

[Transcript] The News Agents / Will Corbyn get his revenge?

Jeremy Corbyn is known for very many things. Parliamentarian, protester, campaigner, star of the pyramid stage, former leader of the Labour Party, and also, possibly, one of the grumpiest old men ever.

Can we just very quickly ask you if you're thinking of standing as an independent, Mr Corbyn? Thank you very much. I'm going to the demonstration against the immigration bill and I suggest you report that too. We are reporting it. It will take 10 seconds. Can I just ask you for... I just want to talk to you for 10 seconds about your future as a Labour MP. Thank you very much. We're not offering any comment this time, sorry. Thank you very much. Why don't you want to talk about it? It's been in the news today, you've put out a statement. Thank you very much. Lots of people really want to hear about your future as a Labour MP. Nothing's hoping who you are or where you're from. We're from Sky News. I told you as I was walking up to you. No, you didn't tell me that. I did. But maybe he's got something to be grumpy about because today the Labour Party National Executive Committee at NEC, its ruling body, has decreed that the man who has stood in his seat for Labour since 1983 who led them into not just the last but the last two general elections will not be allowed to stand again for the party. We have never seen anything quite like it before. And the big question is, is he going to accept the verdict or might he run as an independent? Welcome to the News Agents. The News Agents. It's Lewis. It's John back in News Agents HQ. The good news everybody as you can tell is that the vigil works, the prayers work. The petition which all 16 of you signed to get John back into the studio today has been successful and the midnight mass that Pope Francis did conduct last night has worked and he's back in. He's battled his way through to be back in the studio with us. Obviously, if Lewis is infected tomorrow he'll be less happy to see me than he is right now. Look, later in the show, fascinating interview coming up with none other than the former head of our intelligence services, the SIS, MI6. So Richard Dearlove was head of MI6 in those fateful days leading up to the invasion of Iraq, but he spent a life in the shadows and he's going to be talking to us about Spycraft. But first, should talk about Jeremy Corbyn. I know. We never go long without talking about him considering he is now a former leader of the party. But it is an amazing story today. The journey that the party's been on and Corbyn has been on to go from, as I was saying at the start, twice leader to expelled from the parliamentary Labour Party and then prohibited from being able to stand. As I was saying, I don't think I cannot think of any parallel in modern British political history.

No. I mean, you could go back to the most vilified Labour leader before Jeremy Corbyn as being Ramsay MacDonald. But that was because of the formation of our national government 100 years ago.

And he sort of left his own accord in his own way.

Exactly. But Jeremy Corbyn, until 2019, Labour Party leader with Keir Starmer serving in the shadow cabinet, getting a lot of support from all sorts of people who are now saying he has to be cast into outer darkness. Now, the reasons for it may be sound, but it's a pretty big turnaround to sell to the British public that you've suddenly gone through a 180 as they'd say in America.

Well, Keir Starmer, of course, in the Labour leadership contest described Jeremy Corbyn as a colleague and a friend. And it is a rapid transformation in not such a lengthy period of time to now be the man who is expelling this former colleague and friend and the person

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of course, in his shadow cabinet, he served for a long time, which should just remind people the reasons for this.

The reasons for this are because in the aftermath of the EHRC report into antisemitism and the Labour Party, to cut a long story short, effectively Jeremy Corbyn, Keir Starmer says, continue to undermine the extent of antisemitism in the Labour Party, even in the wake of that report, which had slammed the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership for allowing this culture to develop. And Jeremy Corbyn, when it was published, said that he still thought that the extent had been exaggerated. Now, Keir Starmer responded to that by suspending him from the parliamentary Labour Party, he was no longer a Labour MP. And ever since then, there has been a question mark as to whether he would be allowed to stand for Islington North, a seat that as I say is represented since 1983, he's one of the longest serving MPs in Parliament, whether he would be allowed to stand at the next election. And today, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party have cleared that up and said that he won't be.

Which is the phenomenal position that he finds himself in. But I think we just need to spend a little more time on the kind of investigation into him and the whole accusation of antisemitism. Because there are some fights that political leaders dread having to fight. And there are some that they quite relish. And you get the impression that Starmer, having come to the view that part of the reason for Labour's loss in 2019, and such a sizeable loss, was the presence of Jeremy Corbyn as leader, that you quite fancy having the fight with him. Just as Neil Kinnock fancied the fight with Derek Hatton and the militant tendency, this was your way of proving that you have changed the party. But getting rid of Derek Hatton, who was a Merseyside Labour Party member, union leader, it's not the same as getting rid of the former leader of the party.

No. I think you're totally right, John. Team Starmer's view of this is that they can convince the public, as you say, that the party has changed by using Corbyn and the left, to at every conceivable opportunity, beat them with the biggest stick that they can. Corbyn is the most visible manifestation of this. But at every level of the party, I mean, it's easy to forget now the extent to which Starmer ran. I mean, I was in the room when he launched his campaign in Manchester back in 2020, and his whole appeal then was as a sort of bridging candidate, a more centrist candidate of the party, within the Labour Party. So his line would be, let's not trash the last Labour government and let's not trash the last four years under Corbyn. Well, my word, we have moved so far from that in that time. The Labour Left knew this was coming. I mean, I remember speaking to someone from the Labour Left during that leadership campaign and saying to them, well, would Starmer be such like a bad outcome for you? You know, he signed up to all of these pledges, these Corbyn pledges, and they were like, no, no, no, you don't understand, we'll be out. We'll be out straightaway. They knew that this purge was coming. And if you look across the sort of hierarchy of the Labour Party, the different bits of the Labour Party, it has been purge by purge by purge, whether it's on the National Executive Committee itself, which used to be controlled by the Left, look at parliamentary selections which have gone on. In the hundred most winnable seats of the Labour Party, only two have been from the Left. The Starmer leadership has exercised an iron grip on parliamentary selections. So this, in a way, the Corbyn stuff is the most visible manifestation of this. But there is no doubt that the Starmer leadership has

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been in a way that is completely different. We've talked about before, John, to say how the Biden approach has been, which has been to embrace not only the sort of much of the ideology of the Left, but many of the key figures. We had Bernie Sanders in this studio talking about exactly that. The Starmer approach has been to purge. And that is one of the reasons why it has generated such anger from so many parts of the Left. And there's slight danger with it. You just talked about Derek Hatton. I suppose the danger for it is, is that there is a narrative around Starmer that he's duplicitous. And it was easier for Kinnock to expel people like Hatton and so on, because Kinnock hadn't served with these people. Starmer did serve under Corbyn for such a long time and described him in very glowing terms, as we said. I'm going to push back on the idea of people complaining about him being duplicitous. They may be complaining in private about that. But how many people are going to go public when Labour are 15, 20 points ahead of the Conservative Party, which they are at the moment? Because all the time, there is that faintest whiff in the air of that elusive thing called victory, then you don't want to rock the boat. You don't want to be the one who goes, this is not good enough, and you're behaving in a high-handed, undemocratic way. And the Labour Party is very ill-disciplined for long periods of time. But once it's been out of power for a very long period of time, like it has now, like it was in the lead-up to the 1997 election, you suddenly decide that you're going to go along with any policy that the leader comes up with, if you think it will get your bum on a ministerial seat in a backseat of a limo. Totally. And there's also another element to that as well, which is that although it is true to say that the left has been marginalised under the Stammer leadership, Stammer's team knows something else, and the left knows something else. I think one of the reasons why so many of those Labour-left MPs are just keeping their council and keeping quiet. I think it's two reasons. One, I think there is a bit of exasperation with Corbyn personally. They kind of know how intransigent he can be. Yeah. Look, he's not the guy you're going to go to the wall for. Are you going to die on the hill, Mark Jeremy Corbyn? Yeah, exactly. They know this is a guy fundamentally of the past and also that just the way he approaches things can be difficult. He doesn't always make life easy for himself. I think there's a second thing, though. The current parliamentary Labour Party, we just talked about the selections under the Stammer period. Under the Corbyn period, naturally, there were far more left Labour MPs were selected for winnable seats got into the House of Commons. The actual left in the parliamentary Labour Party at the moment is more powerful than it's been for many years. There's this assumption that Labour are heading for this big majority. Far more likely outcome is Labour gets a very small majority or maybe no majority. And then suddenly, and Stammer's team know this, suddenly, people like Richard Bergen, you know, someone put it to me the other day, Richard Bergen could be the Steve Baker of the next Labour government. You know, you've got these Labour-left MPs who suddenly say, oh, yeah, you want your budget passed. You want an easy life. That's fine. We've got 30 votes. We've got 40 votes. We've got 50 votes. You know what we want? We want minimum wage at 15 quid. We've got this whole list of demands that we want and that Stammer's team would have no choice but to acquiesce over. So they are desperately trying to stay in line, not give the Labour leadership any excuse to throw them out about anything which I'm sure some in Team Stammer would dearly like to do and just buy their time and actually the Labour-left could come again. And that, of course, then sets the stage for the next

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intriguing part of this. So we get to election day or the election is called. Rishi Sunak goes to the palace. The king dissolves parliament. There is to be a general election. What does Jeremy Corbyn do in Islington North? Does he run as an independent? Having spent all those years, decades, as a Labour MP fighting for the cause of the Labour Party, do you then run as an independent? Or do you just accept that my career is over? I am just going to retire quietly. And the indications are that it ain't going to be the quiet retirement, potting shed, planting a few roses.

The rhubarb.

Exactly.

Quite the opposite. I think part of this is all the sources around Corbyn have not denied that he's now going to plan to run as an independent. I think part of the reason for that is because we've already alluded to it in a way. Corbyn's a proud man. He's a very proud man. Whether you like him or you dislike him, one of the things that just runs right through him is his sense of pride. And he feels, he talked about it when he was in the studio. He talked about his removal from the PLP as a disgrace. He's furious about it. And he's furious with Starmer. And he now sees this as basically a pitch battle between him and his successor. And he's got cards in his favour. You've already alluded to one, John, which is look, he's been an MP there for a very long time. He's one of the few MPs in the country who could say he's got a genuine local following. He is devoted, even his worst attractors, I think would say he's devoted to his constituency and his constituents and always has been.

So he's got a large local following. And then there's what his LinkedIn North Labour Party decides to do, again, which is one of his citadels, you know, lots of allies on that. And I got in touch with them earlier today. And this is what they told me. They said this, local party members should select their candidates for every election. That's a quote they've put in the officers of Islington North CLP constituency Labour Party strongly support this statement from Kia Starmer in February 2020. We believe in the democratic right of all constituency parties to choose their prospective parliamentary candidate. Therefore, we reject the National Executive Committee's undue interference in Islington North, which undermines our goal

of defeating the Conservatives and working with our communities for social justice, i.e. his local party is on his side. So here you have a constituency where you don't really count the majority, you just weigh it. I mean, it is 26 and a half thousand. The last election, yeah. 26 and a half thousand. I mean, that is ridiculous. That is as safe as houses. That is four knocks of a constituency for Labour in normal circumstances. Now, people who have run as independence against their party, I mean, it's a mixed bag. But I would guess that Corbyn would do far better than an awful lot of other people who've gone down this route of saying, I don't give a damn that you've taken the whip away from me. I'm going to run as an independent because this is my fortress and I will see how I do.

Well, the Labour Party now, the Central Labour Party have got a number of difficulties to face, right? Which is that given we now know that Islington North, the local party is for Corbyn and want to select him, that means that they're not going to choose another candidate. They could just refuse to choose another candidate. The Central Labour Party would have to impose someone. Now, imagine the dynamics of that. First of all, they've got to find someone, a good candidate. Now, normally, if Corbyn said he was going, because as you said, John,

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this is a plumb seat, you know, you'd be having, you'd be trying to fight them off. You know, there'd be people circling around this seat, vultures for years and years and years. But finding a good quality candidate who's willing to go into that local civil war, it will be a nightmare. Trying to get elected then against this guy without the local party on your side. A nightmare. And then you actually come to the prospect of a general election, where basically instead of fighting the Conservatives or, you know, fighting this local party, you're fighting Jeremy Corbyn. It will set up one of the most interesting dynamics for the next general election. There will be huge press interest, far more than there normally would be just for one seat. So it creates a potentially toxic personal dynamic for someone going in there. I suppose Corbyn's like, in a way, the thing he might be thinking of is Ken Livingston in 2000. The Labour Party would not select him as the party's candidate for the mayor of London. He's well known across London for historic reasons. He runs against the Labour Party and he wins because he's got that kind of personality and that national profile. In a way, Corbyn, who is very close to Livingston, I suspect has someone like that and a race like that in his mind. I'm tempted to go down the bookies and put ten quid on the Liberal Democrats to win. Because if the Labour vote got split, then it could be the most bizarre thing. Anyway, I suspect that come the 2024 election, not since Liz Truss, will there have been such interest in Islington Townhouses? We'll be back after the break with Sir Richard Dearlove. Welcome back. There are times when I think it's probably easier to count in Britain the number of people who don't have podcasts compared to the number of people who do. But perhaps the most surprising of all the people that I found out had their own podcast, it's called One Decision, is Sir Richard Dearlove. And if that name rings a bit of a bell, it's because Sir Richard spent his life in the shadows as an MI6 agent and then as head of MI6, head of the SIS and has now got your own podcast and is in the studio with us. And Richard Dearlove, great pleasure to have you with us. Thank you so much for coming in to talk to us. There's so much to talk about. I mean, we could be here for hours and I'm sure whatever topics we cover, there'll be somewhere we think, why didn't we ask about that? But I've got to start last week being the 20th anniversary of Iraq. I thought you might start there. Do you look back now, given everything that's come out, the Chilcot Report and all the rest of it and the fact that no WMD was ever found, that it was a failure? I do not take that view because the issue has been given a sort of overlay by the media. And it's a pretty complex issue when you look into it or you know about it in more detail. Well, explain the fact that there was such confidence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction when he didn't and that the intelligence was seen to be good, but it wasn't direct human intelligence. Well, first of all, you want to look at the historical picture and I won't go into that because it's well known what Saddam had done in the past. And he had had that capability. Then there was a sort of there was the first inspection regime, which in a way was very successful. But I think without going into too much detail, we knew what hadn't been found. So we knew what the Iraqis had had and we knew what hadn't been found. So I think that's important to understand the sort of hinterland of the issue. The second point is that right up until the invasion, I think Saddam didn't really expect the Americans to invade till very late in the day. What he was worried about was Iran. And he did not wish to expose Iraq's weakness to his Iranian enemies. So whether he still had WMD or not was a rather strategic issue for him

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in relation to Iran. And there was no question that he wanted Iran and the world to believe he still had them. So that's the second point.

But we went to war on the basis that he did have them. So you can understand people listening to you saying that you don't think it was a fact.

Now, well, hang on a moment. So the third point is he had actually restarted his programs. And if you read the Dulfa report, which very few people have ever looked at because it's too long and too complicated, that is the conclusion that Dulfa comes to. And the people that were responsible for restarting the programs were, I think, exaggerating to Saddam and his inner circle, the stage to which they had got, if you understand me.

So there was deception all around you're trying to say.

So what I'm saying was there was a situation in Iraq where senior people involved in the restart of his weapons programs were telling Saddam that they had gone further than they actually had.

But going back to Lewis's point, hundreds of thousands of people died.

But what?

The general belief was, at the time, and it wasn't just British intelligence, it was American intelligence, it was French intelligence, it was German intelligence, that Saddam still had these weapons.

But it was your job to know, and you didn't know?

Well, I wouldn't say it was my job to try to find out as much as we could about what was a very significant Iraqi secret.

Can I ask just about the mindset of that time, which I remember very well because I was based in Paris at that time, and I knew where Shirak stood and he was going to say, no, whatever the circumstances.

And I accept the point you make about that was the general view of the intelligence community.

But was it the brief to have a blank sheet of paper and see where the evidence leads, or was it that you had a thesis that you needed to prove for government?

Look, heads of intelligence do not make policy.

heads of intelligence contribute intelligence for the formation of policy, which is made by the prime minister and whoever else is within that circle.

And I mean, that was the situation at the time.

I mean, I still think that this black and white picture that the media has about the situation in Iraq is rather misleading.

Let me just give you a few random examples, and I'm not going to go into too much detail because there are still sensitivities about sources.

But for example, we knew that the Iraqi military had purchased 50,000 doses of atropine in the lead up to the war.

Atropine is the anti-date for VX nerve gas.

Why would the Iraqis purchase atropine if they did not have the capability?

There was significant intelligence never discounted that the Iraqis had indulged in laboratory production of VX.

It's never been questioned.

It wasn't looked at by Chilcard.

It's never been discounted.

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So if they had trickled production of VX, why and where did it go?

But since you mentioned Chilcard, so you will be aware that the report criticizes you and says that personal intervention by you and its urgency gave added weight to a report that had not been properly evaluated and would have colored the perception of ministers and senior officials.

What is your response to that?

And surely you must regret that the intelligence was wrong and take your responsibility for that.

Of course one takes the view now after the event.

But what I'm saying is the picture is complex.

It's poorly understood.

I don't think actually Chilcard now deceased.

He didn't look into certain things that I recommended because it wasn't part of the reporting procedure.

So you got it wrong Chilcard.

I'm not saying he got it wrong.

I'm saying he didn't answer certain questions.

It's a complicated issue.

Did the inspectors find anything?

But yes they did actually find one or two things.

Now what we knew was that the Iraqi nuclear scientists had been told to disperse any related equipment and bury it or take it to their private houses.

We actually found centrifuge parts or we helped the inspectors find centrifuge parts.

They were seriously trying to preserve their capability and restart it.

I think the problem is they hadn't got very far with the restart but the general intelligence picture for various reasons that I've already tried to explain was they were further down the track.

But I mean I don't think I'm going to go into this in further detail but all I'm just trying to show you is it's not quite as black and white as no WMD existed.

I mean for example hundreds of flatbed trucks observed by overhead went over the border into Syria all covered with tart ballings.

What was on them?

Oh, rather later we discovered that Syria has a chemical weapons programme.

Might there have been some linkage between those two events?

But it is undeniable, just to conclude, but it is undeniable clearly intelligence was wrong and not only that, but Iraq was not the danger, but Iraq was not the danger that was portrayed as it was in 2003 when you were head of MI6 and when the Blair government was telling this country that it was a clear and present danger.

It just wasn't.

I'm not going to, as it were, argue or discuss that point because that's the sort of benefit of hindsight judgement.

Well, yeah.

I know it is, it is, but at the time it was perceived differently.

I want to bring you to present date because what we saw last year was in some way similar

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to what happened in the lead up to 2003 which was the laying out of intelligence to make an argument and it was the laying out of intelligence that Russia was about to invade Ukraine and that intelligence was shown to be absolutely spot on and it kind of blunted Russia's attempts at disinformation or whatever.

But there was a different situation here because I mean where I sort of have a problem with what happened was that the Americans took a policy decision and Blair took a decision to support the Americans.

Blair was worried about the support of the parliamentary Labour Party and therefore used the intelligence argument to try, as it were, to make sure he had the support of the parliamentary Labour Party.

Did he misuse the intelligence?

No, he chose to use it.

Your implication there was, I mean I thought we were going to move on and you've brought it back.

I tried to get you away from the subject and you've gone back to it.

So now that you have gone back to it, I want to push this on.

You've just implied that the Americans had taken a policy decision, Blair decides to go along and therefore uses your intelligence.

The implication of that is he misused the intelligence.

No, he didn't misuse it.

He chose to use it.

In a way that you supported.

Look, usually when you have a foreign policy decision, you have a variety of factors that, as it were, contribute to that decision.

A lot of them avert, some of them probably, possibly, based on intelligence.

And there are a number of famous incidents, you know, publicly where intelligence was used to justify tough decision making, Cuba being maybe the most famous.

We've recently had one in relation to Ukraine, which is clear.

Libya is another one.

But on Ukraine, you have since said that you think Vladimir Putin is not very well.

It's my belief, based on observations by people who I respect and know who live in that part of the world.

Well, you see, that sounds so enigmatic, because I want to know, is that Richard Dearlove, to use the American term just spitballing, or is that kind of based on stuff that you've heard from people you're still in touch with, who are still in the shadows?

Well, let's put it like this.

People in that part of Europe, who are well-informed, shall we say, former colleagues, who have well-informed views, believe there's something wrong with it.

And you still believe that?

Oh yeah, I do.

And I think you've also said that you don't think he'll survive 2023?

Well, I think that is an informed guess.

I think it's very speculative.

At the moment, it depends what happens militarily.

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Why do you say that?

On what basis do you think that's a possibility?

Well, I think that one has a very fragile situation with the regime, if the war now goes badly for Putin in Ukraine.

So I mean, he's got himself into a tough situation, because we're already quite clear that his intention was to roll the government over quickly, really to do it before anybody noticed.

And the West wouldn't be able to do much about it.

But I mean, it's turned into a war of attrition.

You'll know, of course, there are people who say that the war in Ukraine may not have happened, or it may not have happened in the way that it had without Iraq, because Iraq destabilized international order, it showed to countries like Russia that this idea of the rules-based order was a fantasy.

What do you say to that?

That's too much for extrapolation.

I mean, really, no, I think it's going too far.

Sir Richard, you've been very generous with your time, and I know we're imposing on it.

I just wonder whether you think what your successors in SIS will be worried about.

Now, when he looks around the world, what are the things that are causing him unease or thinking we need to be bolstering ourselves?

Is it protests in France, or protests in Israel, or is it much bigger geo-strategic things than that?

I think it's geo-strategic things, say it'll be China.

Obviously a major war in Europe, we're in a unique situation.

And making sure that that doesn't escalate, there is still the problem of terrorism.

I mean, today, MI5 put out a high alert warning on Northern Ireland, saying there are still bits of the IRA that are left.

We've still got significant, extremist problems in the Middle East.

The stability of the Middle East, the situation between Iran and the main sunny countries.

Cyber security, the whole cyber environment, and I think I would add sort of organized international criminality of a level which is concerned to the nation state.

And a final question which has no national security implications, I don't think whatsoever.

Why did you decide you wanted to do a podcast?

Why did you decide on one decision?

Well, I got asked whether I would be willing to start speculating and talking about geopolitical events.

It's one of my primary interests.

And you've got a bit of history in it.

I've got a bit of history.

I mean, I think I've got more history than most.

I joined the intelligence service when I was, gosh, only 21 years old.

I have been involved in geopolitical events.

And I moved from an intelligence service to academic university environment where I've been for the last 20 years, more or less.

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So, Reggie, you've been obviously in the intelligence service a long time.

How do you think, if you were a young spy starting out today...

You shouldn't say spy.

You should say case officer, intelligence officer.

Case officer, intelligence officer.

We run spies.

Okay, fine.

Well, intelligence officer, case officer.

Somewhere I'm working in the intelligence services today.

How do you think it's different?

How do you think it will be different compared to when you were starting out?

Well, we're not in the Cold War, and I don't believe we are in a Cold War with China because our relations with China are very intertwined, so it's going to be different.

That's the first point.

And the second point is the world has been transformed by technology.

So, you know, social media, all the different aspects of modern technology, we're not there.

In 1966, when I joined, there weren't many lawyers around.

There was no intelligence services act.

There was no formal acknowledgement or a vow of the existence of MI6.

The convention was that her Majesty's government did not comment on such matters beginning and end of story.

You could travel the world on an alias passport without any problems.

You can't do that now because of biotechnology.

It's a very, very different place, but there is one essential which is still the same, which is human behavior.

Successful espionage, despite all the technology in my book, is still intimately linked with human behavior.

And so, Richard, I think yours must be one of the most mythologized lives of not you personally, but the head of our secret intelligence services.

See.

Yeah.

You are see.

I was.

What in the mythology was real about your life and what is fantasy?

Well, there's an awful lot of fantasy because of the fiction and some of it very good, generated by the whole idea of intelligence services.

You know, there are serious books and there are many, many less serious mythical books.

I think the picture you derive, you know, from TV series, the pictures you derive from reading novels, it's probably not really very close to the truth.

What the truth is more mundane or the truth is scarier?

Depends what you, I mean, if you're involved in the events of 9-11 and the aftermath, the invasion of Afghanistan, invasion of Iraq, war in Iraq, it's, and it's scarier is the wrong word, but it's a heavy responsibility.

It's an odd position to be in, but it's a privilege to have been there and to have had

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to do that job, whatever one's successes and failures.

So, Richard dear love, thank you so much.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

This is The News Agents.

What is fascinating and problematic about doing an interview like that is that frankly we could have spent three hours, five hours, just discussing the lead up to Iraq, the implications of it, the decision making, and you would still have people on social media saying, but you didn't ask him that, and we had the whole waterfront to cover of China, the changing face of intelligence, Russia, Ukraine, and it's just a mass to kind of boil down.

Still as you would expect, not surprising, rather defensive about Iraq, but also I think just putting a tiny bit of distance between himself and the politicians that I just gave the intelligence.

I'm not making political decisions.

Yeah, a tiny bit, but also I think in a way less apologetic about the actual enterprise itself than even some of the politicians.

I mean, even Blair, he doesn't resale from it, and like dear love and everybody else involved, still says that despite the fact that the intelligence was obviously completely wrong, that they still don't think it was a mistake.

So they have that line.

And where I found him even more committed to that, perhaps because ultimately he was responsible for the intelligence, and obviously he can point to different things and say, well, actually he was still committed to the program and so on.

But I am still surprised by the truculence of so many of the big players at that time.

And maybe I think to some extent, to be perfectly honest, you can't get inside people's minds, people's souls, but I do think they can't quite admit it to themselves, to be honest, because we know in the end what a catastrophe the aftereffects were and the humanitarian side of things were.

And there is almost, it seems to me, a bit of an effort just to slightly, and this is not just about dear love, it's about almost everybody involved at the time to just avert the gaze.

You know, I think there's something slightly different as well that is just worth dwelling on.

The thing I said, you know, I was the BBC's Paris correspondent in the lead up to the Iraq war.

The French believed he had WMD.

Everyone believed the intelligence, the Russians believed it, the Germans believed it, but Shirak and Schroeder were saying, well, yeah, he may have it, but it is just a bloody stupid decision to go and invade Iraq when you've got no fly zones and you can contain him.

So it's the wrong decision strategically.

And what they are all responsible for was, yeah, well, everyone got the intelligence wrong.

It's just that Britain and America made a bad strategic decision, the consequences of which we are still living with, the ripples of which are still felt around the world.

[Transcript] The News Agents / Will Corbyn get his revenge?

Right.

Well, we will be back tomorrow.

I think even suddenly made list by me putting in an appearance.

Wow.

Wow.

The Queen herself.

See you then.

See you then.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.