

The bombs belong to Blair and Bush

No one doubts the atrocious inhumanity of those who planted the bombs that killed and caused mayhem in London yesterday. No one should also doubt that this outrage has been coming since the day Tony Blair joined George Bush in their bloody invasion and occupation of Iraq.

They are “Blair’s bombs,” and he ought not be allowed to evade culpability with yet another unctuous speech about other people’s violence.

He was warned. Indeed, the only reliable warning from British intelligence in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq was that which predicted a sharp increase in terrorism “with Britain and Britons a target.” Had Blair heeded that warning--instead of conspiring to deceive the nation that Iraq offered a threat--the Londoners who died yesterday might be alive today, along with tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis.

Three weeks ago, a classified CIA report revealed that the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq had turned that country into a focal point of terrorism. None of the intelligence agencies regarded Iraq as such a flashpoint before the invasion. On the contrary, in 2003, the CIA reported that Iraq “exported no terrorist threat to his neighbors,” and that Saddam Hussein was “implacably hostile to Al-Qaeda.”

Blair’s and Bush’s invasion changed all that. In invading a stricken and defenseless country at the heart of the Islamic and Arab world, Blair’s adventure became self-fulfilling, and his epic irresponsibility has brought the daily horrors of Iraq home to Britain.

For more than a year, he has urged the British to “move on” from Iraq, and this week, it seemed that his spin doctors and good fortune had joined hands. The awarding of the 2012 Olympics to London created the fleeting illusion that all was well, regardless of messy events in a faraway country.

Above all, the G8 meeting in Scotland and its accompanying “Make Poverty

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History" campaign and circus of celebrities served as a cover for what is arguably the greatest political scandal of modern times: an illegal, rapacious invasion conceived in lies.

Over the past two weeks, the contrast between the coverage of the G8, its marches and pop concerts, and another "global" event has been salutary. The World Tribunal on Iraq in Istanbul has had virtually no coverage, yet the evidence it has produced, the most searing to date, has been the silent specter at the Geldoff extravaganzas.

The tribunal is a serious international public inquiry into the invasion and occupation, the kind governments dare not hold. Its expert, eyewitness testimonies, said the author Arundathi Roy, a tribunal jury member, "demonstrate that even those of us who have tried to follow the war closely are not aware of a fraction of the horrors that have been unleashed in Iraq."

The most shocking was given by Dahr Jamail--for me, the finest reporter working in Iraq. He shames the flak-jacketed, cliché-crunching camp followers known as "embeds."

He described how the hospitals of besieged Falluja had been subjected to an American tactic of collective punishment--with U.S. Marines assaulting staff and stopping the wounded entering, and American snipers firing at the doors and windows, and medicines and emergency blood prevented from reaching them. Children and the elderly were shot dead in front of their families, in cold blood.

We have heard little of this. Imagine for a moment the London hospitals that received the victims of yesterday's bombing under such an attack. Unimaginable? But it happens, in our name.

The two men responsible for this, George Bush and Tony Blair, arrived smiling at the G8 meeting at Gleneagles. No one in the British "mainstream" has made the obvious connection of what they have done in Iraq. No one has stood up and said that Blair's smoke-and-mirrors "debt cancellation" at best amounts to less than the money the government spent in a week brutalizing Iraq, where British and American violence is the cause of the doubling of child poverty and malnutrition since Saddam Hussein was overthrown.

The unstated theme of the G8 week has been silencing and pacifying and co-opting dissent and truth. The mawkish images on giant screens behind the pop stars in Hyde Park beckoned a willful, self-satisfied ignorance. There were no images of murdered Iraqi doctors with the blood streaming from their heads, cut down by Bush's snipers. They and the suffering inflicted on their country have been airbrushed.

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On the front page of the Guardian, the Age of Irony celebrated as real life became more satirical than satire could ever be. There was Bob Geldoff resting his smiling face on smiling Blair's shoulder--the war criminal and his knighted jester.

Elsewhere, there was a heroically silhouetted Bono, who celebrates men like Jeffrey Sachs as saviors of the world's poor while lauding "compassionate" George Bush's "war on terror" as one of his generation's greatest achievements; and there was Gordon Brown, the enforcer of unfair rules of trade, saying incredibly that "unfair rules of trade shackle poor people"; and Paul Wolfowitz, beaming: This is the man who, before he was handed control of the World Bank, devised much of Bush's so-called neo-conservative putsch, the bloodfest in Iraq and the notion of "endless war."

And if you missed all that, there is a downloadable pdf kit from "one Campaign" e-mail to "help you organize your very own ongoing Live8 party." The suppression of African singers and bands, parked where Geldoff decreed in an environmental theme park in Cornwall, far from the vaunted global audience, was described correctly by Andy Kershaw as "musical apartheid."

For the politicians and pop stars and church leaders and polite people who believed Blair and Brown when they declared their "great moral crusade" against poverty, Iraq was an embarrassment. The killing of more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians by mostly American gunfire--reported in a peer-reviewed study in *The Lancet*--was deleted from mainstream debate.

Has there ever been a censorship as complete and insidious and ingenious as this? In our free societies, the unmentionable is that "the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people," wrote the playwright Arthur Miller, "and so the evidence has to be internally denied." Not only denied, but distracted by an entire court of jesters.

Deploying the unction of Geldoff, Bono, Madonna, Paul McCartney and company, the invaders and plunderers of Iraq and the pawnbrokers of Africa, headquartered in London and Washington, have pulled off an unprecedented scam: the antithesis of February 15, 2003, when 2 million people brought both their hearts and brains and anger to the streets of London.

The people killed and maimed in Iraq and the people willfully impoverished in Africa by our governments and our institutions in our name, deserve the return of that anger--before Blair and his court can exploit the atrocity and tragedy that has now befallen London, and which need never have happened.