



The Use and Abuse of Terror

*The construction of a false narrative
on the domestic terror threat*

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CONTENTS

Foreword

A Recommendation by Anthony Barnett

1. Introduction	1
2. The politicisation of terror	4
3. How the Prime Minister misled the nation	16
4. Ricin	21
5. Old Trafford	26
6. Conclusion	29

Appendix 1: what has happened to the 12 Point Plan

Appendix 2: the Police statement of 6 January 2003

Appendix 3: chronology

FOREWORD

I HAVE WRITTEN THIS PAMPHLET to accompany the Channel 4 documentary, “Dispatches: Spinning Terror”. It is the product of long conversations with patient and very generous interviewees. Many thanks go out to Crispin Black, Martin Bright, Charles Clarke MP, Gill Crossley, David Davis MP, John Denham MP, Baroness (Kishwer) Falkner of Margravine, Osman Karim Fatah, Mark Fisher MP, Margaret Gilmore, Dominic Grieve MP, Professor Alastair Hay, Julian Hayes, Gerald Howarth MP, Chief Constable Ken Jones, Lord Lloyd of Berwick, Alastair Lyon, Mark Oaten MP and Haras Rafiq. One of our interviewees was a Kurd who had been held on suspicion of terrorism over the non-existent plot to bomb Old Trafford stadium. For entirely understandable reasons, he asked to remain anonymous. In parts, I have drawn heavily from Dr David Morrison’s superbly researched essays, “What became of Blair’s ‘several hundred’ terrorists?”; “Blair forced to change spin”; “Blair’s pre-holiday package”; and “House of Lords says NO to detention without trial”. These essays can be viewed in full at www.david-morrison.org.uk/counter-terrorism.

I would also like to thank executive producer Eamonn Matthews and film producer/director Dai Richards, with both of whom I have tested to destruction many of the arguments put forward in this pamphlet, and from whom I have learnt a great deal. Assistant producer Anna Ewart-James and researcher Waleed Ghani have worked brilliantly on this project and I have mercilessly pillaged their hard work. Waleed has also kindly read the manuscript, prepared the appendices and has saved me from

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

some embarrassing errors. Matthew Grimshaw very kindly read the pamphlet and made valuable observations. Needless to say any remaining errors of judgement and fact remain my own.

Finally, I am indebted to Dorothy Byrne, Head of News and Current Affairs at Channel 4. It was her idea to make the film and she has been an inspiration throughout.

Peter Osborne
February 2006

A RECOMMENDATION

Anthony Barnett

I RECOMMEND THIS PAMPHLET to everyone who is concerned about the fate of Britain and how it is governed.

I ask you to put aside all your usual prejudice for the 30 minutes or so it takes to scan its content and consider its implications and arguments at face value.

Perhaps you might be persuaded to do so because Peter Osborne is a man of the right and I am from the left and we are such an unlikely combination that it might give pause for thought, in an age when such pauses are all too rare and valuable. It is for this reason I agreed to write this recommendation.

Two issues bring us together, Tony Blair and terrorism. First, terrorism. There is an extremely remote but not totally inconceivable possibility that fanatics bent on martyrdom could get hold of nuclear weapons and, having done so, would be unable to overcome the difficulties of transporting them to America and would explode them here.

Everything to prevent this that needs to be done should be done. The basic steps are clear: we need a cool, tight focus; very good intelligence; a determined effort to isolate terrorists from the communities that might sympathise with them, not least because these communities are the best source of such intelligence; grown-up communication with all citizens by the authorities; and on a world as well as domestic scale, policies that are just, honest and honourable and do not inflame people to take revenge (or to sympathise with those who call for revenge) against our government.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

Second, Tony Blair. We both feel, I all the more so after reading Osborne's pamphlet, that Britain's Prime Minister has done the opposite of all this. He has lost his cool, amplified tabloid prejudices, called for measures that are likely to widen support for armed opposition to his policies, proved himself unable to communicate with the population in an adult fashion and committed British forces to operations that are dishonest.

Perhaps this strikes you as unfair. But Osborne assesses the evidence of an important moment, intended to be a defining one, when the Prime Minister hijacked Britain's anti-terrorist policies on 5 August, a month after 7/7. Within weeks of the atrocities, a careful cross-party agreement on new measures had been concluded. Blair shattered it. An account of this can be found in the pages that follow. Here I simply ask, did the Prime Minister communicate this grave development in cool, clear and adult language?

Here is part of what he said:¹

Let me just say this to people very, very clearly, this is the beginning of, and there will be lots of battles in the months ahead on this, let's be quite clear because of the way that the law has been interpreted over a long period of time, and I am prepared for those battles in the months ahead. I am also absolutely and completely determined to make sure that this happens.

It does not make sense – although the Prime Minister when speaking has a mesmeric capacity to convince his listeners into believing that he is lucid and they understand him. Against whom is he pitting himself in this hyperventilated image-battle? Osborne shows how the Government had had a bad headline day. Blair was determined to put it right. This he did, for the day after his speech the *Sun* screamed: VICTORY FOR SUN OVER NEW TERROR LAWS.

¹ From his Press Conference www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page8041.asp

A RECOMMENDATION

I had not known this and was shocked. What I had known, for I shouted at the television when I heard the Prime Minister suddenly announcing this on the news clip, was that he said:

What I'm trying to do here is, and this will be followed up with the action in the next few weeks as I think you will see, is to send a clear signal out that the rules of the game have changed.

The *whole point* of defeating terrorism is to defend and preserve our rules, not overthrow them. For example, not jailing people without a fair trial, or the presumption of innocence. These are our rules, this is our game, and, to be focused, such rules are necessary to defeat terrorism. Who is this person who on 5 August thinks he can suddenly declare that our rules have changed and then go on holiday?

Well, we know what sort of person he is. He is someone whose judgement cannot be trusted on central issues of war and peace.

Here I think the argument should be widened briefly as essential background to the pamphlet. Osborne shows how Blair and his officials at first denied there was any connection between the 7/7 terror attacks on London and the Iraq war, and then denied that they had denied it when their denial could no longer withstand scrutiny.

Why did they want to deny the obvious in the first place? In part because they wanted to generalise 'the threat' and live off the politics of fear. But also because they did not want to talk about Iraq.

The more important argument, perhaps, concerns George Bush's Washington and Blair's relationship to it. But let's just stick to British domestic politics.

On 9 September 2002, to prepare the public for war, the British Government published its assessment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.² Known as the September dossier, it was personally introduced by the Prime Minister who endorsed the claim which led the headlines the next day that Saddam Hussein

² See www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/iraqdossier.pdf

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

had weapons of mass destruction that could be ready for use within 45 minutes. (I was told that in so far as there might be any actual source for this story, it was possibly a reference to CS gas grenades, but I think the true source of the story was a desire for a tabloid-friendly frightener.)

The dossier also included more serious statements, for example a section of its executive summary reads:

As a result of the intelligence we judge that Iraq has:

- *continued to produce chemical and biological agents*

These are extremely toxic substances which, of course, Saddam had made and used before the 1991 war with Kuwait. But then he lost that war and the UN entered the country and destroyed both his stockpiles and his factories.

The person who led the team that did this, who met and assessed the people who made the chemical WMD and who knew the nature of Iraq's technology, was Ron Manley. He was living in Cornwall after his retirement but continued to work part-time for the Ministry of Defence. Manley was *not asked* to assess the intelligence.

openDemocracy managed to find and interview him after the invasion.³ He explained that the technology for producing the chemical WMD agents in military quantity involved building facilities that had to be ventilated for their workforce to survive; and that this could not have been done without being observed.

Manley hated Saddam Hussein and had assumed he had somehow kept back some WMD for what he calls a "panic attack", but added:

My view has been all along that they didn't retain any militarily significant quantities of chemical weapons... The point is that production of these materials on a large scale really is not something you can easily hide. You could hide the individual items of equipment or the raw materials in, say, Saddam's massive palace complexes. But

³ To hear the interview, see www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-iraq/article_1351.jsp

A RECOMMENDATION

when you actually start to build a plant and manufacture chemical agents it's a whole different story.

In other words, experts knew at the time that the dossier was plain wrong.

When put under pressure to explain himself to the Labour Party Conference, Tony Blair said that he was sorry the intelligence was wrong but he was not sorry he had helped overthrow Saddam Hussein. Isn't there something disingenuous about this? Does a Minister bear no responsibility for the assessment of the intelligence and information he or she receives?

Had the Prime Minister said, "Go and find the best person to help us assess this threat to Britain from Iraq's WMD", which is what he should have done, why then Ron Manley would have been asked.

And *was* Blair so "sorry" that the intelligence provided was wrong, when afterwards he promoted the person responsible for it to become head of MI6?

How has he got away with misleading Britain over the reasons for going to war with Iraq?

This question lies at the heart of Peter Osborne's pamphlet. He himself provides part of the answer: the media. But can it be that it is the headlines and not the people's representatives that matter?

In his conclusion Osborne asks us to consider what it means when the Prime Minister of the day throws his full weight behind the police to demand a measure they consider to be vital to our national security – and then Parliament comfortably defeats him.

He laments the loss of trust that is involved. But I asked myself, and I think the reader should ask, after such a parliamentary reprimand, *why didn't he have to resign?*

Anthony Barnett
10 February 2006

Anthony Barnett is the Editor-in-Chief of openDemocracy.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST TIME I ever spoke to Tony Blair was by telephone at about 8.30am on 10 March 1993. I was then a junior political reporter on the *Evening Standard*, while Blair was shadow Home Secretary. He rang me up in an anxious frame of mind. Labour was preparing to announce that it was keeping up its opposition to the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Tony Blair told me that the Labour Party was committed to fighting terrorism. “We are suggesting nothing,” he said, “that in any way inhibits the police and security services from doing their job.”

The youngish ex-barrister, who in those days still lived in Islington, told me that it would be disgraceful to accuse the Labour Party of being soft on terrorism simply because it opposed the PTA. He suggested that, on the contrary, Labour was courageously holding out against knee-jerk politics. I can remember an implication in our conversation of how easy it would be to pander to the right-wing press, yet how wrong to do so. He was adamant that there was no contradiction between respect for civil liberties and security against terrorism.

He said that Labour was adamantly opposed to the “exclusion orders” imposed by the Conservative Government, giving powers to restrict rights to travel. He expressed his concern about the PTA provisions which allowed suspects to be held for one week without a reason being given. “If you are a terrorist you should be under lock and key,” the future Prime Minister told me. “If you are not, you shouldn’t. If you are suspected of being one, you should be under surveillance.”

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

Looking back at the copy I filed that day I can see that the *Evening Standard*, though then a Conservative supporting newspaper, gave Tony Blair a fair crack of the whip. This is what I wrote:

On the day of the discovery of an enormous cache of explosives in London, Labour is aware its stance will appear to some as if it is supporting civil rights for terrorists. But shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair is determined Labour will carry on with its long-standing opposition to the Act on the grounds that it makes unacceptable inroads into civil liberties.

The purpose of this pamphlet is partly to examine why the Prime Minister no longer seems to believe that civil liberties and security are compatible. It will try and explain why, instead of holding out bravely against the tabloid press, he now appeases it.

This pamphlet will argue that the Government is fighting terror in the wrong way. It will show that some legislation is less designed to fight terrorism than to fight a publicity campaign. Too much of its activity is aimed at generating newspaper headlines. Too often Tony Blair's key target is less Osama Bin Laden than the editor of the *Sun*. The Prime Minister prefers the short-term gratification that comes for being praised for being "tough on terror" to the long-term slog of finding a solution. This false perspective has led to a series of serious mistakes.

This pamphlet will show how the Prime Minister does not tell the truth about terror. Rather than look the threat steadfastly in the face, the British public has been fed half-truths, falsehoods and lies.

It will also demonstrate that New Labour has set out to politicise terror, to use it for narrow party advantage. Both major opposition parties have repeatedly offered to join with the Government to confront the major terrorist threat that Britain undoubtedly faces. They were right to do so. Yet again and again, their offers have been spurned. Meanwhile those who stood up for civil liberties – as Tony Blair did in 1993 – are now accused of giving succour to the terrorists.

INTRODUCTION

The Prime Minister has promoted a false narrative on terror. He claims that only New Labour is ready and willing to face up to the terror threat. One way New Labour illustrates this point is through misleading statements and public scares, which in many cases turn out to be unfounded. At times, Ministers have been so keen to make political use of the terror threat that their public statements have risked prejudicing impending criminal trials.

It should be stressed that the Government is by no means solely responsible for this distorted public discourse on terror. The police and, to an even larger extent, the British media organisations have had a reckless attitude. Two key case histories – the “Ricin Plot” and the alleged terrorist conspiracy to blow up Old Trafford football ground – demonstrate the unreliability of both official statements and media reporting about terrorism.

A significant amount of press coverage in the two cases mentioned above was fabrication. But it should be stressed that this level of fantasy and invention was only possible in the first place, and sustainable over time, thanks to official prompting and collusion. Just as it suited Government policy that the “45 minute threat” should gain currency ahead of the invasion of Iraq, so was it helpful to Ministers that the British public should believe that Ricin had been found in a north London flat.

The experience of the past few years teaches us that what the Prime Minister, his Ministers, or the police say on the subject of terror must be treated with great scepticism. This is damaging: only a Government which possesses the trust of the British people is in a position to ask us to surrender our civil liberties. That trust has been forfeited.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

THERE ARE OCCASIONAL GREAT CRISES in our national life when party distinction gets set aside. One is bereavement or tragedy. Politicians come together to mourn in the wake of a national disaster or the death of the sovereign. Another might be a profound economic disaster of the kind that led to the formation of the National Government in 1931. A third comes when the nation is confronted with some terrible external threat. Open party animosity was set aside during World Wars One and Two.

The threat from Islamic terrorism is of the same nature. It has already claimed scores of British lives and may well claim many more. It is reasonable to expect that our politicians should rise above party politics when terrorism comes onto the agenda.

They have not done so. On the contrary, fighting terror has become a partisan issue. This is a betrayal of those who have already died, and those who may yet die, at the hands of the terrorists. In Britain, the war on terror is now being fought along party political lines.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005

An indication that New Labour was set on addressing the domestic terror threat from a narrow and mainly partisan perspective came with the controversy over the Prevention of Terrorism Bill of spring 2005.

The crisis was prompted when New Labour's earlier piece of anti-terrorism legislation – the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act of 2001 – came unstuck in the House of Lords. The Law Lords

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

ruled that section 23 of the 2001 Act contradicted the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Section 23 allowed for the detention without trial of foreign nationals suspected of terrorist links, in particular those who could not be deported to their country of origin because they might be subject to torture there.

It had always been likely that this section of the 2001 Act, which had been rushed through Parliament in response to 11 September, was incompatible with the ECHR. The Government had been warned of this difficulty many times,⁴ but appeared to be taken wholly by surprise by the Lords ruling.

Casting around for a replacement, Ministers came up with the idea of control orders. These included restrictions such as house arrest for suspects who had not been charged with any crime. The Prevention of Terrorism Act now gave the Home Secretary the power to apply to the courts to impose these “control orders” on anyone who in his opinion “is or has been involved in terrorism related activity.” The Government needed to rush these proposals through Parliament as the detention of these men in Belmarsh under section 23 of the 2001 Act was about to become illegal. The opposition parties – and this was surely their proper function – wanted to debate these new and severe restrictions on the traditional liberties of the British subject. The issue was made graver and more urgent by the need for a solution in time for the imminent General Election. So urgent was the problem that Parliament was required to debate the measure even before the Government had worked out the details. In an interview for the programme, the former Law Lord, Lord Lloyd, described the situation as follows:

⁴ On 30 July 2002 the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (a superior court of record) ruled that indefinite detention under the Part 4 Powers was incompatible with the ECHR. Though this was then overturned by the Court of Appeal, it was ultimately affirmed by the Law Lords in December 2004. For the 2002 SIAC ruling, see: www.statewatch.org/news/2002/jul/SIAC.pdf See also Richard Norton-Taylor, “Right ruling, wrong reason”, *Guardian*, 1 August 2002.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

The Home Secretary said that he wasn't in a position yet to say what was going to be in the Bill itself. He was going to introduce amendments at the very last moment, so that when the House of Commons had its committee stage, where they're supposed to examine the Bill clause by clause, they had nothing to examine. There wasn't a Bill.

In these exceptional circumstances, the Conservative Party offered a compromise proposal – a “sunset clause”, so that the Act would lapse after 12 months. The Government dismissed this proposal and steamrolled the PTA through Parliament, while attacking both the Conservatives and Lib Dems for being soft on terror.⁵ Tony Blair warned the House of Commons that if the legislation was not passed:⁶

The shame will lie with the Conservatives who, faced with legislation to prevent terrorism – faced with legislation on which we were advised by the police and security services – are going to vote against it. If they want to vote against it, let them: we will be content ultimately to have the verdict of the country on it.

This charge that the “shame” lay with the Conservative Party was strong. All the Conservatives had wanted to do was impose a 12 month sunset clause so that a piece of legislation, which had profound implications for the liberty of the British subject and which was said by experts to be poorly drafted, could be properly re-examined at the end of a year.

Peter Hain, Leader of the Commons, had already gone further than the Prime Minister. He told BBC viewers that:⁷

If we are tough on crime and terrorism, as Labour is, then I think Britain will be safer under Labour... we have to create a safer, more secure country and it is our Labour Party that is achieving that. It's our assertion that we are providing more security for this country and its citizens than alternative policies... the risk would be lower under Labour.

⁵ The Government did eventually agree to a “review” of the Act after 12 months.

⁶ Hansard, 9 March 2005.

⁷ BBC Breakfast, 24 November 2004. Quotation taken from the BBC website.

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

Labour's strategy was clear enough. It was determined to take the strongest, most populist line on terror; and then to brand its political opponents as weak or soft. There is strong evidence that this strategy worked.

The London bombings and the smashing of consensus

In the immediate aftermath of the 7 July outrages, British politicians for the most part behaved perfectly. They came together to condemn the terrorists. As he so often does at a moment of crisis, Tony Blair found the correct words to articulate the national mood. He stressed the need not to panic, and advocated a steady and measured response. Opposition leaders Michael Howard and Charles Kennedy agreed that they would set aside party differences and do everything in their means to help the Government. So on 11 July, Michael Howard assured Tony Blair that:⁸

We wish to play our part by making constructive measures that we hope will help establish a durable consensus on the best measures to safeguard us all.

Tony Blair replied in similar vein:⁹

It is important if we possibly can, that when we come to look at any future legislation, we try to establish it on the basis of a consensus. If it is possible to do that, we should, and I assure him that I will work to see that that is done.

Meanwhile Home Secretary Charles Clarke was swift to make contact with his opposite numbers Tory shadow Home Secretary David Davis and Lib Dem Home Affairs spokesman Mark Oaten. Parallel lines of communication were developed between their staff members, and cemented by a regular exchange of letters and e-mails. The three offices swiftly agreed on three new laws that would help prevent a repetition of the London bombings: creating

⁸ Hansard, 11 July 2005.

⁹ Ibid.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

offences of Acts Preparatory to terrorism, Indirect Incitement to terrorism, and attending a terrorist training camp.

There seemed to be a real chance that some good could come out of the calamity of the London bombings: politicians of all parties coming together to fight a ruthless common enemy.¹⁰

This co-operation brought risks for the opposition parties, in particular perhaps for the Lib Dems where the libertarian tradition was strongest. But in due course the consensus was confirmed at a meeting of the three party leaders.

By the start of August, there was a general agreement that everything was on course for announcements at the party conference season and the passing of an anti-terrorism act, with cross party support, by Christmas. Charles Clarke, David Davis and Mark Oaten each set off on holiday (Clarke to the United States, Oaten to France and Davis to campaign for the Tory leadership). They had taken the precaution of sharing contact numbers in case of an emergency.

On the afternoon of 4 August, both Oaten and Davis were surprised to receive a call from the Home Office minister Hazel Blears. Oaten was in St Tropez when he took his, while Davis was in the north of England. According to both Oaten and Davis, Blears gave the impression that the call was little more a formality. She told them that there would be an announcement on terrorism by the Prime Minister the following day, but that it would not go further than had already been agreed between the three parties. Oaten recalls:

The basis of the conversation led me to believe that what the Prime Minister was going to announce was of very little political significance, that this was not a big shift, and that the consensus that we had had would continue. I then called Charles Kennedy, my boss, that night and said, look, I'm in France, the Prime Minister is going to

¹⁰ The following account is based on interviews with many of those most intimately involved, including the Home Secretary Charles Clarke, Conservative Shadow Home Secretary David Davis and Lib Dem Home Affairs spokesman Mark Oaten.

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

make a statement tomorrow. As far as I'm concerned there's nothing in that which should trouble us, or put the consensus at risk. I went to bed that night assuming that it was business as normal, that the Prime Minister would be using his last day before holiday to reiterate some of the issues on terrorism. I was badly wrong.

Davis remembers:

I was sitting in a restaurant in Ambleside, and I got a telephone call from Hazel Blears telling me the next day the Prime Minister was going to be making an announcement on their counter-terrorism proposals, and that there were going to be four things in it, and she told me four things.

The following day (5 August), in his monthly Downing Street Press Conference, the Prime Minister went far beyond anything agreed or even discussed with the opposition parties. He dramatically announced a "12 Point Plan" which put forward new measures which he surely knew that the opposition parties could not support.

This 12 Point Plan at once shattered the harmonious working relationship between the three main parties. It remains unclear whether Hazel Blears was deliberately deceiving Davis and Oaten in her telephone calls. It seems more likely that she was acting in good faith. This theory gains currency from several credible reports that Home Office officials were taken aback by the Prime Minister's 12 Point Plan on the day itself. The *Evening Standard* political correspondent Paul Waugh was told by Home Office officials that their "jaws dropped" during the Prime Minister's speech. According to Martin Bright, political editor of the *New Statesman*:

It was my understanding that it took Charles Clarke and the Home Office by surprise. Now what was extraordinary was that over the previous months Charles Clarke had been quite carefully building a consensus, not only with other political parties, but he was making a gesture towards liberal Britain on these issues, and it was a deeply humiliating moment for him.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

Charles Clarke, it must be said, rebuts any suggestion that he was put under pressure from Downing Street or kept out of loop, saying:

I was on holiday in America at that time, and I was on the phone to the Prime Minister a great deal during that time, right up to the statements that he actually made. I was fully involved, fully supported it, and thought it was the right thing to do.

Be that as it may, there are grounds for speculation that 10 Downing Street had seized control of the terrorism agenda from the Home Office. It is possible that Blears may have been kept in the dark even 24 hours before the Prime Minister's announcement (though Charles Clarke today insists that Blears gave Oaten and Davis "a very full briefing").

The context is important: the Prime Minister had been confronted by a concerted campaign in the tabloid press for new anti-terror laws. He may well have concluded that the thoughtful, consensual strategy worked out with the two main opposition parties came at too great a political cost. He may have decided that it was more profitable to give an impression of acting tough. That was the impression gained by many MPs, including his own supporters. John Denham, a former Home Office minister and chairman of the Home Affairs Committee, described the proposals as "half-baked." He told me later:

There must be concern that the Government agenda is sometimes driven by public and media pressure in this area, rather than a concern for what is most effective.

Tony Blair's terror initiative showed numerous signs of having been cobbled together in a hurry. Some of the measures proved ill-thought out and unworkable.¹¹ However, it may have achieved the result that the Prime Minister, who left the following day to the West Indies to stay at Cliff Richard's holiday home, wanted.

¹¹ Chapter Six and Appendix 1 analyse the subsequent failure of the 12 Point Plan.

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

For days before the plan was announced, he had been heavy pressure from a tabloid campaign, led by the *Sun*, claiming that holidaying politicians were not taking the terror threat seriously enough. On 3 August, the *Sun* raged against holidaying MPs: “LET’S HOPE THE BOMBERS ARE ON HOLIDAY TOO”. On 5 August an open letter from Trevor Kavanagh, political editor of the *Sun*, was headlined: “DEAR MPs SIX WEEKS HOLIDAY IS ENOUGH FOR ANYONE”. Then on 6 August, as Tony Blair flew to the West Indies with his family, the *Sun* headline was much more reassuring: “VICTORY FOR SUN OVER NEW TERROR LAWS.”

The consensus smashed again: the 90 days fiasco

To their credit both the Home Secretary Charles Clarke and opposition politicians remained determined to maintain a cross party alliance on the Terrorism Bill in spite of the set back of 5 August. When Mark Oaten expressed his concern to Charles Clarke about the breakdown over the 12 Point Plan, the Home Secretary gave a reassurance that it was still his aim to get a consensus on counter-terrorism measures. According to Mark Oaten:

I'm very clear in my mind that the Home Secretary would rather have seen a situation where political parties weren't having to issue statements saying that consensus had broken down, and I think that he regretted that that had happened, and was very keen, on his return from holiday, to get together with myself and David Davis, so that we could re-engage in the kind of spirit that we'd had before Tony Blair had made that statement.

Charles Clarke was as good as his word. The Home Office did indeed work together with the two other main parties on the Terrorism Bill as it entered Parliament in the autumn. The most contentious point, it swiftly emerged, was the proposal for 90 days detention without charge for terrorist suspects, a proposal which smashed through the British tradition of freedom from arbitrary arrest dating back centuries. It can be traced back at least to article

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

39 of Magna Carta, which states that the King cannot lock up his subjects until he puts them through a process of law.

The proposal to break with this ancient principle had first emerged from the police. Though it was greeted with scepticism from opposition parties and many Labour backbenchers, there were numerous indications from the Home Secretary that he was looking for a compromise solution which could carry the support of his political opponents.

On 15 September, Charles Clarke gave Oaten and Davis concrete reason to believe that he was prepared to compromise on the 90 day point. He wrote to them saying:

In particular, it may be that you are convinced by the case for some extension, but feel that three months is too great an extension. I would be interested in your views on this particular point.

In an earlier draft of this letter, inadvertently released to the public, Clarke had been even more open to discussion:¹²

I think the case for some extension is clear, though I believe there is room for debate as to whether we should go as far as three months and I am still in discussion with the police on this point.

The following month, when grilled by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, the Home Secretary was even clearer. Questioned about his commitment to the 90 days, he replied:¹³

I never say never in politics and I would not say I have an absolute fixation on anything actually but not on three months either. I have said to the opposition parties if they are interested to talk about this, and in the interests of getting agreement, I am interested to talk about it too.

Clarke continued to indicate that he was ready to compromise right up to the bitter end. Dominic Grieve, the shadow Attorney

¹² See reports in the, for example, the *Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 2005.

¹³ Evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, 11 October 2005.

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

General who was deeply involved in these negotiations, describes a meeting between the opposition parties and Charles Clarke at the end of the committee stage of the Terrorism Bill's passage through Parliament, on the morning of 7 November:

We explained to him that we had grave reservations, and I said to him that I thought that 28 days was really the outside limit of what was acceptable but I waited for his proposals. And having listened to what we had to say he told us that he was going to go away and think about that and was going to try and come up with some compromise formula to put to Parliament.

Mark Oaten says:

I made it very clear to the Home Secretary that if we could find a way forward on 90 days, if they would look at alternatives to 90 days, we may still be able to support them. I was led, right until the last point, to believe that the Home Secretary wanted to achieve that.

Charles Clarke gives a different perspective on these discussions, insisting that he gained the impression that neither of the opposition parties were ready to compromise and it was therefore not worthwhile trying to pursue negotiations. Charles Clarke described the Conservative position:

We went through a wide range of proposals on which there was broad agreement and then I came to an end and said, you know, was there any possibility that they would go beyond the 28 days in a process that would carry through. They said no...

Those present at the meeting waited to hear back from Clarke about what the compromise was going to be. But early that afternoon, Tony Blair appeared to take control of the process. Rather than negotiate a solution, as Clarke had hinted only in the morning, 90 days was turned into an issue of principle during the course of the day.

This became clear to Labour MPs when the Prime Minister addressed a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

House of Commons at the end of the day. It was a closed meeting, and it is impossible to obtain a verbatim report. According to accounts from those present, the Prime Minister made the same kind of brilliant, emotive speech that he delivered to the House of Commons on the eve of the Iraq invasion. Those present say that he did not try to make a reasoned and well-constructed case. Rather the Prime Minister concentrated on the political utility of voting for the Bill. According to one present, the Labour MP Mark Fisher:

He didn't attempt to address the case or the facts. It was entirely an emotional appeal to us as Labour politicians to support him in the lobbies and many of us felt that we could have done better if we'd heard from him why he believed that 90 days was important. Instead, we heard a passionate and brilliantly delivered appeal for why we should support him. He gave no argument at all. [He said that] our opponents were politically dangerous and misguided and this was very important for the next election and the credibility of the Government. They were all political points... you could see the impact it was having particularly on new and younger Labour MPs. They were pinned in their seats at the prospect that if there was a further atrocity they might be held responsible. And in the Prime Minister's words, they would be held to have abetted terrorism and their constituents.

Some of the Government's argument for 90 days veered into the infantile and the insulting. In an attempt to put pressure on Labour MPs wavering about whether to vote in favour of the Bill by showing it enjoyed widespread national support, the Government despatched a questionnaire to Labour members. The questions misrepresented the complexity of the argument. Two examples from the questionnaire, which was displayed on the Labour Party website, are quoted below:

Do you think police should have the time and opportunity to complete their investigations into suspected terrorists?

Yes/No/Not sure

THE POLITICISATION OF TERROR

*Do you think the Government should make
sure there are new safeguards to protect
innocent people?* *Yes/No/Not sure*

The pattern of events leading up to the so-called 12 Point Plan, and in the days leading up to the Commons vote over 90 days was uncannily similar. In each case the Home Secretary gave the strongest possible impression, almost right up to the final moment, that he was minded to act consensually and find a compromise. In each case, the two major opposition parties believe they were badly misled. In each case, Downing Street appears to have suddenly taken over the management of affairs at the end. In each case, the Government's tough line on terror was made into a political point.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW THE PRIME MINISTER MISLED THE NATION

THE PRIME MINISTER, the British Government and the police have consistently misled the British public about the nature and scope of the threat to the British people over terror. Three examples are set out below.

Control orders

On 28 February 2005, with the Prevention of Terrorism Bill being discussed in Parliament, Tony Blair made the following comment to listeners to Women's Hour:¹⁴

What they [the security services] say is that you have got to give us powers in between mere surveillance of these people – there are several hundred of them in this country who we believe are engaged in plotting or trying to commit terrorist acts – you have got to give us power in between just surveying them and being sure enough to prosecute them beyond reasonable doubt. There are people out there who are determined to destroy our way of life and there is no point in us being naïve about it.

These remarks were terrifying. Anyone listening to the Prime Minister's remarks must have felt that, within days of the Prevention of Terrorism Act being passed, the "several hundred" individuals plotting to wreak devastation through Britain would have been under lock and key. And yet that is not the case at all.

¹⁴ This analysis follows that made by Dr David Morrison in his lucid paper "What Became of Blair's "several hundred" terrorists?", *Labour and Trade Union Review*, May 2005. www.david-morrison.org.uk/counter-terrorism/several-hundred-terrorists.htm

HOW THE PRIME MINISTER MISLED THE NATION

Nearly a year has gone by, and yet no more than 17 individuals have been made subject to Control Orders. At least half of them seem to have been foreign nationals, who had already been detained under Section 23 of the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. The Prime Minister's suggestion that the Security Services were demanding new powers in order to deal with a new category of terrorist suspect turns out to have been nonsense. His figure of "several hundred" terrorists plotting mayhem was contradicted almost at once by Downing Street and what seems to have been a Home Office briefing.¹⁵ It seems to have been plucked out of thin air.

"No link with Iraq"

In the immediate aftermath of the London bombings, the British Government went out of its way to deny any suggestion that there was any connection between the 7/7 atrocity and the invasion of Iraq two years before. On 11 July, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that there was no link between the two. Replying to a question from Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond, he declared that:¹⁶

The one thing that is obvious from the long list of countries that have been victims of this type of terrorism is that it does not discriminate greatly between individual items of policy. I am afraid I must tell the Hon. Gentleman that it is a form of terrorism aimed at our way of life, not at any particular Government or policy.

The Prime Minister could not have been more explicit: there was no connection between Iraq and the London atrocity. Senior ministers took the same line. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw added further substance to the denial on BBC News 24 on 18 July:

¹⁵ See for example the *Daily Express*, 2 March 2005, "MI5 Protest that Blair 'sexed up' Terrorist Claims". See also the sharp downplaying of the Prime Minister's remarks in Downing Street official briefing, 11am 28 February 2005.

¹⁶ Hansard, 11 July 2005.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

The terrorists have struck across the world in countries allied with the United States, backing the war in Iraq, and in countries which had nothing whatever to do with the war in Iraq. They struck in Kenya, in Tanzania, in Indonesia. They have struck this weekend in Turkey, which was not supporting our action in Iraq.

This was a disingenuous formulation. Far from being random attacks on Kenya and Tanzania, as Straw suggested, the targets in both countries were the United States embassy. In Indonesia, the targets had been foreign nationals from Australia, a leading member of the pro-war coalition. As for Turkey, the Foreign Secretary ought to have been aware that the attack there came from a Kurdish separatist organisation, and not Al-Qaeda.

There were similar protestations from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the days after the bombings. They were dishonest.

Both men had been advised many times that the Iraq War would increase the chances of a terrorist outrage in Britain. Some of the warnings have found their way into the public domain. For example, a month before the March 2003 invasion the Joint Intelligence Committee had warned that:¹⁷

The terrorist threat to Western interests... would be heightened by military action against Iraq.

In June 2005, some three weeks before the London bombings, Britain's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre judged that:¹⁸

Events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist related activity in the UK.

On 18 July 2005, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (also known as Chatham House) published a briefing on terrorism and national security which declared:¹⁹

¹⁷ See the Intelligence and Security Committee Report, *Iraq Weapons of Mass Destruction – Intelligence and Assessments*, 11 September 2003.

¹⁸ Taken from a leaked document published in the *New York Times*, 19 July 2005.

HOW THE PRIME MINISTER MISLED THE NATION

There is no doubt that the situation over Iraq has imposed particular difficulties for the UK, and for the wider coalition against terrorism. It gave a boost to the Al-Qaeda network's propaganda, recruitment and fundraising, caused a major split in the coalition, provided an ideal targeting and training area for Al-Qaeda linked terrorists.

This document provided a reasoned and authoritative rebuttal of the denials emerging from Downing Street and the Foreign Office. Jack Straw responded:

I'm astonished if Chatham House is now saying that we should not have stood shoulder to shoulder with our long-standing allies in the United States.

Once again, the Foreign Secretary was guilty of distortion and misrepresentation. Chatham House had not questioned for a single second whether Britain should have stood “shoulder to shoulder” with the US. All it had done was to reach the dispassionate conclusion that the invasion of Iraq had increased the terror risk to Britain. This judgement was shared by the intelligence services, as Straw must have known at the time he was speaking.

In the wake of the Chatham House pronouncement, the Government was obliged to change its line that there was no link between the Iraq invasion and the London bombings. Tony Blair even went to the extraordinary lengths of reinventing reality by claiming never to have denied the link in the first place. This is what he said at his Downing Street press conference on 26 July:

I read occasionally that I am supposed to have said it [the London bombings] is nothing to do with Iraq, in inverted commas. Actually I haven't said that.

The Prime Minister was being disingenuous. From 7 July, until 18 July, he and his Ministers had gone out of their way to give the strongest impression that there was no connection between the attack on London and the Iraq invasion.

¹⁹ RIIA, *Security, Terrorism and the UK*, July 2005.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

“Arresting” the terrorists

At Prime Minister’s Questions on 9 November 2005, Tony Blair claimed that “just this last weekend, we arrested people on a terrorist operation.” He had made a similar claim on Channel Four television on 8 November, and at a press conference on 7 November. In fact there had been no arrests over the weekend. Some suspected terrorists had been charged, a crucial distinction since the debate raging at the time concerned the length of time that should elapse between arrest and charge.

When Michael Howard wrote to the Prime Minister to ask for a correction, Tony Blair replied unapologetically:²⁰

The point I was making remains entirely valid. The point was not about the difference between arrest and charge but rather that we face a continuing threat, and whether arrested on 21 October or 4 November makes no difference to this essential point.

This is a relatively trivial example. But it illustrates the British Government’s habitual casualness about factual accuracy in terrorism cases.

²⁰ Letter from Tony Blair to Michael Howard, placed in the House of Commons Library, 11 November 2005.

CHAPTER FOUR

RICIN

IN EARLY 2003, just as the British Government was seeking to persuade the British people to wage war against Saddam Hussein in order to prevent him distributing weapons of mass destruction to terrorists, the police made a significant announcement. They had, they said, foiled a terrorist ring in its attempt to launch a chemical attack in Britain using the deadly poison Ricin.

According to a press release from Scotland Yard issued in the names of Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Pat Troop and Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner David Veness,²¹ Ricin poison had been found in a flat in Wood Green, North London. The Government latched onto the news.

The Prime Minister joined in by warning that the discovery highlighted the dangers from weapons of mass destruction, adding: “The arrests which were made show this danger is present and real and with us now. Its potential is huge.”

²³

²¹ See Appendix 2 for the full text of the Metropolitan Police Press Release issued on 6 January 2003.

²³ From a speech to diplomats on UK foreign policy, in London on 7 January 2003. See www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2635807.stm

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

Within weeks the Ricin case was being cited around the world as further justification for the war in Iraq. US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the UN Security Council of a direct link between the British “Ricin Plot” and an alleged al-Qaeda “poisons camp” in Iraq.²⁴ The following day Tony Blair endorsed these remarks, saying in a Newsnight interview that “what Colin Powell was talking about yesterday is correct”, adding that “it would not be correct to say there is no evidence linking Al Qaeda and Iraq.”²⁵ In late March 2003, US commanders in Iraq claimed to have destroyed a “poison factory”, though no chemicals or laboratories were found. The US commander in chief, General Richard Myers, claimed:²⁶

And then just recently we attacked and now have gone in on the ground into a site in north-eastern Iraq where the Ansar al-Islam and al Qaeda had been working on poisons. And it's from this site where people were trained and poisons were developed that migrated into Europe. We think that's probably where the Ricin found in London came from.

It is unusual, and potentially prejudicial, for Ministers to comment on upcoming court cases. Nevertheless, as the Ricin case moved towards trial, Ministers continued to regard the Ricin trial as an important publicity resource. In due course, the trial judge was provoked into warning the Home Secretary to curb his public remarks for fear of prejudicing the case.

The facts about the Ricin Plot

No Ricin was ever found in the Wood Green flat – just a small number of ingredients for the manufacture of Ricin. The

²⁴ For a transcript of Powell's statement to the UN Security Council in New York on 5 February 2003, see www.un.int/usa/03clp0205.htm

²⁵ Comments made in an interview with Jeremy Paxman for a Newsnight Special, 6 February 2003. For a transcript, see www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/2732979.stm

²⁶ General Myers made this claim on CNN's 'Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer', on 30 March 2003. For a transcript, see www.edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0303/30/le.00.html

RICIN

announcement from David Veness and Pat Troop that “a small amount of the material recovered from the Wood Green premises has tested positive for the presence of Ricin poison” was misleading: the tests were only capable of indicating that Ricin *might* be present. But they did not establish its presence. The press release also said that: “Tests were carried out on the material and it was confirmed this morning that toxic material was present”.

This latter statement was utterly wrong. No confirmatory tests had yet been carried out. All that had taken place by the time they issued their joint release was a preliminary test. When a definitive test was done, it confirmed that there was no Ricin at all.²⁷ At that time, Veness and Troop had no way of knowing whether or not Ricin had been found.

On 7 January, chemical weapons experts at the government research facility at Porton Down carried out more accurate tests into the presence of Ricin. These tests established that there was no Ricin. Curiously, Porton Down apparently did not pass on this information to the British Government until late March. And apparently the Government never asked for the results of this definitive test.²⁸

Yet, thanks to a series of events that at times defy belief, the existence of Ricin continued to be proclaimed for over two years. By the time that Porton Down belatedly passed on its negative finding to the Government, the matter was deemed *sub judice*, as by then charges had been laid against the accused. This decision infuriated the defence lawyers. One of them, Alastair Lyon, argues:

Judges are reasonable human beings. Evidence that corrected a press campaign that was wrong and prejudicial surely could have been put into the public domain. If the argument behind the publicising of the find of Ricin was that the public had a right to know, then telling the public the truth – the finding that there was no Ricin – was surely even more in the public interest.

²⁷ It is unusual for the Deputy Chief Medical Officer to countersign a Police Press Release. It is stranger still that she endorsed a statement that proved to be so inaccurate.

²⁸ This time-lag was confirmed in the Ricin trial in 2005.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

The background to the Ricin Plot

On 18 September 2002, one alleged mastermind of the so-called Ricin Plot, an Algerian named Mohammed Meguerba, was arrested in north London and found to possess fake IDs. Bailed after suffering an epileptic fit, he absconded, turning up in Algeria on 16 December 2002, where he was arrested by security police after allegedly being smuggled in by Islamist militants.

After being interrogated and possibly tortured for two days, he allegedly revealed a poisoning plot in north London, naming the Algerian Kamel Bourgass as ringleader and other Algerians as co-conspirators. Meguerba's information led police to a flat in Wood Green, where they arrested several men, though Bourgass was not there. The police did discover recipes for Ricin, a mortar and pestle, and castor beans, from which it is possible to extract Ricin.

On 14 January 2003, while on the hunt for another terror suspect, the police raided a flat in Crumpsall, Manchester. By chance they found Bourgass and another alleged conspirator. After a violent struggle, Bourgass murdered DC Stephen Oake and wounded several other police officers.²⁹

On 29 June 2004 Bourgass was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of DC Oake after an 11 week trial at the Old Bailey. The sentence was kept secret because of the impending trial for the Ricin Plot. On 13 September 2004 an Old Bailey case began against Bourgass, Mouloud Sihali, David Khalef, Sidali Feddag and Mustapha Taleb. Six months later, on 8 April 2005 the jury acquitted Sihali, Khalef, Feddag and Taleb. Four days later the jury acquitted Bourgass of the most serious charge – conspiracy to murder. It did find him guilty of “conspiracy to

²⁹ Both Bourgass and Meguerba had been separately arrested for minor offences before. Both times, although being suspected of being in breach of immigration laws, they were freed without charge by the police. Both times, the immigration authorities were informed but appear not to have acted on the information. Had they done so, and had they deported Bourgass and Meguerba, the Ricin Plot would never have happened. It is this lack of co-ordination which failed to prevent the Ricin Plot, not the inadequate detention powers as the Police late claimed.

RICIN

commit a public nuisance by the use of poisons or explosives to cause disruption, fear or injury.” The judge sentenced him to 17 years. The Director of Public Prosecutions Ken MacDonald abandoned the trial, due to start the following day of another four men accused of the conspiracy. Meguerba has yet to stand trial in Algeria and remains in custody.

How the myth of the Ricin Plot survived

The press has continued to report the Ricin Plot as if it was real, while the Government has never formally announced that there was never any Ricin at the Wood Green flat. For example, on the very night of its collapse, Newsnight ran a long piece which implied that Ricin had been found in the flat.³⁰ Later, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian Blair said on the “Breakfast with Frost” programme on 17 April 2005 that the Ricin case demonstrated the need for new laws. This was after the case had failed. In a report as recent as 5 October 2005, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Andy Hayman used the Ricin Plot as an argument in the police campaign for a 90 day period of detention without trial.³¹ This report was sent to the Home Secretary and distributed to members of the Press at the Prime Minister’s press conference on 11 October. Hayman claimed that Meguerba could have been successfully convicted if the police had been able to hold onto him for longer than seven days. This suggestion was wrong: the police did not use even the seven days they were allowed. Meguerba had been held only for three days.

³⁰ See A Gilligan, “Ricin certainties”, *Spectator*, 23 April 2005, for an account of Newsnight’s uncritical acceptance of the police and Government line.

³¹ Anti-Terrorism Branch (SO13) report, 5 October 2005, ‘THREE MONTH PRE-CHARGE DETENTION’.

CHAPTER FIVE

OLD TRAFFORD

ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY 19 APRIL 2004, the British people were alerted to an amazing coup. They learned how the police had seized a terrorist gang just as it prepared to launch an audacious bomb attack on Old Trafford stadium on match day, an attack which could have killed thousands of people. The story was billed by the *Sun* as an “exclusive” but splashed in other papers too. It dominated ITN and Sky News for two days. It was a national sensation.

And yet there was not a shred of truth in the story. It was a complete fabrication. It caused needless alarm amongst millions of TV viewers and newspaper readers. It stirred up anti-Islamic prejudice. It ruined the lives of several of the suspects. They lost their homes, their jobs and their friends as a result. They have never received a personal apology, either from the police or from the press. Unlike in the Ricin case, the British Government cannot be blamed. The police and, to an extent the media, are responsible for the invention.

The background

On the morning of Monday 19 April 2004, over 400 officers from four police forces, many of them armed, raided half a dozen houses, flats and businesses in and around Manchester. They arrested eight men, one woman and a 16 year old boy. They were held for several days and intensively interrogated. According to Gill Crossley, a lawyer who represented one of the suspects, “I was never told why it was that my client had been arrested, or any of the particulars relating to the offence that was under investigation.” She recalls that “the questioning went on over days

OLD TRAFFORD

and days, but with no real substance to any of the questions.” In due course the suspects were released. No charges were ever laid.

The media coverage

The newspapers, by contrast, had no doubt about what the story was. The front page of the *Sun* proclaimed: “MAN U SUICIDE BOMB PLOT”. On pages four and five the paper claimed: “EXCLUSIVE: MAN UTD SUICIDE BLASTS FOILED”.

Once the story had started to run, it was further fuelled by the Manchester police. Rather than issue a cool denial, they played it up by holding a press conference. The accompanying press release read: “We are confident that the steps that we have taken to date have significantly reduced any potential threat in the Greater Manchester area.” With the weekend fixtures looming, it went on: “Greater Manchester Police and Manchester United Football Club have put in place extra security measures to reassure the public about the safety of both matches.”

How the story was fabricated

The police and security services have, very properly, refused to discuss what intelligence led to the raids of 19 April being made. But the police interrogations of the suspects shed a ray of light.

One of the suspects, a Kurd, suffered so badly from having his name linked to a terrorist plot that he wants to remain anonymous. He told me how Old Trafford had cropped up in his interrogation:

I was in the police station, and the interview stopped, like a rest, and somebody they bring in the coffee, and they ask me what you like? I say I like the football. Oh, who do you support? They ask me just like a friendly, who do you support? I say Manchester United. Oh, how long you support Manchester United? I said a long time I support Manchester United, when I was tiny, I was small, you know and all my family supported Manchester United... they asked me, have you been football ground? I said, of course I've been to the football ground. Two years ago, long time ago, I can't remember.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

These questions were surely prompted by the discovery at the anonymous suspect's flat of Manchester United paraphernalia: a poster of Old Trafford, and ticket stubs the suspect had kept as souvenirs of his only visit to the ground, when he had gone with a friend to watch United play Arsenal the year before.

The two friends had bought their tickets from touts, which meant that they sat at different parts of the ground. The *Sun* reported that the bombers planned to sit at different parts of the ground, in order to cause maximum damage with their bombs. This claim can only have been based on the fact that the old ticket stubs found by the police were for seats in different parts of the stadium. This information had not been made public, so the *Sun* could only have obtained it from the police.

The Kurds I spoke to had come to Britain in order to escape the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime. Perhaps their most meaningful emotional connection with Britain was a love for Manchester United, which was why they kept the souvenirs in their flat. The Manchester police discovered nothing else suspicious. Indeed they found plenty of evidence that they could not possibly have been Islamic extremists, ranging from a fridge full of beer to a picture of a girlfriend to a collection of video cassettes. Nevertheless the police probably viewed the Manchester United souvenirs as potential evidence of a bomb plot.

This evidence was then prematurely leaked, through unofficial police sources, to the press. The Manchester police then encouraged the story to run by issuing public statements that, while falling a long way short of giving outright confirmation, could be read as corroborating the story. Disgracefully, the Greater Manchester police refused to launch an investigation into the numerous leaks. The reporting of this incident was inflammatory and misleading.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE consequences of these failures to discuss responsibly the threat of domestic terror?

The 12 Point Plan

The Prime Minister claimed on 5 August 2005 that his 12 Point Plan would “set a comprehensive framework for action in dealing with the terrorist threat in Britain.” That claim was exaggerated and, in large part, false.

Some of the measures, such as the Prime Minister’s announcement that anyone with links to terrorism would be barred from claiming asylum, were not new. The Prime Minister failed to point out in his televised statement that terrorists are already ineligible for asylum under the terms of Geneva Convention.

There appears to have been no progress in the Prime Minister’s pledge to draw up a list of “extremist” websites, bookshops and so forth, and deport anybody who “actively engages” with them.

The Prime Minister pledged to set a maximum time limit on extradition cases involving terrorism. This pledge also appears to have been dropped. There has been no indication that it is being taken forward, and it is hard to see how the proposal might work in practice. Similarly, the proposal to close places of worship used for “fomenting extremism” has been abandoned, though here the Prime Minister can claim to have kept his word because he did no more than pledge to “consult” on the measure. He also promised to extend the use of control orders. Progress on this is unclear.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

The creation of a new offence of “glorifying” terrorism has not been dropped, but it is in jeopardy. It is one of the most controversial parts of the Terrorism Bill, with important legal voices warning that it would be impossible to enforce. There is a possibility that the Government will be defeated on the measure.

The Government already has been defeated on the proposal to extend the period that suspected terrorists could be imprisoned for without charge from 14 to 90 days. To be fair to the Prime Minister he did not mention a specific time limit on 5 August, merely promising that the detention without trial period would be “significantly extended.” Technically he can claim to have met this objective (as the period was eventually extended to 28 days), but the defeat over 90 days was of course a humiliation and a severe defeat for Government policy.

Some of the objectives in the 12 Point Plan are being carried out. Progress is indeed being made towards consultation on an extension of powers to strip individuals of British citizenship; point eight pledged an increase in the number of special judges hearing terrorism cases; the Bill does indeed widen the criteria for the proscription of terrorist organisations; work is afoot to review the competence in English needed to acquire British citizenship; the FCO has developed a database of those whose activities or views present a threat to the UK with a view to the exclusion of anybody who appears on that database.³²

The Home Office produced their own progress report on the 12 Point Plan on 15 December.³³ This report places a good gloss on the record. But the overall failure is striking. The headline announcement from the Prime Minister was his promise to deal with the “preachers of hate” against whom tabloid newspapers campaigned hard in the wake of the London bombs. The Prime

³² The 12 Point Plan, and its progress, can be found in Appendix One.

³³ See www.press.homeoffice.gov.uk/Speeches/15-12-05-st-ct-progress-report?view=Standard

CONCLUSION

Minister, almost certainly in response to this pressure, promised that the “rules were changing” so that these preachers could be expelled.

Eight months have passed and none has been thrown out of Britain. By comparison, Germany has expelled some 20 imams, Italy and France around four. Just one prominent preacher has been banned from this country. Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, leader of the al-Muhajiroun group, travelled to Beirut of his own free will and has since been prevented from returning.

The failure of the Prime Minister to deport foreign nationals is not surprising. The “measure” to deport foreign nationals which Tony Blair announced on 5 August was actually far from new. Though spun as new by the Prime Minister, it was in fact 34 years old. The Immigration Act 1971 gave the Home Secretary powers to deport individuals from Britain on the grounds that their presence was “not conducive to the public good.”

The Prime Minister created the illusion of fresh action by saying that the Home Secretary was being given “new grounds for deportation and exclusion” which included “fostering hatred, advocating violence to further a person’s beliefs, or justifying or validating such violence.” Indeed, the accompanying press statement from the Home Office boasted that:³⁴

The Government’s ongoing work to tackle terrorism and extremism took another step forward today as the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, published a list of certain type of behaviours that will form the basis for excluding and deporting individuals from the UK.

This announcement, one can guess, was made primarily to appeal to tabloid newspapers which had been campaigning against the continued presence in Britain of a small number of outspoken Muslim clerics. In common with many New Labour anti-terrorism measures, it concerned perception as much as reality. The

³⁴ Home Office Press Release, 24 August 2005, ‘Tackling Terrorism – Behaviours Unacceptable In The UK’ www.press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Tackling_Terrorism-Behaviours_Un?version=1

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

impression given that the 12 Point Plan would increase the chances of deporting the “preachers of hate” was misleading. Even the “notes to editors” at the bottom of the Home Secretary’s press release relating to the Home Secretary’s list of “unacceptable behaviours” stated: “the list published today does not give the Home Secretary new powers.”

The problem with deporting unwanted foreign nationals from the UK does not lie with the 1971 Immigration Act, which actually gives the Home Secretary wide discretion. The difficulty lies with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which makes it illegal to deport an individual to a country where he may be subject to torture. The Labour Government had put the ECHR into British law in 1998. At the time of the 5 August announcement, the British Government had no way of overcoming this difficulty. The Government has since sought to engineer a solution by negotiating memoranda of understanding, which would give assurances about the treatment of deportees. In the last six months such memoranda have been negotiated with just three countries: Lebanon, Jordan and Libya. However, not one has yet led to a deportation. In addition, the courts have yet to test whether these “assurances” are sufficient to overcome the obstacle of returning people to countries which permit torture.

Scarcely any of the measures announced by the Prime Minister have yet become law. His claim that the 12 Point Plan “set a comprehensive framework for action in dealing with the terrorist threat in Britain” is absurd. It can more accurately be described as a fairly successful short term device for dealing with calls for action from tabloid newspaper editors.

Muslim working groups

In the wake of the London bombings, the Prime Minister made a series of announcements aimed at averting another catastrophe. One of the most visible was the setting up of seven task forces to investigate Muslim extremism, and to recommend initiatives for

CONCLUSION

tackling it. This was a considerable enterprise by any standards, requiring deep learning and insight, and generous resources.

But Tony Blair's task forces into the roots of Muslim extremism were given six weeks to do their business. They seem to have met just three times before reaching their conclusions. One of the Muslim leaders involved, the Liberal Democrat peeress Kishwer Falkner, told us:

When we agreed to be on the Working Groups, and we were told what the deadlines were, we were taken aback. We spoke to one another and queried whether we were just being set up as a tokenistic exercise, because it didn't seem to me, in the middle of August, when half the country's on holiday, that two or three meetings of a couple of hours each would set to right a host of intractable and difficult long-term problems to do with how we coexist, how we integrate with each other.

Falkner feels that the recommendation of her working parties were second guessed by the Prime Minister's 12 Point Plan, announced just two weeks after the working parties were set up. She says she was:

...completely dismayed within days of being set up to discover in the speech the Prime Minister made on 5 August, that he was proceeding full steam ahead with a raft of measures, without waiting for us to come up with our recommendations, or indeed, our analysis of the problems. And the raft of measures was completely counter to reducing alienation and extremism. In fact, if anything, it was going to increase alienation in terms of the Muslim community.

Her criticism was echoed by Haras Rafiq, co-founder of Bridges TV (UK), a Muslim television organisation which will start broadcasting later this year. He told us:

The brief was to find ways or find a solution to the problem of extremism and radicalisation within the Muslim community. Now let's just reflect on that. Find a solution for extremism and radicalisation in the Muslim community in the UK, that's a huge piece of work. It isn't

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

something that can be tackled, you know, in the space of a month, two months. The whole process smacked to me a little bit of presentationalism, and to be seen to be doing something rather than actually producing an effective and constructive piece of work.

It is hard to regard these task forces as a great deal more than some shallow spin from the Government. In the three years before the London bombings, the Government had commissioned two major enquiries into the problems of Muslim segregation and extremism – Ted Cantele’s report in the wake of the Bradford riots and a government report of 2004, *Young Muslims and Extremism* – and largely dismissed both. The idea that Tony Blair’s hurriedly-formed and short-lived Muslim working groups could provide a better analysis than either of these two earlier studies was absurd.

A false analysis of terror

The British Government has persistently failed to tell the truth either to itself or to the British public about the terror threat in Britain. These failures of diagnosis have led to failures of response. An example is the Prime Minister’s denial that there is a connection between the Iraq War and domestic terrorism.

That denial is not merely false. It also inhibits the kind of deep understanding of the motives of Muslim terrorists which the Prime Minister presumably wants. It causes intelligence experts to ignore some obvious lines of inquiry, and to adopt others that are less fruitful. Before the invasion of Iraq British intelligence, under pressure from the Government, falsely identified something that was not present – weapons of mass destruction. There is now a danger that the Government’s refusal to acknowledge the link between terror and Iraq will cause the intelligence services to steer away from something that palpably is present – namely burning Muslim anger about British policy in Iraq and the wider Middle East.

But there is a wider problem: that Government policy appears to be dictated by short-termism and an obsession with newspaper headlines. The Prime Minister’s response to the terror threat has

CONCLUSION

been unfortunate. Again and again he has rushed into poorly drafted legislation which severely curtails the liberty of British subjects, and which in due course turns out to be bad law. The long-term effect is the creation of anger, disillusion, distrust and the further alienation of the Muslim community.

In the end it is unrealistic to expect that the problem of Muslim terrorism in Britain will be dealt with by meretricious legislation. On the contrary, only a profound and subtle response, requiring full engagement with the needs and aspirations of Muslim communities, is required.

There is very little sign of this, as the superficiality of the Muslim Working Parties set up after the London bombings demonstrates. In the meantime, much of the Government response to terror, while claiming to confront the problem, may actually be making things worse in the medium to long term. An example of this is the hurried and panicky proposals for 90 days detention without trial. As the intelligence expert Crispin Black said to us:³⁵

Everything we do in response to terrorism should have two factors in mind. One is hearts and minds and the other is the flow of intelligence. 90 days is a very good example: would that improve our performance in securing or protecting of shoring up the hearts and minds of the small numbers in our Muslim communities that might be affected by this virus of terrorism? Yes or no? It seems to me no. It was an over the top measure. If you sitting, say, in a Muslim part of Yorkshire and you are looking at your telephone thinking those three young men that I saw last night outside the garage, maybe I should phone the police? And you've suddenly been presented with the fact that they can be detained for 90 days, does that make you more or less likely to produce that information to the authorities?

³⁵ For an invaluable analysis of the fundamental flaws in our current approach to calibrating and understanding the terrorist threat, see C Blunt, 7 - 7: *The London Bombings: What Went Wrong?*, Gibson Square Books, 2006.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

Consequences for public trust

The defeat in the House of Commons of the Government's proposals for 90 days detention without trial for terrorist suspects was represented at the time as an indication of Tony Blair's political weakness. This analysis missed the point. That Commons defeat signalled a national crisis in public trust in politicians, the police and the security services.

Consider this: the Prime Minister of the day, fully backed by the police, had thrown his weight behind a measure he described as crucial for national security and the fight against terrorism. And yet it was comfortably rejected by MPs.

This collapse in trust has come about because few people now believe what the Prime Minister, the security services and the police tell us about security matters. Before the Iraq War, the state security services, encouraged by elected politicians, issued assurances about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. These turned out to be false. There is now a comparable dissonance between public statements made by Government ministers and the truth about domestic terror.

This dissonance is a massive problem. Britain today faces a threat from international and domestic terrorism which is far more dangerous and insidious than anything it has confronted before. We need to trust our politicians, our police, and the media. But that trust has been betrayed.

APPENDIX 1

THE 12 POINT PLAN³⁶

1(a) Take steps to deport suspected terrorists to countries which practise torture; amend the Human Rights Act if necessary.

This seems to be happening. Three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) have been signed, with Jordan, Lebanon and Libya; other MoU are pending. And the HRA could still be amended.

However, legal advice from Amnesty and others suggests the courts are likely to reject these documents as guarantees against torture. In addition, the MoU signed so far do not provide cast iron guarantees against torture and execution and it is still unclear how compliance will be monitored.

1(b) Draw up a list of 'extremist' websites, bookshops etc and deport anyone who 'actively engages' with them.

Nothing has been heard about this. There is no indication in the Home Secretary's progress report that this is being taken forward.

2 A new offence of glorifying terrorism.

This has been one of the most controversial parts of the Terrorism Bill and will be subject of a tight vote in the Commons when Bill returns from Lords. There is a significant possibility that the Government will lose.

³⁶ This Appendix has been prepared by Waleed Ghani and is in part based on Charles Clarke's progress report (www.press.homeoffice.gov.uk/Speeches/15-12-05-st-cl-progress-report?view=Standard). I am also grateful to Matthew Grimshaw for his analysis.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

3 *Bar terrorists from claiming asylum.*

This was already law. Terrorists are already ineligible for asylum under the terms of the Geneva Convention. The Government is however seeking to extend this circumstances in which the bar applies in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill (currently in the Lords).

4 *Consult on extending powers to strip individuals of their British citizenship.*

No formal consultation has taken place, although an extension to the Home Secretary's powers to strip individuals of their citizenship has been included in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill.

5 *Consult on setting a maximum time limit on extradition cases involving terrorism.*

Nothing has been heard about this. There is no indication in the Home Secretary's progress report that this is being taken forward.

It is also very hard to see how such a limit could work in practice. If the limit is reached, does the extradition attempt fail? If so, this would provide an incentive for the defence to delay proceedings. Extradition could not legally go ahead without judicial authorisation.

6 *Significant extension to pre-charge detention of terrorist suspects.*

This measure was defeated in the House of Commons with the Government's proposed 90 day extension reduced to 28 days.

7 *Extend the use of control orders.*

This seems to have been dropped. The Prime Minister did not make it clear whether he intended to make changes to the control order system. There was no mention of control orders in the Terrorism Bill. However, further terrorism legislation expected later in the spring; and the number of control orders in force has increased to eight.

8 *Increase the number of special judges hearing terrorism cases.*

THE 12 POINT PLAN

This is happening. The Department for Constitutional Affairs is reviewing the capacity of the courts, specialist tribunals and the judiciary to deal with existing and anticipated caseloads relating to terrorism, with a view to meeting the demands of counter-terrorism. The judiciary has put in hand new procedures for the allocation, handling and case management of such trials. The Court Service is making an additional suitable courtroom available.

9 *Proscribe Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Al Mujahiroun.*

This is happening. The Terrorism Bill widens the criteria for proscription and the list of proscribed organisations will be reviewed on the basis of the new Bill.

10(a) *Review the threshold of competence in English needed to acquire British citizenship.*

This is happening. Measures contained in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill address this point.

10(b) *Set up a Commission on Integration with Muslim groups.*

Muslim Working Groups were set up in the summer of 2005, but not very satisfactorily (see Chapter 6).

11 *Consult on new powers to close places of worship used for fomenting extremism.*

This was dropped by the Home Office in December.

12(a) *FCO to develop a database of individuals whose activities or views present a threat to UK security.*

This has been achieved.

12(b) *Exclude anyone who appears on this database and only allow them to appeal the decision from outside the UK.*

This is happening. Some individuals have been deported; changes to the rules to allow 'non-suspensive' appeals (i.e. post deportation) are contained in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill. Tighter security at ports, biometric tests, etc are also proposed.

APPENDIX 2

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE PRESS STATEMENT OF 6 JANUARY 2003

*Joint statement from MPS Assistant Commissioner David Veness and the
Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Pat Troop*

In the early hours of Sunday, 5 January, 2003, six men and one woman, were arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000 at premises in North and East London by officers from the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Branch.

The six men, aged in their late teens, 20s and 30s, remain in custody and are being interviewed by Anti Terrorist Branch Officers. The woman has been released.

This successful joint operation between the Anti-Terrorist Branch, MPS Special Branch and the Security Service follows receipt of intelligence.

A quantity of material and items of equipment were found at a residential premises in Wood Green, north London, where one of the men was arrested.

This material has been analysed at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratories at Porton Down.

A small amount of the material recovered from the Wood Green premises has tested positive for the presence of Ricin poison.

Ricin is a toxic material which if ingested or inhaled can be fatal.

Our primary concern is the safety of the public and the police have worked closely with the Department of Health throughout.

THE POLICE STATEMENT OF 6 JANUARY 2003

Tests were carried out on the material and it was confirmed this morning that toxic material was present.

The Department is now alerting the health service, including primary care, about these developments.

It is also ensuring that the Health Service is able to provide advice to the public, including through NHS Direct.

If any new developments have implications for public safety we will ensure that the public is informed immediately.

Intensive police investigations are continuing and forensic analysis of the premises in Wood Green will take some time to complete.

We have previously said that London and indeed the rest of the UK, continues to face a range of terrorist threats from a number of different groups.

And while our message is still 'alert not alarm, we would re-iterate our earlier appeals for the public to remain vigilant and aware and report anything suspicious to police.

We are asking people to be vigilant about their surroundings, particularly in public places and if they see anything suspicious to dial 999 immediately.

We are also encouraging the public to call the free confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline 0800 789 321 if they have any information about people or activities that could be linked to terrorism.

The Metropolitan Police is doing everything possible to combat the threat of terrorism but it is only with the help and support of the public that we can reduce the harm which it causes.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Ricin is a protein toxin that is derived from castor oil seeds. It inhibits protein synthesis and has widespread toxic effects on the body. These include damage to most organ systems and a combination of pulmonary, liver, renal and immunological

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

failure may lead to death. No antidote is known: treatment can only be supportive.

2. Clinical features of Ricin:

The early symptoms depend on the route of exposure. Fever, gastrointestinal upset, coughing may be amongst the first effects noted.

Absorption via the lung as a result of exposure to aerosolised toxin leads to particularly serious lung damage including pulmonary oedema and Adult Respiratory Distress Syndrome.

Ingestion of Ricin causes irritation of the gut: gastroenteritis, bloody diarrhoea and vomiting.

Effects on the Central Nervous System have been reported including seizures and CNS depression.

The effects of exposure to Ricin may be delayed for some hours after exposure and patients who develop a fever may consult their own doctors.

3. We placed a full range of guidance on Ricin and other chemical and biological agents on the PHLS website. In September 2002, we drew this to the attention of PCTs. We have kept the specialist poisons service alert to concerns.

APPENDIX 3

CHRONOLOGY³⁷

7 DECEMBER 2000

Terrorism Act 2000 passed.

11 SEPTEMBER 2001

Al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon.

21 DECEMBER 2001

Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 passed in direct response to the World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks.

5 JANUARY 2003

Six men are arrested after a flat is raided in Wood Green, London. Police find recipes for Ricin, and ingredients and equipment for extracting Ricin in the flat.

6 JANUARY 2003

Scotland Yard issue a Press Release in the names of Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Pat Troop and Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner David Veness. This Press Release claims that “a small amount of the material recovered from the Wood Green premises has tested positive for the presence of Ricin poison.”

7 JANUARY 2003

Home Secretary David Blunkett and Health Secretary John Reid issue a joint statement stating that “traces of Ricin” have been found at the Wood Green flat.

³⁷ This Appendix has been prepared by Waleed Ghani.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

On the same day, chemical weapons experts at the government research facility at Porton Down carry out further and more accurate tests into the presence of Ricin. These tests establish that there was no Ricin at the Wood Green flat. This information was, apparently, not passed on to the British Government until late March.

14 JANUARY 2003

Police raid a flat in Crumpsall, Manchester. They find Bourgass and another alleged conspirator. After a violent struggle, Bourgass murders DC Stephen Oake.

5 FEBRUARY 2003

In a speech to the UN Security Council on the need to launch a pre-emptive war against Iraq, US Secretary of State Colin Powell cites the British Ricin case as an example of Iraq's malignant influence throughout the world.

6 FEBRUARY 2003

In a Newsnight interview on BBC2, the Prime Minister supports Colin Powell's claim.

20 MARCH 2003

Iraq War begins.

19 APRIL 2004

In the early morning, eight men, a woman, and a 16-year-old boy are arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000. That night ITV Late News leads on the story that these people were engaged in a plot to blow up Old Trafford football ground. These claims are repeated in the print and broadcast media over the next week. They turn out to be entirely baseless.

29 JUNE 2004

Bourgass is sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of DC Oake.

CHRONOLOGY

13 SEPTEMBER 2004

The 'Ricin' case against Bourgass and four others begins at the Old Bailey.

16 DECEMBER 2004

Law Lords rule that indefinite detention under Part 4 Powers of the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 is illegal.

28 FEBRUARY 2005

On BBC Radio 4's 'Women's Hour' the Prime Minister makes the claim that there are "several hundred" people in the UK who are "engaged in plotting or trying to commit terrorist acts".

11 MARCH 2005

Prevention of Terrorism Act passed in direct response to Lords ruling on Part 4 Powers. Control Orders introduced.

8 APRIL 2005

The jury at the Old Bailey acquits Bourgass' four co-accused in the 'Ricin' case. A few days later the Director of Public Prosecutions decides not to put on trial four more men in connection with the Ricin Plot. Bourgass is acquitted of conspiracy to murder, but he is sentenced for 17 years for "conspiracy to commit a public nuisance by the use of poisons or explosions to cause disruption, fear or injury".

17 APRIL 2005

On the "Breakfast with Frost" programme, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian Blair says that the Ricin case demonstrated the need for new laws.

7 JULY 2005

Terrorist attacks on London transport network. 52 die at Aldgate, King's Cross, Edgware Road, and Tavistock Square.

11 JULY 2005

In the Commons, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats all agree on

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TERROR

the need for cross-party consensus in dealing with the terrorist threat.

18 JULY 2005

The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) publishes a briefing which states that the war in Iraq has boosted Al-Qaeda's capacity for propaganda, recruitment and fundraising.

19 JULY 2005

After a meeting between the Prime Minister and Muslim leaders, Downing Street announces that a Muslim "task force" is to be set up to investigate the causes of extremism. This idea later develops into the seven Muslim Working Groups and the Home Office's *Tackling Extremism Together* report.

3 AUGUST 2005

Headline in the *Sun*: "LET'S HOPE THE BOMBERS ARE ON HOLIDAY TOO".

5 AUGUST 2005

Prime Minister's monthly Downing Street Press Conference. Blair announces "12 Point Plan" for dealing with the terrorist threat.

6 AUGUST 2005

Headline in the *Sun*: "VICTORY FOR SUN OVER NEW TERROR LAWS."

Blair leaves the UK for Barbados, where he will spend 26 days as the guest of Cliff Richard.

15 SEPTEMBER 2005

As the Home Secretary announces the details of the Terrorism Bill, seven men, including five of the men cleared in the 'Ricin case', are arrested under powers allowing deportation for national security reasons.

6 OCTOBER 2005

Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Andy Hayman writes to the Home Secretary to put the case for 90 days detention

CHRONOLOGY

without charge. He includes a report he composed the day before. This report is subsequently released to MPs and journalists.

4 NOVEMBER 2005

The Home Secretary sends out an e-mail to Labour MPs, which includes a link to a questionnaire on terrorism legislation on the Labour Party website. Clarke later apologises for the oversimplistic nature of this questionnaire, which is then removed from the website.

7 NOVEMBER 2005

11am: the Home Secretary meets with opposition representatives and reaffirms his belief in consensus, and possible compromise on 90 days. Immediately after the meeting, the Home Secretary announces this in a televised press statement outside the Home Office.

12.30pm: at the Prime Minister's monthly Downing Street Press Conference, Blair declares his insistence that there is no compromise on 90 days

6pm: at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Blair insists to Labour MPs that they vote for 90 days.

9 NOVEMBER 2005

The amendment to Terrorism Bill to give police powers to detain terrorist suspects for up to 90 days is defeated in the Commons.

7 DECEMBER 2005

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission grants bail to two of the men who were arrested on 15 September. These men had previously been cleared in the Ricin case. The other five men are due to be released subject to certain bail conditions being satisfied.



MR BLAIR'S POODLE GOES TO WAR:

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The Iraq war presented a severe test for Parliament, a test that it did not pass. In particular, while Parliament did establish the *casus belli*, it failed to extract the information to judge whether the Executive had acted prudently and proportionately; Select Committees were thwarted by the Executive; and Parliament failed to explore the broader, important question of whether the Prime Minister's judgement was right in taking Britain to war. Congress fared little better. Like the Commons, it too suffered from partisanship.

The failure of Parliament to scrutinise the war has resulted in colossal damage. In particular, the lack of candour on the part of the Executive has contributed to a loss of public confidence in our political leaders – and that in turn has eroded trust in political institutions. Worst of all, Tyrie concludes, the erosion of public confidence in the decisions about Iraq weakens national security.

*"His pamphlet should be read by all MPs and students of politics" – Peter Riddell in *The Times**

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