

Busy fondling their own self-esteem

The great Chilean balladeer Victor Jara, who was tortured to death by the regime of General Pinochet 33 years ago, wrote a song that mocks those who see themselves as rational and liberal, yet so often retreat into the arms of authority, no matter its dishonesty and brutality to others. He sang:

*Come on over here
where the sun is nice and warm.
Yes, you, who have the habit
of jumping from one side to the other...
[Over there] you're nothing at all,
Neither fish nor fowl,
You're too busy fondling...
Your own self-esteem.*

The past few weeks have seen a fiesta of these rational, liberal people who dominate British mainstream politics. For them, the most basic forms of morality and shame, the kind you learn as a child, have no place in public life. On 27 September, the Guardian published a front-page photograph of Tony Blair, a prima facie war criminal, his arms outstretched, his grin fixed. Beside this was a headline, "Charm and eloquence. But a missed chance". Beneath this, Polly Toynbee wrote: "There were some damp eyes dabbed with hankies and men blowing noses. 'Don't go,' someone said."

Consider such vomit against the facts of Blair's actual crime – the unprovoked invasion of a defenceless country, justified by lies now voluminously documented, and causing the violent deaths of tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children. The word "crime" is verboten among those about whom Victor Jara

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sang. To spell out the truth would illuminate the collusion of an entire political class.

Instead, the shameless neither-fish-nor-fowl tribunes speak and write incessantly of a “mistake”, a “blunder”, even a Shakespearean tragedy (for the war criminal, not his victims). From their studios and editorial offices, they declare the mendacious and dishonest banalities of their unclad emperor “brilliant”. Al-Qaeda, said Blair in his speech to the Labour party conference, “killed 3,000 people including over 60 British on the streets of New York before war in Afghanistan or Iraq was even thought of”. The breath is swept away by this one statement. Half a million infants lie dead, according to Unicef, as a result of the Anglo-American siege of Iraq during the 1990s. For Blair and his rational, liberal, neither-fish-nor-fowl court, these children never lived and never died. Clearly, the Emperor Tony was a leader for his time and, above all, clubbable, whatever the “mistakes” he had made in Iraq.

A parallel world of truth and lies, morality and immorality dominates how the crime in Iraq is presented to us. In recent months, the invaders have vanished. The US, having murdered and cluster-bombed and napalmed and phosphorus-bombed, is now a wise referee between, even a protector of, “warring tribes”. The buzzword is “sectarianism”, blurring the truth that most of the attacks by the resistance are against the foreign military occupiers: on average, one every 15 minutes. That the majority of Iraqis, Sunni and Shia, are united in their demand that US and British forces get out of their country now is of no interest. Has journalism ever been so voluntarily appropriated by black propaganda?

The confidence in the Blair regime that this propaganda will see them right (if not re-elected) is expressed in striking ways. The former Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, the epitome of neither-fish-nor-fowl, who supported a piratical attack on a Muslim country, now aims his liberal, rational remarks at the most vulnerable community in Britain, fully aware that the racist subtext of his words will be understood in “Middle England” and hopefully further what is left of his contemptible career. It was Straw who let Pinochet escape justice for fraudulent reasons of ill-health. Victor Jara’s song is an ode to Straw, and to the authoritarian, twice “retired” David Blunkett, now elevated by the Guardian as “one of the most brilliant, natural politicians”, on a mission to ensure that a higher form of corruption, mass murder, does not blight “Tony’s legacy”.

The Tory leader, David Cameron, the former public relations man for the asset-stripper Michael Green, will follow this legacy, should he become prime minister. Standing on the Bournemouth seafront with his family, including three young

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children, he emphasised his support for the crime against the Iraqi people, whose children, says Unicef, are now dying faster under Blair and Bush than under Saddam Hussein.