OCTOBER 2003

Great Britain : Tony Blair's Challenges

INTRODUCTION

This month, I'd like to focus on the major directions domestic debates are taking in the United States and Great Britain.

In the wake[1] of the war in Iraq, of the difficult reconstruction of the country, of the controversy around the absence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), what are the respective positions of Bush and Blair in their countries? Both leaders experience criticism at home.

Current debates also tend to shift again towards **domestic issues**: now that the military operations are over in Iraq, the American president and the British Prime Minister have to address domestic issues that are back on top of the agenda: **the economy** in the United States, and **the reform of public services** in the UK.

I'd like to insist: the only way for you to improve your style, to reach an idiomatic level on English is to read articles IN ENGLISH. You cannot rely only on the current events briefings or summaries your teacher may be providing. You must read IN THE TEXT.
Read carefully these articles, the explanations are here to help, and pick up the vocabulary and expressions. Not only the content is important: the form as well.

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Eléments en gras = informations importantes
Eléments en italique = mots de liaison, mots-outils à réutiliser dans vos essais
Eléments soulignés = vocabulaire lié au sujet d'actualité

Notes en vert = notes de langue
Notes en rouge = notes de civilisation

Texte en noir vient des articles de presse
Texte en bleu = mes commentaires

[1] In the wake of : dans le sillage de = suite à

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1. Great Britain : Tony Blair's Challenges

BEFORE YOU READ

The two texts were written at the beginning of October2 in the wake of **the annual Labour Party Conference**. The Conference is held every October in Bournemouth, on the South Coast of England.

This year, Tony Blair went to the conference with two major *hurdles*[3] :

The aftermath[4] of the war in Iraq
Did Tony Blair lie to the British about the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) ? Was the report about these weapons « sexed-up » *so as to* substantiate the case for war ? What about the suicide of Dr Kelly ?

The domestic agenda
The British public services –schools, hospitals, public transport- are in a state of major crisis. Is Tony Blair going to successfully address this issue now that the war in iraq isn't so much *focussed* on ?
Is Tony Blair going to be able to govern at all, considering the strife[5] between him and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown ?

These are questions which answers will come up throughout the year. You must look out for them.

Jan 2005 Update
All these issues are still relevant in the light of the upcoming general election in Britain. If the ballot is anticipated this srping, Blair will be campaigning throughout the winter. You must be able to draw an accurate account of his achievements and of the criticism levelled at him.
His rivalry with Gordon Brown in particular is on top of the agenda in the Labour Party.

[2] IN October. Attention à la préposition IN (ON Monday etc. pour un jour de la semaine) et à la MAJUSCULE obligatoire.
N'oubliez pas la majuscule à American.

[3] A hurdle : un obstacle

[4] the aftermath (sing) = les suites de, les conséquences de

[5] the strife (sing) = les conflits

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TEXT Bruised, but bouncing back[6]

Oct 2nd 2003, *The Economist*

Tony Blair's not on his way out, but it's not clear where he's going

Mr Blair is under fire but resisting.

THERE'S something rather thrilling about watching Tony Blair on form. There he is, facing **his party's annual conference**, bloodied by the failure to find any Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the corrosive effect of the Hutton Inquiry and the war's messy aftermath[7]; with Labour traditionalists who oppose his market-oriented policies out to pull his domestic agenda apart; with the press announcing his imminent replacement by his ambitious chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown. And yet his brilliant showman's sense catches the audience's mood with a speech that is bruised, touched with humility, but above all defiant. He is unrepentant about Iraq and apparently determined not to give an inch of ground on his domestic agenda to his critics. "I have no reverse gear," he said. [...]
Still, displays of bravado do not answer the fundamental question. **Is Mr Blair now so damaged that he is no longer an asset to his party, but a liability[8]?** [...] Some people think that this loss of moral stature will, and should, bring Mr Blair's political career to an end.

The Economist defends Mr Blair

[...]For all the passionate opposition to the war among some Labour Party activists, even those who think that he made a terrible mistake appear ready to concede that ***at least*** **he thought he was doing the right thing**, and that he thought he had good grounds for that belief. Mr Blair's explanation in his speech to the conference of his decision to go to war was listened to with respect, understanding and even some applause. His reception overall, culminating in **a seven-minute standing ovation** at the end of a speech in which he had not ducked[9] any of the difficult issues, was a deliberate message to the outside world. **The Labour Party still wants Mr Blair to be its leader and will not allow him to be destroyed over Iraq**. His achievement is to have made Labour feel for the first time in its 103-year history that it can be "the natural party of government" and it is sufficiently grateful for that not to desert him in his hour of need.

The challenges Blair will have to meet

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[6] Bruised : meurtri / a bruise : un bleu
to bounce back : rebondir au sens propre comme figuré
Mot à mot : il est « blessé, meurtri » mais il « rebondit ». Conseil de traduction : évitez les calques i.e. reproduire les mêmes mots plutôt que le sens. Ici on traduirait plutôt par : « Blessé mais pas abattu » (par exemple).

[7] The aftermath [usage singulier] : les suites de, les conséquences de

[8] A liability : un handicap

[9] to duck : baisser la tête / éviter

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