suggested that Mr. Blair should pay the market rent if he is going to stay there since he will otherwise "effectively be living in a huge country estate at the tax payer's expense."

Nor are the Blairs' new neighbours in London excited at the prospect of their arrival in Connaught Square. What has alarmed the residents of the area is the extent of the precautions being undertaken to ensure that the former PM and his family are protected from anyone who may wish to take revenge for the war in Iraq or any other grievance. According to the neighbours, if the Blair family are really so much at risk, they should consider the fact that it may not be wise to live in such a crowded part of central London. On the other hand, if it *is* safe for them to live there, they should not require anything approaching the current levels of security being proposed.

There is little doubt that Mr. Blair has aroused a great deal of negative passion during his time as Prime Minister, and not only among the lunatic fringe. As one letter to the newspapers pointed out, "Under Blair's leadership, Britain has colluded in the invasion, occupation and utter devastation of Iraq, blocked UN action to end Israel's invasion and bombardment of Lebanon, conspired with the EU, US and Israel to impose a crippling economic blockade on the Palestinian people, and refused to implement the earlier wishes of the European Parliament to suspend Israel's preferred trading status with the EU. And now this warmongering, hypocritical, war criminal's apprentice is to be appointed a peace envoy to the Middle East of all places". That says it all...!



Gordon Brown

A recent survey by the Independent newspaper in the UK has channelled some of the animosity generated by Mr. Blair into an amusing exercise based on asking different commentators what they would give the departing Prime Minister as a farewell gift. Among the suggestions that this generated were the following:

"I would give him a sackcloth and ashes. If he is going to become a Catholic, he has to learn repentance." (Joan Bakewell, Columnist)

"I would give him a chemistry set. Tony Blair can then build the weapons of mass destruction he has always wanted. He took us war on the basis of these weapons, which did not exist. He also may be in need of a bullet-proof vest, in case he meets any of his new Arab neighbours when he moves house". (Andrew Gilligan, Journalist)

"I would buy Tony Blair a green card so that he can move to the US for the rest of his life. It would suit him, and have clear advantages for me". (Andreas Whittam Smith, Journalist)

"It will be an enormous culture shock to go from Prime Minister to private citizen. A phrase book might help with the Blairish translation included:

The right to a fair trial = 19th century nonsense

The right not to be banged up without trial = 13th century nonsense

Universal human rights = 20th century nonsense

Policy = Press release

Legislation = Many press releases stitched together

Guantanamo = Anomaly

Kidnap and torture = Extraordinary rendition"

(Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, a human rights/civil liberties organisation)

"I would give the Prime Minister five plastic water guns to play with, to mark each of the five wars that he has been involved in." (John Kampfner, Journalist)

But frankly, my personal favourite remains the suggestion by Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a former foreign secretary, who said "I would make him the British Ambassador to Baghdad. The Iraqis would be very grateful and so would the British. And he could hardly complain!" If only...

There has been a great deal of speculation that one of the reasons behind Tony Blair's determination to take on the role of Middle East envoy is related to his desire to leave behind an enduring legacy. Given that many feel his legacy is in fact defined by the growing mistrust towards politicians created by actions such as his decision to take Britain to war in Iraq, and widespread disgust over the financial scandals ranging from the Blair family's weakness for freebies to lingering suspicions over the "cash for honours" affair, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that the ex-Prime Minister would indeed be looking to leave behind a more dignified legacy. But the hubris involved in the idea that *he* could take the lead in solving the intractable problems in the Middle East (which he has directly contributed to *worsening*!) is quite mind-boggling.

Indeed, to give the last word to Robert Fisk, one may recall "another man with Blair's pomposity, a certain Kurt Waldheim, who actually believed he could be an "envoy" for peace in the Middle East despite his little wartime career as an intelligence officer for [the German army during the Second World War]"! If only one could believe that Blair the war-monger will someday be discredited as he so richly deserves to be, and as thoroughly as Waldheim ultimately was...