

Mr C. A. Clarkson,

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/Fax: xxxxxxxxxxxx

e.mail: sasha@livemind.co.uk

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Dear Nick,

I have always liked you, and it pains me to write this; but I am not going to vote for you at the next election while Tony Blair is still leader of the Labour Party. If on the other hand, he is replaced by Gordon Brown, I will not only vote but campaign for you.

The reason for this is that the Iraq War has highlighted Blair's deficiencies of character and judgement. Blair may be intelligent, but it has been a feature of his premiership that when confronted with an inconvenient fact, he pretends it isn't there. Disraeli said of Gladstone "His conscience is not so much his guide as his accomplice." in Blair's case, this observation applies to both his conscience and to his reason.

It was always clear to me that Bush's invasion of Iraq was motivated by greed, revenge and a supremacist ideology. It was justified by lies about WMD and non-existent links between Saddam and Al Qaeda. The problem of the current US administration is that it is full of intelligent people, like Rumsfeld and Bremer, who prostitute their reason to their desires. Because Blair thought that it was in Britain's interest to be America's best friend, he also fell into this trap and persuaded himself of the rightness of the case for war.

None of this might have mattered, had the 'coalition' brought peace and stability to Iraq, but in this they have manifestly failed. Anyone who understands the complex history of Mesopotamia might have warned them; and indeed it seems that the British Foreign Office did so, but were ignored! If politicians are immoral while succeeding in their stated aims, few may care in the long run; but to be immoral and incompetent is totally unforgivable.

This failure of policy is what Blair should be apologising for! Hundreds of coalition troops and thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians have paid the price since 'victory' was declared last year; and, for most in Iraq, life is worse than it was under Saddam, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Even worse, Al Qaeda and similar organisations now certainly are active in Iraq and attracting recruits and sympathy throughout the Muslim world. We are all less secure because of this disastrous invasion!

I am not anti-American. Western Europe owes a debt to the USA for helping us defeat Nazism and maintain our liberty during the cold war. However, it is neither in the wider interests of humanity, nor in the true interests of the Americans, that we support them when they get things so badly wrong. In particular, we should not have made so wholehearted a commitment to such a controversial and repellant regime as that of George W Bush! If, God forbid, Bush is reelected in November, it will partly be due to Blair's support of his position, and also due to those Labour MPs who blindly backed Blair. I should not like that on my conscience!

Are any of the real successes that this government has had actually due to Blair? I can't think of a single one. The party would be destroyed at the polls if there were a credible alternative. The government's best asset is Gordon Brown's stewardship of the economy.

Most of the parliamentary party seem to have been paralysed by a climate of fear akin to that extant in the early eighties. Why are so few prepared to think for themselves or to speak out for what they truly believe? Rather than holding the executive to account, Parliament has now become largely its tool. My Russian forbears suffered at the hands of both the NKVD and the SS, but my British ancestors fought and endured hardship for the freedoms we now enjoy. Surely, in our free society, the political cowardice now displayed by so many MPs is reprehensible and inexcusable?

The Labour party's last hope of redeeming itself is to show the kind of intelligent disloyalty which used to be the Tories' secret weapon when they were a mainstream political party. Your leader has become a serious liability to this country - please please please get rid of him!

Sincere regards,