

Wednesday, 19th January 2011

(2.00 pm)

Evidence of SIR STEPHEN WALL, GCMG, LVO

SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Welcome, everyone, and welcome to our witness, Sir Stephen Wall.

At this session we are hearing from Sir Stephen Wall, who served as the Prime Minister's advisor on European issues and head of the Cabinet Office's European Secretariat from 2000 to 2004. You had also served in Number 10 as a Private Secretary to the Prime Minister from 1991 to 1993 and in the private office of several foreign secretaries.

We are going to explore first the way government worked and then how foreign policy decisions were made during Mr Blair's time as Prime Minister and Sir Stephen's direct responsibilities in relation to Europe and more general issues of policy on Iraq.

As I say on each occasion we recognise witnesses give evidence based on their recollection of events and we, of course, check what we hear against the papers to which we have access, some of which are still arriving.

I remind each witness on each occasion you will later be asked to sign a transcript of the evidence given to the effect that the evidence is truthful, fair and accurate.

1 With those preliminaries out of the way can I ask
2 Sir Stephen some general questions about the way the
3 government worked and foreign policy decisions were made
4 under Mr Blair and then we want to turn more
5 specifically to the policy on Iraq? I understand you
6 worked in Number 10 under three Prime Ministers?

7 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I worked for a year in the press
8 office when Jim Callaghan was Prime Minister, because I
9 had been in the Foreign Office News Department and when
10 the head of that department, Tom McCaffrey moved to
11 Number 10, I moved with him. Then, as you said,
12 Chairman, I worked for two years for John Major as his
13 Foreign Office Private Secretary and then for Tony
14 Blair as his EU advisor.

15 When Tony Blair became Prime Minister, he inherited
16 within Number 10 the traditional system whereby there
17 was a Foreign Policy Private Secretary who did foreign
18 policy, defence and Northern Ireland. That changed
19 after the 2001 election and although I had been in the
20 job as head of the European Secretariat since September
21 2000, my job changed as part of that overall change.

22 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. You had also served in the
23 private office of I think four foreign secretaries.

24 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I served in the -- yes. David Owen,
25 Peter Carrington and then Geoffrey Howe, John Major and

1 Douglas Hurd.

2 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Five.

3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Five.

4 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: There can be few, if any, officials in
5 modern times who have had experience of working both
6 sides of Downing Street than yourself.

7 To set the scene could you give us a thumbnail
8 sketch of the different roles both in the Foreign
9 Secretary's private office but most particularly in the
10 Prime Minister's office on Foreign Affairs?

11 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I mean, the role of a private
12 Secretary anywhere and obviously the role of the Private
13 Secretary or Private Secretarial team, because there
14 were obviously more than one, in my first incarnation
15 I was an Assistant Private Secretary responsible for
16 a particular area of activity, in this particular case
17 mostly Africa and Commonwealth issues, working to the
18 Principal Private Secretary, but the job of the Private
19 Office obviously is to be the interface between the
20 Secretary of State and the rest of the department, and
21 indeed between the department and the rest of Whitehall
22 and particularly in the case of the Foreign Office
23 Private Office between the Foreign Secretary and the
24 Prime Minister at one remove.

25 There's a hotline between the Foreign Office, the

1 desk of the Principal Private Secretary in the Foreign
2 Office and the desk of what was then the Foreign Policy
3 Private Secretary in Number 10, and that hotline was
4 used a lot. I mean, not for exciting communications,
5 for routine communications, and the rule that had
6 applied, certainly since Jim Callaghan's day as Foreign
7 Secretary, was that when one of the Foreign Office
8 Private Secretaries wrote to Number 10 on a matter of
9 policy that had to be cleared with the Foreign
10 Secretary. In other words, you could not express a view
11 as the Private Secretary, purporting to be the view of
12 the Secretary of State, unless that had been cleared with
13 him.

14 There had been a particular incident where that had
15 gone wrong and Jim Callaghan felt his name had been taken
16 in vain.

17 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Is it possible to draw any general
18 contrast between the arrangements for conducting foreign
19 policy under different Prime Ministers or are they each
20 one sui generis.

21 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Well, I think until the changes that were
22 made in the foreign policy structure in Number 10 under
23 Tony Blair there had been a consistent pattern. There
24 was one person, a Foreign Office nominee, who was the
25 Private Secretary for Foreign Policy, Defence and

1 Northern Ireland. That meant that there was a very
2 short line of authority, as it were. If you were doing
3 that job, you knew the Prime Minister's wishes across
4 the board on the issues for which you were responsible.
5 When I worked for John Major I knew that if I wasn't
6 doing something, then nobody else was doing it. I was the
7 one person who had that responsibility.

8 It also meant that, however much you tried, there
9 were not enough hours in the day to be anything more
10 than a Private Secretary. If you had it in mind to
11 build a power base, which I personally never did, it was
12 quite difficult to do so. In other words, the authority
13 for giving advice to the Prime Minister rested with the
14 Foreign Secretary as far as foreign policy was
15 concerned. You were very often its channel.

16 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Could you speak a little more slowly.

17 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I will try. You were very often its
18 channel and clearly, as with any Private Secretary,
19 because you have access, you are quite often a confidant
20 and a sounding board, but you weren't in a position to
21 make the policy. You were a transmitter of policy and
22 a transmitter of information in both directions.

23 That did change under Tony Blair, more I think on
24 the side of the house that was run by David Manning and
25 then by Nigel Sheinwald than by me.

1 Very briefly, there had been a European Secretariat
2 in the Cabinet Office responsible for the coordination
3 of Whitehall policy on the European Community, later the
4 European Union, since we joined in 1973. The primary job
5 of that outfit was to coordinate the policy. In other
6 words, when the European Commission put forward
7 a proposal the Secretariat got together the key players
8 in Whitehall to give advice to Ministers as to what the
9 British response should be and then to ensure that
10 instructions were carried out, and when eventually EU
11 legislation was adopted that it was implemented and
12 legislation passed and so on.

13 That role was the role that I undertook when I came
14 back from Brussels in the year 2000. Before the 2001
15 election Tony Blair said to me that if he won the
16 election he wanted me to move into Number 10 and work
17 from within Number 10 and at the same time he was
18 setting up a rather equivalent structure which David
19 Manning was the first head of on the foreign policy
20 side.

21 My understanding of the reason that he wanted to
22 move away from the more traditional model was that he
23 felt that rather than have one person who was a channel
24 for other people's expertise, why not have available to
25 the Prime Minister the people who were actually the

1 experts?

2 As far as the job I was doing was concerned, that
3 was in a way a slight misunderstanding of it in that
4 traditionally the head of the European Secretariat had
5 been the Prime Minister's principal advisor other than
6 Foreign Secretary on European Community issues. For
7 example, under Margaret Thatcher, David Williamson, now
8 Lord Williamson, was a huge influence on her thinking.
9 In 1997, when New Labour came to power, Brian Bender was
10 doing that job as head of the European Secretariat.
11 Similarly he was used just as much by Tony Blair as
12 I was subsequently.

13 So in my perception I mean the job got a bit
14 grander in rank simply as a reflection of the job I had
15 done in Brussels before, and I was physically placed
16 inside Number 10, which had one advantage, which was
17 that I had access to the Number 10 e-mail system,
18 because otherwise there was a firewall between Number 10
19 and the Cabinet Office. So we weren't part of that
20 internal system. I had the advantage that I was that
21 little bit closer to hand. I was half a minute away
22 rather than two minutes away. It had the disadvantage,
23 of course, that I was physically cut off from the
24 rest of my team.

25 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. Do you want to offer any kind

1 of qualitative comparative judgment about the former and
2 the then later set of arrangements or -- you talked of
3 disadvantage and advantage from your standpoint.

4 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I think the changes that the Prime
5 Minister made were viewed with some suspicion in the
6 rest of Whitehall. As far as my job was concerned there
7 was suspicion because for the first time in the history
8 of our membership of the European Union the coordinating
9 role was being done by somebody from the Foreign Office
10 rather than from a domestic department. There was
11 obviously concern that this was going to be the creation
12 of a Prime Minister's department and that, therefore,
13 the Prime Minister would have not just more sources of
14 independent advice, but the capacity for action, as it
15 were, which didn't pass through the Foreign Office or
16 the Ministry of Defence.

17 I think there is some truth in that. On the other
18 hand, having done the job of Foreign Office Private
19 Secretary in its previous manifestation, I mean, it was
20 one of those jobs where you worked seven days a week and
21 you worked 90 hour weeks. So there was a huge burden on
22 one person, so it wasn't necessarily an ideal system.
23 So it was understandable that Tony Blair wanted to make
24 some change.

25 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. I think with that I will ask

1 Baroness Prashar to pick up the questions.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Stephen, I want to look at the
3 arrangements for providing advice to the Prime Minister
4 between 2000 and 2004.

5 Perhaps you can begin by telling me which officials
6 and special advisers were most influential with the
7 Prime Minister on foreign policy during that period?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: If you take foreign policy across --
9 I should also explain, because I think it is germane. My
10 job as head of the European Secretariat and as the Prime
11 Minister's EU advisor was to coordinate Whitehall
12 activity and advice to him and give advice to him on all
13 those things which we normally think of as the European
14 Community's activities, ie, changes to the treaties on
15 the one hand, and there were a lot of negotiations on
16 that score, economic and monetary union and more
17 particularly the whole day to day range of issues, like
18 the Working Time Directive, the Agency Workers Directive
19 and so on, which were enormously sensitive in UK
20 domestic terms and important and where a view had to be
21 formed and where the Prime Minister might need to take
22 a view.

23 There was a subcommittee of the Cabinet
24 traditionally chaired by the Foreign Secretary which was
25 the arbiter of most of those issues if there was

1 Ministerial disagreement. It was rare, therefore, for
2 those things to come to the Prime Minister.

3 What I didn't do, and this is relevant to your
4 point, was what we might call strictly foreign policy
5 issues, even if they related to the countries of the
6 European Union. Those fell very much to David Manning
7 and later Nigel Sheinwald and to the Political Director,
8 Peter Ricketts, for most of this period in the Foreign
9 Office.
10

11 That said, very often there was not an absolute
12 distinction between these things. If you take policy
13 towards Russia for example, quite a lot of that was
14 energy policy or climate change policy or trade policy,
15 which I did have some say in.

16 So against that background in terms of on the
17 European side I would say that I, Roger Liddle, who was
18 a political special advisor, one or two others from the
19 Policy Unit were influential. On foreign policy the key
20 players were undoubtedly David Manning, Matthew Rycroft
21 and Jonathan Powell.

22 Jeremy Heywood didn't play much part in foreign
23 policy. He played quite a part in European policy,
24 particularly policy towards the Euro.

25 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: He as Principal Private Secretary?

1 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Exactly. Because he had -- I mean, it
2 has become almost illegal to have a government that
3 doesn't have Jeremy Heyward in Number 10 to help run it.
4 Because of his past experience he was a key figure, but
5 not on the foreign policy side.

6 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Slow down.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Any observation on the relationship
8 between the Civil Servants and special advisors and how that
9 dynamic worked?

10 SIR STEPHEN WALL: From my perspective the one thing that
11 I did find when I came into working in Number 10 was
12 that quite often on an issue, let us say agricultural
13 prices, there would be possibly three separate bits of
14 advice going to the Prime Minister, one from myself and
15 the other officials and maybe two from different policy
16 advisers.

17 Tony Blair never to me seemed to object to that and
18 I certainly didn't seek to suppress other people's views
19 but, it did seem to me that on the whole it made more
20 sense for the Prime Minister to read one piece of paper
21 containing different views rather than find in his box
22 one piece of paper, deal with it and then five minutes
23 later find another.

24 As regards the foreign policy side of things I am not
25 aware that David Manning or Nigel Sheinwald encountered

1 that particular problem.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you have any sense that the
3 advice from the Foreign Office or ambassadors had any
4 impact on the Prime Minister? Was the channel from the
5 Foreign Office and ambassadors?

6 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. The traditional route of advice to
7 the Prime Minister on most foreign policy subjects
8 continued to be either directly from the Foreign
9 Secretary or a minute from the Foreign Secretary's
10 Private Secretary reporting his views and that would go
11 to the Prime Minister perhaps with a covering note from
12 David Manning or Nigel Sheinwald summarising if there
13 were lots of documents, and it is very much the
14 traditional role of the Number 10 Private Secretary or
15 the Manning figure or myself to actually produce
16 a synthesis of different bits of advice and try to pull
17 it together so that the Prime Minister doesn't
18 necessarily have to read all of the background
19 documents, and in that respect I think Prime Ministers
20 vary.

21 I mean, I didn't work directly for Margaret
22 Thatcher, but one was very aware sitting in the Foreign
23 Office that she liked to read a lot of background
24 material. Certainly I found when I worked for John
25 Major that he was intellectually curious about issues

1 and would read the background material.

2 As far as Europe was concerned I don't recall Tony
3 Blair reading the background material as opposed to the
4 advice that I gave to him. He was economical with the
5 use of his time in that respect, very -- I mean, we
6 would have, for example, a meeting with the Prime
7 Minister of let's say Denmark for the sake of argument,
8 and on some issues the Prime Minister of Denmark would
9 say "Tony, what do you think about so and so?" and the
10 Prime Minister would turn to me and say "Stephen, what do I
think
11 about so and so?". I am obviously not talking about the
12 biggest issues clearly.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I understand that.

14 SIR STEPHEN WALL: If you said to the Prime Minister: you
15 need to focus on X and Y, he would read voraciously and
16 then you were running to keep up. If you said to him,
17 "We have a bit of trouble with the following four EU
18 countries" he worked the telephones or worked the room.
19 He always had very quickly both a grasp of the subject
20 and a very clear idea of what he wanted to do.

21 I remember at one stage at a European Council
22 venturing to suggest to him how he might handle some
23 particular issues with a head of government and he said
24 to me, "You know, Stephen I haven't got where I am today
25 without knowing how to do this". In other words, "This

1 is what I am paid to do".

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, from what you saw did the
3 quality of advice -- I mean, how did it compare to what
4 happened previously?

5 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I don't think there was a difference in the
quality of advice.

7 I mean, I think there's a difference historically over
9 time in the way that advice to the Prime Minister and
10 other Ministers is dealt with in terms of discussion,
11 but I think that's a slightly separate issue from the
12 way in which the day-to-day advice from the Foreign
13 Office would have been handled.

14 I mean, I was never aware of any significant advice
15 from another department that I dealt with not being
16 shown to the Prime Minister, and I am sure the same was
17 true for David Manning, and there was the usual
18 correspondence - with one exception, which I will come to -
19 there was the usual correspondence from Number 10 to the
20 rest of Whitehall saying "The Prime Minister's view is X
21 or Y".

22 One exception to that was on my side of the house on
23 European matters where it became impossible to have
24 correspondence of that kind with the Treasury, because
25 Gordon Brown didn't want his officials to communicate

1 with Number 10.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about the quality of advice?

3 I mean, how did that compare? Was there a change in the
4 quality toward what happened previously or was there
5 a sustained --

6 SIR STEPHEN WALL: No. I never detected a change. There
7 were experts in the Foreign Office providing advice to
8 the Foreign Secretary. The Foreign Secretary, whoever
9 it might be, had their own views, which would obviously
10 be reflected in the material that came across and was
11 shown to the Prime Minister.

12 So I never -- I mean, the quality of individuals
13 changes over time, but if you look at it in the round,
14 I don't recall thinking there's been a falling off in
15 either the quantity or the quality of advice available
16 to me and then through me to the Prime Minister.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I move on to the role of Cabinet
18 Secretaries? Were successive Cabinet Secretaries
19 involved significantly in foreign and security policy?

20 SIR STEPHEN WALL: In my time in Number 10 I can't -- when
21 I was in the Press Office I wouldn't have been that much
22 aware of it. When I worked for John Major, I would say
23 on the whole no, but at that stage there was a senior
24 figure in Number 10, Sir Percy Cradock at the time, who
25 was the kind of wise person with experience who was that

1 kind of sounding board.

2 In my subsequent incarnation under Tony Blair I was
3 never aware of the Cabinet Secretary playing, certainly
4 on my side of things, a very significant role, the one
5 exception being that Richard Wilson as Cabinet Secretary
6 was very much involved in the advice that I was
7 preparing and clearing with him, Richard Wilson, on how
8 we handled the issue of the Euro and a possible
9 referendum on the Euro.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you observe Wilson's successors,
11 Andrew Turnbull.

12 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. Certainly my impression was, and
13 obviously you have spoken to others about this, but my
14 impression, partly because you did have in the person
15 doing my job and the person doing the job done by David
16 Manning two people rather more senior than you'd had
17 before, and to that extent that probably created
18 a situation where the Cabinet Secretary -- I am not sure
19 the Cabinet Secretary would have felt inhibited but
20 perhaps felt there was not the need if he didn't feel so
21 inclined to take as close an interest as he might
22 otherwise have done.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think the role had been
24 defined differently? Do you think there was
25 understanding the role had been restricted, defined

1 differently?

2 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I don't think this was ever defined in
3 any formal sense. I mean, Tony Blair was not a person
4 who sat down with you and described the job that he
5 wanted you to do. I mean, in the four years that I was
6 there I never had a one-to-one conversation with him
7 about Europe or my role in it other than perhaps in the
8 back of a car going to the airport. So I don't think he
9 would have on the whole set down with people and said
10 "This is how I want you to do it and these are the areas
11 where I want you to intervene or not".

12 I mean, I clearly had a sense of what his priorities
13 were, but not that kind of job description, if you like,
14 and I think that for any Cabinet Secretary recognising
15 the issues that were top of the Prime Minister's mind,
16 very often crises, and gripping a crises like foot and
17 mouth, say, gripping a crisis in Whitehall terms,
18 putting the Whitehall machine together, that was very
19 important.

20 The Prime Minister did feel quite strongly that if
21 things were to be well done that mattered he had to
22 handle them. I never felt that he had a very clear
23 sense of the role of the big departments of state, not
24 least because he had never been in government before.
25 I remember somebody saying to me, you know, his view of

1 junior ministers was that they were there to appear on
2 The Today programme. That was sort of trivial, but
3 that's an illustration of I think some of his approach,
4 which was that he had to focus on things and drive them
5 and make sure they were happening for them to happen
6 properly.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: This was a question of delegation?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did the access and influence of
10 the SIS chief, Sir Richard Dearlove compare to what had
11 been the case previously?

12 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I am not in a position to comment on
13 that, because although I had some dealings with him in
14 my role there was never an occasion when I was with him
15 at a meeting with the Prime Minister and so I didn't
16 observe his comings and goings.

17 We did, all of us I think, operate on the so-called
18 need to know principle. You didn't nose around asking
19 about things that didn't immediately concern you.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think that 9/11 had an impact
21 on their relationship and was he looking for advice to
22 the SIS, policy advice?

23 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I can't say that I saw that from my
24 perspective. 9/11 changed a lot. It is relevant when
25 we come on to talk about the European story in respect

1 of Iraq. It was obviously a sea change moment in Tony
2 Blair's view of his role I think as Prime Minister and
3 his international role.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I move on to the role of Cabinet
5 Ministers? Were Cabinet Ministers, not just the Foreign
6 Secretary, consulted sufficiently on major foreign
7 policy decisions?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Well, here I think again there have been
9 changes over the years and I don't know whether at this
10 moment you want to go back a bit on that?

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I would like you to, yes.

12 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I start not from experience but for the
13 work I am doing now as an official historian in the
14 Cabinet Office, looking at Britain's relations with the
15 European Community starting in 1963. I have been
16 looking recently at the period of 1967 when Harold
17 Wilson and his Cabinet decided to relaunch our bid to
18 join the European Community, and over a period of many
19 weeks the Cabinet met frequently on the issue, taking
20 very often a paper by the Foreign Secretary and the
21 Prime Minister, commenting on the paper, the paper taken
22 away, rewritten, brought back to Cabinet, discussed in
23 detail. Harold Wilson had a week-end Cabinet, Saturday
24 and Sunday, at Chequers where the whole Cabinet met to
25 discuss the issues.

1 So after a period of very intensive discussion in
2 Cabinet where it is clear from the records -- obviously
3 you can't tell who said what, but you can see that those
4 who are basically hostile are expressing their views and
5 in the end you get a real sense that the Cabinet had
6 united around that policy.

7 That practice continued under Jim Callaghan when
8 I was involved working first of all in the Number 10
9 Press Office, because we used to see the papers that
10 went to Cabinet, and then when I went back after a year
11 and was one of the Private Secretaries working for David
12 Owen, I was involved in the writing of papers that went
13 to the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

14 David Owen himself as Foreign Secretary had
15 a special advisor specifically on economic issues so
16 that he felt he was competent to take part in the
17 discussions in Cabinet on economic issues, ie, outside
18 his own immediate sphere, and there was the rule that
19 papers for Cabinet had to be circulated at least
20 48 hours in advance so that people were ready to speak
21 about them, having that basis of knowledge.

22 I don't think this is just nostalgia on my part.
23 I do think there is a very important issue here, which
24 is that one of the things I noticed sitting at the back
25 of the room at Cabinet under Tony Blair's Prime

1 Ministership, I think it is quite difficult for -- you
2 know, unless you are a Clare Short and she got very
3 little thanks for doing it, although very often in my
4 judgment she was spot on on the things she put her
5 finger on, you have to be quite brave I think if you are
6 Secretary of State for Health or Education to intervene
7 on a subject that's not your own subject.

8 The advantage of having a document that sets out all
9 the issues is you have the basis for doing that. You
10 don't feel an idiot putting up your hand saying "How
11 about so and so?". That was not lost under Tony Blair.
12 That was lost under Margaret Thatcher, that habit of
13 Cabinet papers. It wasn't revived under John Major.
14 There was more discussion in Cabinet reflecting I think
15 not so much a change of -- a difference of style --
16 well, there obviously was a difference of style between
17 him and Tony Blair, but perhaps reflecting more the fact
18 that he had, especially after the '92 election,
19 virtually no majority, and he had difficult contending
20 characters in the Cabinet he had to balance.

21 What was happening, however, at that time was --
22 which didn't happen under Tony Blair -- very frequent
23 meetings of the committee that was then called OPD, the
24 Overseas and Defence Policy Committee. I worked in
25 Downing Street from 91 to '93 for John Major and so was

1 involved in aspects of the Bosnia crisis then.

2 Looking back to prepare for this afternoon, I mean,
3 between the start of the crisis in May '91 and the end
4 of December that year there were 19 reports to Cabinet
5 and some debate. In the following year between January
6 and December out of 40 Cabinet meetings, there were 28
7 reports to the Cabinet with one paper.

8 In August 1992 OPD in the absence of Cabinet
9 meetings because it was the summer break, OPD met and
10 decided to send 1,800 British troops to the former
11 Yugoslavia in a peacekeeping role. So it didn't go to
12 Cabinet until it met in September when it was reported to
13 Cabinet and endorsed by Cabinet.

14 If you take the period January to December 1992,
15 there were 13 meetings of OPD, seven of them about
16 Yugoslavia and all of them with documents and I think
17 all but two of those meetings had memoranda from the
18 Foreign Secretary or the Defence Secretary or both.

19 So you have seven OPD discussions about Yugoslavia
20 with a total of 13 papers to OPD, and between January
21 and July '93, which is coming to the end of my period,
22 in that six-month period OPD met 13 times and six of
23 those meetings were about Bosnia and there were papers
24 from Ministers to each of those meetings.

25 So although Cabinet was not on a whole taking

1 papers, there was a formal Ministerial Committee chaired
2 by the Prime Minister with the Chancellor of the
3 Exchequer, the Defence Secretary, the Foreign Secretary,
4 all present and looking at documents.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Against that background did that
6 surprise you, that the Cabinet Committee on Overseas and
7 Defence met so rarely under Mr Blair?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: It didn't surprise me but I think, you
9 know, I do think that because of the importance of the
10 issues which the Cabinet and the Cabinet committees
11 take, that degree of formality is important, both
12 because of the significance of the issues and for the
13 reasons we have talked about, ie enabling people to form
14 a view on the basis of the best possible assemblage of
15 information and advice.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, we know that a lot of sort
17 of informal meetings took place. Do you think they were
18 an effective forum for discussions?

19 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think they are effective obviously and,
20 as I understand it, the key Ministerial players were
21 there. It is not that people were excluded, but Jim
22 Callaghan used to say when he had his Principal Private
23 Secretary present at a political meeting and the special
24 advisor said "What's he doing there?" Jim Callaghan would
25 say "This is my wait a minute man", in other words

1 "I want someone who can say 'hang on a minute'."

2 If you only have the people who are directly engaged
3 in something it is very easy to get into a situation
4 where you don't necessarily see the wood for the trees,
5 and Number 10 is a strange place. It is a mixture of
6 sort of hothouse and bunker. It is an odd place to work
7 in and particularly when things get intense.

8 I think if you have a very convinced and persuasive
9 and charismatic Prime Minister, which Tony Blair was,
10 absolutely confident in his own judgment, and I think
11 one of the characteristics of Tony Blair is I always
12 found him a very nice person to work for. He is
13 a decent and conscientious man, but of all the
14 politicians I have ever dealt with, including Margaret
15 Thatcher, he was the one with the most self-assurance.

16 So in that situation the Prime Minister obviously
17 has a better prospect of carrying his view than in
18 a situation where there is a more formal setting which
19 allows for a greater degree of debate. Not that he
20 would stifle debate, but I -- I mean, I went -- I didn't
21 go to all the meetings of Cabinet during the period we
22 are talking about, but I went to a lot of them, and
23 although there was debate and the record shows that,
24 generally speaking, the Prime Minister was making
25 a powerful case to his colleagues about the course of

1 action to be followed, and I only recall one meeting,
2 which I think was the meeting on -- I wasn't at the
3 meeting -- I think where Peter Goldsmith presented his
4 advice. I think it was the week before, 13th March
5 I think, where it was clear that the second resolution
6 wasn't going to happen, and the old tradition of Cabinet
7 used to be that because it is the Prime Minister's
8 Cabinet he sits at the table and others come into the
9 room and join them. Tony Blair didn't do that. They
10 all came in and sat down and then he would come in last.

11 On this particular occasion the buzz around the
12 Cabinet Room before he came in was quite sort of
13 febrile. Obviously in the life of the government it was
14 a very tense moment. That's the only time I can
15 remember that sort of feeling of unease clearly related
16 to Iraq.

17 As Tony Blair came into the room John Prescott stood
18 up and saluted. It was a sort of funny moment but in
19 I think in a rather characteristic way John Prescott
20 was doing something quite clever. He was saying "You
21 are the Commander-in-Chief and this is the time to rally
22 to the flag". People laughed but interestingly the
23 atmosphere changed. Sitting at the back I had
24 thought to myself "This is going to be a difficult
25 Cabinet", and it wasn't.

1 That's the only occasion where I can recall thinking
2 to myself, "This is difficult for the Prime Minister or
3 could be difficult for the Prime Minister".

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In his book Mr Blair has described
5 at length his difficult relationship with the Chancellor
6 of the Exchequer. You yourself have been quoted by
7 Andrew Rawnsley saying you are unable to recall a time
8 when there was such a relationship of non-communication
9 between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

10 Did these divisions at the heart of government mean
11 the Prime Minister could not confide with senior Cabinet
12 colleagues on foreign policy issues?

13 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I can't be sure of that, because
14 obviously I wasn't aware of all the meetings that he
15 would be having with colleagues.

16 I don't think he was a man who confided in the sense
17 that you mean with a lot of people. My kind of sense
18 when I worked for him was that there was probably two
19 people, Alastair Campbell and Anji Hunter, and to
20 an extent subsequently Sally Morgan, whom he did confide
21 in a lot. There was a sort of circle beyond that which
22 certainly included Jonathan and probably Jeremy Heywood,
23 and then there was a circle or more than one circle
24 quite a long distance away from that which included
25 people like myself.

1 He also had a rather interesting view of the
2 distinction between the politicians and the officials to
3 the extent I don't just mean it would be improper to ask
4 officials to do party political things, but things which
5 I would have regarded as political in the kind of
6 ordinary sense he would sometimes say "This is not to
7 discuss".

8 I remember on an aeroplane journey, John Kerr, who
9 was the Permanent Secretary in the Foreign Office, and
10 myself trying to suggest to him that it might be a good
11 idea to sup with a slightly longer spoon with Silvio
12 Berlusconi than we were doing. Tony Blair listened
13 politely and then said "Leave the politics to me". In
14 other words "Enough" kind of thing.

15 His relationship with Gordon Brown was such that on
16 very big issues they obviously did talk to each other.
17 Quite often it was heated and nobody else was present at
18 those meetings, but those who worked next door could
19 hear the sound of voices, and they had a modus vivendi
20 which enabled them to reach conclusions.

21 If you are saying was it a huge drain on the Prime
22 Minister's energies, I mean, my perception, and this is
23 not just in retrospect, I remember thinking at the time
24 this relationship is taking up a huge amount of the
25 energy of the Prime Minister because it was

1 fundamentally down to him, or he took the role, to keep
2 that particular show on the road.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: One final question from me. Just
4 give me some idea how did Mr Blair treat the Cabinet
5 meetings? Were they for proper discussion or just
6 consultation? I mean, how did he treat the Cabinet
7 meetings?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: He certainly had a view, which I think he
9 is on record about, that the last thing he wanted was
10 the kind of era where the Cabinet met for two days. He
11 wasn't going to have that. He did have a feeling
12 I think, and this relates to Iraq, on some very
13 sensitive issues you couldn't trust some members of the
14 Cabinet not to leak stuff. As it happened, when it came
15 to the discussion in the spring and summer, early summer
16 of 2003 about the Euro, arrangements were made, first of
17 all, for members of the Cabinet to see the 18 studies of
18 the whole issues that were done by the Treasury and
19 subsequently the actual result of the five tests. Each
20 member of the Cabinet was shown that document on
21 a restrictive basis and as far as I know it didn't leak.
22 So there are ways that that could have been got round.

23 I think one has to remember, you know because he had
24 never been in government before he had no governmental
25 points of reference. There was no Prime Minister under

1 whom he had served who was a role model in his head for how
2 to conduct a Cabinet. So -- and having dragged his own
3 party sort of kicking and screaming into the
4 21st century, 20th/21st century, I think he felt that
5 his job was to set out for the benefit of the Cabinet
6 members the direction and obviously it was up to them to
7 respond if they wanted to.

8 So for quite a lot of the time that was the nature
9 of the discussion. I think, and the records bear it
10 out, there was debate about Iraq. It wasn't just that
11 people came and said "Yes, Sir, No Sir", but his
12 approach to Cabinet was one of advocacy for a course of
13 action and very much steering the government.

14 Quite often -- I mean, there were some issues where
15 certainly on my side of the house I would be kind of
16 waiting for the summing-up and the summing-up would be
17 "On verra", "We shall see". He wanted to keep his options
18 as open as he possibly could. So we would record it
19 that 'the Cabinet took note with approval' or whatever the
20 appropriate turn of phrase was.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much.

22 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Before Sir Lawrence sharpens the focus on
23 Iraq, I think Sir Roderic might have one or two.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just a couple of supplementaries before
25 we move from the general to the specific.

1 I mean, just picking up what you were saying about
2 the contrast between formal OPD meetings and informal
3 meetings, you said that in these informal meetings so
4 far as you were aware the right people were there, but
5 in an OPD traditionally you would have some senior
6 Cabinet Ministers who were not directly departmental
7 Ministers for Foreign Affairs. I mean, you mentioned on
8 Bosnia the Chancellor of the Exchequer used to attend
9 OPDs on Bosnia.

10 In this style of working were you lacking these
11 outside but heavyweight senior Ministerial voices such
12 as the Chancellor or a Deputy Prime Minister or it could
13 be another heavyweight, a big beast as Michael Heseltine
14 once called them, challenging or stress testing a policy
15 and able to do so because of their personal weight and
16 seniority in the way that an advisor or official or more
17 junior minister might not be able to do?

18 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I mean, I share the implicit view, and
19 indeed it is more what I expressed -- I have to say
20 I didn't attend any of the meetings on Iraq, where Iraq
21 specifically was discussed. Europe was a slightly
22 different case, because there the more traditional
23 system applied whereby there was Ministerial correspondence
24 about particular issues, the Foreign Secretary summed-up
25 in a letter at the end, reaching a conclusion. If that

1 didn't find acceptance then Ministers met under his
2 chairmanship and thrashed it out. So that was very much
3 the traditional method by which, you know, government
4 works, and continued to apply, which was why it was
5 rather rare on those kind of issues, not unique but
6 relatively rare, for the Prime Minister to have to take
7 a view. If he did take a view, generally speaking on
8 these European matters it would be me consulting him,
9 telling him what the state of opinion was among the
10 Ministers and him reaching a view which was then either
11 expressed directly by me to the rest of Whitehall or
12 possibly conveyed to the Foreign Secretary and the
13 Foreign Secretary trying to get a result which reflected
14 the Prime Minister's wishes.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You mentioned Alastair Campbell and Sally
16 Morgan. Were either of them people who had influence on
17 foreign policy issues?

18 SIR STEPHEN WALL: That's hard to say. I would think in
19 Sally Morgan's case no. I think Alastair Campbell was
20 a very big influence across the board. I mean, the only
21 person I ever saw Tony Blair regularly in a huddle with
22 was Alastair Campbell, and Alastair Campbell had views
23 and obviously didn't hesitate to express them.

24 I don't think Alastair Campbell would have seen
25 himself as a source of distinct advice in the sense of

1 wanting to give rival advice and certainly I found on my
2 side of the house on Europe he was a very cooperative
3 person to work with, not a difficult person to work with
4 at all, but he was one of those people who, you know,
5 saw his job as being to do the best possible job he
6 could for the success of the Prime Minister's
7 premiership and for Tony Blair as a person, and that
8 I think governed his approach.

9 One point that does occur to me, because I think, if
10 I remember rightly, it came up in your session with
11 Alastair Campbell, which is the question of the presence
12 of the Press Secretary at sensitive meetings.

13 I mean, in my experience certainly when I worked for
14 Tom McCaffrey as Jim Callaghan's Press Secretary and
15 I observed it again when I worked for John Major and Gus
16 O'Donnell was the Press Secretary, that the basic rule
17 was that the Press Secretary had a right of access to
18 any meeting involving the Prime Minister; in other
19 words, the Press Secretary would have to be specifically
20 excluded rather than specifically included. The obvious
21 reason being the Press Secretary needed to know what was
22 going on. The more you knew the less likely you were to
23 say something inadvertently that was mistaken. The
24 Press Secretary had to know the Prime Minister's mind
25 intimately in order to be able to do the job.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just finally from me at this stage to
2 make sure we correctly understood how much visibility
3 you had of the Iraq issues, from what you have said you
4 were frequently but not always in Cabinet?

5 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Right.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So when it was discussed in Cabinet, you
7 would hear it there. You wouldn't have been involved in
8 meetings specifically on the subject of Iraq. Did you
9 see papers on Iraq? Would you be a copy addressee of at
10 least some of the papers and the telegrams and that sort
11 of thing?

12 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I would have seen telegrams. David
13 Manning quite often, more often than not I think copied
14 to me -- for example, if he went to Washington to talk
15 to Condi Rice, he would usually copy me in on the
16 records he did of those meetings.

17 I don't think I saw the specific intelligence
18 analysis, but I would have seen the weekly JIC summary
19 books. I would have had a broad picture of the
20 intelligence and I had one specific conversation with
21 John Scarlett, which may be worth recording. We went
22 to --

23 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I think we might stop you there actually.

24 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Sure.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You would also have been around the Prime

1 Minister and other officials at times when Iraq came up
2 as a subject in the course of meetings or journeys or
3 wherever when all sorts of things were being discussed.

4 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Oh, yes.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you would have been reasonably well in
6 the flow, but given, as you said, there is a need to
7 know principle?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, and obviously I was present at
9 specific meetings with European leaders, in the
10 bilaterals particularly with President Chirac and one
11 particular meeting with Chancellor Schröder in March
12 2002, where I was the only official present. So yes.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And you had a network of counterparts in
14 the offices of every other European leader with whom you
15 would be discussing all sorts of issues on the phone
16 from time to time, and sometimes Iraq might come up.
17 Might you be used as a channel between, say, the Dutch
18 Prime Minister and British Prime Minister because you
19 were talking to his European advisor?

20 SIR STEPHEN WALL: On the whole, no. The only specific
21 occasion I do recall doing that was the beginning of
22 2003 when we with the Spanish put together the letter,
23 the letter which is sometimes known as the letter of the
24 great eight, where I think I talked to certainly Polish,
25 Dutch and Danes I think specifically to line up what we

1 were doing. Occasionally it would come up in other
2 meetings, but David Manning and Matthew Rycroft had
3 their own links to those people if they needed to talk
4 to them, and obviously our embassies were a channel, and
5 the Foreign Office particularly in the person of Peter
6 Ricketts and others wouldn't have been talking to Prime
7 Minister's offices but they were talking to their own
8 contacts, but it terms of access to Prime Minister's
9 offices both David Manning and Matthew Rycroft had those
10 contacts.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

12 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Lawrence, over to you.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Really following on just to clarify
14 what your role was in all of this, anything to do with
15 the European Union in some ways would come through you,
16 but the policies of individual member states not
17 necessarily so?

18 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Correct, and if I think back about my
19 European role insofar as it affected Iraq, the things
20 that I was thinking about immediately before and then
21 certainly after the invasion were how do we manage our
22 European relationships? How do we put together again
23 the relationship with France and Germany, particularly
24 France, and there is some more that can be said about
25 that and the relationship with President Chirac. Do we

1 try -- there was a big discussion which had started in
2 October -- after October 2002 about how we manage
3 relationships within Europe, because at the European
4 Council in late October 2002 the Prime Minister and
5 President Chirac had a tremendous bust-up. The bust-up
6 was not about Iraq. It was about European agriculture
7 and enlargement and the financing thereof.

8 Basically Tony Blair had to take on President Chirac
9 single handed in the European Council and effectively
10 won the point, and President Chirac was angry and the
11 summit that had been due to take place, bilateral summit
12 was first of all cancelled and then subsequently
13 deferred, and there was as part of the bilateral meeting
14 between the two of them on the margins of that European
15 Council there was a discussion of Iraq, which was not
16 the first time President Chirac had expressed his strong
17 views about the course of Iraq policy, but it was one of
18 the occasions and one where it was pretty starkly
19 expressed. You may want to talk about President Chirac
20 separately. I do have a fairly clear picture of how
21 that developed.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just because you raised it, it is
23 an interesting question. Do you think the fallout from
24 that particular meeting, and you mentioned the
25 cancellation and deferment of the summit, undermined the

1 possibilities at that time for the greater coordination
2 between London and Paris on Iraq, that at a time that it
3 would have been helpful to have more communication with
4 each other we had less?

5 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think there was a basic fundamental
6 difference of approach that was probably unbridgeable
7 regardless of particular variations in the mood and the
8 temperature, and that was based around the fact that
9 President Chirac was consistently of the view that there
10 were two separate issues. One was getting inspectors
11 back into Iraq and a resolution that achieved that,
12 which, as he told the Prime Minister, would have
13 unanimity, because even Syria, the Vice President of
14 Syria had told him would support it, and trying to do
15 two things in one resolution, which he thought would
16 first of all not get you nine votes in favour of getting
17 the inspectors back in and, secondly, was effectively,
18 he put it, saying to Saddam Hussein, "There are two ways
19 you can choose to be killed and here they both are". So
20 his view was pretty consistently that you had to
21 approach it, if you were going to do so, in two bites,
22 as it were.

23 That was -- and it became even more so as time went
24 on, but that was such a basic divide really, exacerbated
25 by the differences of views about the kind of policies

1 the Americans were pursuing, which I think made it hard.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I am sure we will come back to that
4 particular period. I want to just go back to pre-9/11.
5 What sense did you have at the time of the views around
6 Europe about how to deal with the Iraq problem?

7 SIR STEPHEN WALL: It was a non-issue really I think is my
8 recollection. Interestingly -- I mean, there was -- the
9 first I think of the Bush presidency -- in June 2001 there
10 was an EU/US summit dinner in the margins of the
11 European Council in Sweden. Just looking back at the
12 files I notice that the notes prepared by officials for
13 Tony Blair make no mention of Iraq but his own
14 manuscript notes do. Written in them is the word "Iraq"
15 as well "Security, Middle East peace process, Bosnia,
16 Kosovo".

17 So it was certainly on his mind at that time.
18 I don't think it was discussed at the meeting. The
19 meeting was reported -- officials weren't present -- on
20 the basis of subsequent briefings and so on, the meeting
21 was reported by the UK representation as having been
22 success.

23 My recollection is neither Tony Blair or President
24 Bush, and I think they compared notes before and after,
25 did think it was a big success. Although President Bush

1 played his part, I think being surrounded by lesser
2 states, as he saw many of them, wasn't his idea of fun.
3 There had been rumour beforehand that President Chirac
4 was going to tackle him on the subject of capital
5 punishment and climate change. I think he did in the
6 event raise climate change but not capital punishment.
7 I don't that kind of event led President Bush to think that
8 Europe was where he wanted to be.

9 I think it is also true to say that probably most EU
10 member states, I wouldn't say they are natural Democrats
11 but on their whole most of their leaders feel more at
12 home with the Obama, Clinton, George Bush Seniors, than
13 with the Reagan, George W Bush type of President. So
14 there were those suspicions around.

15 9/11 did change that. I mean, there was, as you
16 know, a tremendous upsurge of fellow feeling for the
17 United States, of which -- I mean, my recollection is
18 very strongly that Tony Blair was the person who most
19 articulated that and articulated a vision of a changed
20 world in those early days, and I notice that David
21 Manning described him as travelling "like a bat out of
22 hell" during that period. There was a huge programme of
23 travel around the world immediately on the back of 9/11
24 and in advance of a special European Council which the
25 Belgian Presidency called for 21st September, where

1 there was very strong unanimous support for the
2 Americans, support for military action in Afghanistan,
3 and Tony Blair did say to that meeting -- I don't think
4 he, as far as I know, referred to Iraq specifically, but
5 he did talk about there being people in the world
6 wanting to acquire and use biological and nuclear
7 weapons if they could.

8 He certainly spoke about there being an opening for
9 Iran and Syria to kind of reform themselves and come
10 back into the international community. Iraq didn't feature in
11 that
12 list, so maybe in his own mind Iraq was in a different
13 category.

14 The fact that this became his number one
15 pre-occupation -- I wrote him a minute the following
16 month before a further meeting of the European Council.
17 I had just come back from the European Parliament and
18 I said to him, "When I was at the European Parliament
19 last week, I found them much more interested in the
20 future of Europe than the future of the world. So what
21 I am about to tell you in my minute might all seem a bit
22 kind of virtual compared to what you have been doing".

23 So there was in a sense a little bit of: we had
24 a world view and perhaps some elsewhere in the European
25 Union, even though they were quite supportive, didn't
26 have that same view of the seismic significance of what

1 had happened.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's very important. I think we
3 would like to talk a bit more about that after a short
4 break. Just before that pre-9/11, can you recall much
5 consultation by the UK, for example, when we had the
6 policy review in early 2001 about Iraq, much
7 consultation with our European partners?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I can't, no. I don't recall, but that
9 doesn't mean to say it didn't happen. I certainly don't
10 recall it.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So basically before 9/11 as far as
12 most of Europe was concerned, Iraq was sort of second
13 order rather than first order?

14 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, very much so.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

16 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I think we will take a short break now
17 and then come back for 9/11 and what follows.

18 (A short break)

19 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Let's resume. I think you had just about
20 got to 9/11. Lawrence.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We were getting through 9/11 after
22 one day. You indicated that there was this sense of
23 solidarity with the United States afterwards, that sort
24 of global response the Prime Minister had been trying to
25 articulate was not necessarily being followed by other

1 states in the European Union. Is that a correct
2 interpretation of what you were saying?

3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, and I think that -- I mean,
4 certainly when you get towards the end of the year the
5 Prime Minister and President Chirac had a conversation.
6 I think it was person to person. It wasn't on the
7 phone, but I can't remember where it took place, in
8 November, which was mostly about Afghanistan, but -- and
9 indeed it was in the run-up to what became the Security
10 Council Resolution 1382 on Iraq. So Iraq was part of
11 the conversation, the Prime Minister saying "We need to
12 get that resolution", and President Chirac said he hoped
13 the Americans were not planning to bomb Iraq. The Prime
14 Minister said he thought that was unlikely but that the
15 next two or three weeks were crucial, and that if the
16 military campaign [in Afghanistan] stalled, and the
17 humanitarian situation worsened and if there was no
18 progress in the Middle East, there would be mounting
19 pressure in the United States for a different strategy.
20 So Iraq is kind of there as an issue.

21 In the December European Council, mid-December 2001
22 in Laeken, which was preoccupied with the whole question
23 of setting up a Convention which then became the
24 negotiation on the Constitutional Treaty, and
25 interestingly in terms of the relationship between Blair

1 and Chirac, everybody had expected that Tony Blair would
2 support the Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok to be the chair
3 of the Convention, and in fact Tony Blair agreed with
4 Chirac and because of his support for Chirac, which is
5 how Giscard d'Estaing became the chair of the
6 convention. So they were very much working together and
7 Tony Blair saw it as casting bread upon the waters in
8 terms of his relationship with Chirac.

9 In the drafting of the conclusions of that meeting
10 the Belgian Presidency did try and include a reference
11 to the need to seek approval of the international
12 community before any -- before there was any
13 geographical extension of operations from Afghanistan
14 to, for example, Iraq and the Prime Minister and
15 Schröder and Berlusconi and Aznar and Prime Minister
16 Van Aartsen got that deleted. Interestingly Schröder
17 was part of that group at that point.

18 So there were already a kind of few straws in the
19 wind, as it were, about some unease, which I think then
20 were reflected a bit more in March. There were -- I
21 don't know what was happening in March, what had
22 prompted it, whether it was something Dick Cheney had
23 been saying or what was coming out of Washington,
24 because at the General Affairs Council, the Foreign
25 Ministers meeting, on 11th March, the Italians asked

1 whether their partners had any insights into US thinking
2 on Iraq. The Luxembourgers said that Colin Powell,
3 had recently talked to Jean-Claude Juncker, their Prime
4 Minister, and told him that there was no programme to
5 attack Iraq. The Spanish presidency concluded that
6 present speculation that military action was imminent
7 was wide of the mark.

8 Then at the European Council in Barcelona in the
9 middle of March there was a conversation which I think
10 I mentioned earlier between the Prime Minister and
11 Chancellor Schröder, where apart from the interpreter
12 I was the only other person present, where Schröder
13 basically said that given the German political situation
14 there was no way anybody was going to ask Germany to
15 participate in military action in Iraq. There would
16 have to be prior Security Council authorisation. He
17 didn't think it would be forthcoming, but that Germany
18 did have in Kuwait Fox tanks, ie vehicles that could
19 detect fall out and they would leave those in place. He
20 didn't want there to be a war but that was the least
21 amount of solidarity he should show and he didn't want
22 to make Germany persona non grata in the United States
23 by not offering that degree of cooperation if it came to
24 it.

25 There was also in the margins of that European

1 Council a breakfast meeting between the Prime Minister
2 and Romano Prodi, the President of the Commission, at
3 which Prodi expressed concern about Iraq and Matthew
4 Rycroft's record has the Prime Minister -- it says:

5 "The Prime Minister reassured him that no military
6 action was imminent."

7 So there was clearly a kind of feeling it was
8 nonetheless there as something that was being
9 contemplated.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, there are two things going
11 on here, aren't there? There is a question of are the
12 Americans about to do something dramatic and military.

13 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And the fact that President Bush had
15 put Iraq very firmly on the table.

16 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, yes. Absolutely.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In 2001. Was the Prime Minister in
18 these sorts of discussions, were other European
19 countries focusing at all on the issue about how
20 therefore you get Iraq back into accepting inspectors?

21 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Not that I recall at that stage. I mean,
22 trying to think back about my own -- it is very
23 difficult to detach what one thinks now from what one
24 thought and knew then -- I can't remember thinking that
25 there was a moment when there was a real sort of

1 step change. To me it was more a progression like that
2 over the period of a year maybe with occasional -- I
3 don't remember, for example, kind of thinking that after
4 Crawford things were dramatically different than before
5 Crawford.

6 I do remember vividly David Manning when he came
7 back from the meeting he went to in July in Washington
8 and he was wheeled in to see the President and
9 I remember David Manning telling me, and I really did
10 say to him "Look if you are going to do this you can do
11 it on your own, but if you want to do it with coalition
12 and international support you have got to go the UN
13 route". That has always stuck in my mind as one kind of
14 defining movement. That was very much Tony Blair's
15 policy.

16 Nigel Sheinwald, as the Permanent Representative in
17 Brussels, was reporting in July at that same time that
18 Iraq had been deliberately kept off the EU agenda. So
19 there was clearly a sense that there was a capacity for
20 divergence ostensibly between us, and the French
21 probably having a different view and therefore that the
22 safe thing was not to talk about it in any formal sense.
23 Nigel was told by Chris Patten's Cabinet -- Chris Patten
24 was the Commissioner responsible for external
25 relations -- that there had not been a formal discussion

1 of Iraq in the General Affairs Council for three years,
2 and Nigel was saying at the time "We and the Americans
3 must obviously deny people the satisfaction of exposing
4 splits within the European Union", which does suggest
5 that there was already then in people's minds an issue that we
6 and the Americans were in a different position certainly
7 from the French. A question mark at that point how many
8 others. As we know, later there was a Franco-German
9 attempt to coalesce people around their view, and
10 an effort by us to do the opposite.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's moving ahead a bit. Just on
12 this period in terms of the unease that you were
13 describing around you, how much of that have was because
14 of a sense that their populations would be unhappy and
15 the goodwill towards the United States that had been
16 built up after 9/11 would be dissipated and so much of
17 it was a sense of the dangers to the Middle East and the
18 consequences for international order?

19 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think more of the latter. I think it
20 became more manifest in the autumn I think, a feeling
21 that the Americans weren't taking the Middle East peace
22 process seriously enough, which was constantly the
23 central pre-occupation of the European Union countries,
24 that the administration's view of the world was one
25 which might unwittingly encourage terrorism, because it

1 kind of split the world into kind of white hats and black
2 hats, as it were, good and bad and so on. I think that
3 was the unease, in other words, that this kind of
4 new-found unity after 9/11 which had coalesced in terms
5 of action in Afghanistan was being dissipated and that
6 we were on divergent courses. I think that was the
7 course.

8 I mean, it was probably fed by public opinion, but
9 I don't think it was primarily driven by public opinion,
10 as I recall.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You described how the official parts
12 of the European Union were not really dealing with Iraq.
13 It was too difficult and too divisive to have statements
14 emanating from the Council and the Commission on this
15 subject, but what about generally in terms of trying to
16 build support for a stronger line on Iraq? Was there
17 discussion with individual member states, perhaps even
18 around Council meetings?

19 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I mean again I can't put my finger
20 on it and I wasn't directly involved as the person doing
21 that. It would certainly have been done by Tony Blair
22 and by the Foreign Secretary and obviously by Peter
23 Ricketts in the Foreign Office. My sense is that
24 although it happened over time, there was quite early on
25 a common line between the Prime Minister and the Prime

1 Minister Aznar of Spain, who anyway had formed a kind of
2 coalition of views on economic reform within the European
3 Union rather to the irritation of President Chirac in
4 particular, one of whose pet themes was how you could
5 fly over Spain and see all the railway lines that France
6 and Germany had paid for going nowhere.

7 So the fact that there was this sort of
8 British/Spanish axis, promoting an economic view of
9 Europe which was not necessarily very congenial to Chirac,
10 was a factor.

11 My recollection is that Berlusconi in Italy was more
12 kind of nervous, probably because public opinion there
13 was always quite opposed. He was strongly Atlanticist
14 and became a kind of stronger supporter over time, and
15 then the Dutch, the Portuguese, Finns and Danes and to
16 a lesser extent the Swedes, were kind of broadly thought
17 to be of an Atlanticist persuasion, let us say.
18 I wouldn't put it more strongly at that stage.

19 Then over time, probably more from late 2002
20 onwards, the future accession countries were seen by us
21 from one side of the argument and by the French from
22 another as being very much supportive of a strong
23 Transatlantic Relationship and therefore support for the
24 United States, against the background where they had all
25 obviously emerged from the former Soviet Union, still

1 very fearful that Russia represented the main threat to
2 their continued existence. That was still a real factor
3 in their minds and therefore support from the United
4 States through NATO was their number one Foreign Policy
5 priority. I think their position on Iraq, as I saw it,
6 was a product of that view really.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What you are describing is the
8 filter through which this issue was being viewed is the
9 degrees of the Atlanticism.

10 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, yes.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is suggested the wording
12 President Bush agreed in September -- announced in
13 September that he was taking the issue to the Security
14 Council, a sort of collective sigh of relief. Would you
15 say that was a general European view that this was the
16 right course of action and might well be the way by
17 which war was avoided?

18 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, I think that is the case, although
19 I think that people may have been misreading it in this
20 sense, that clearly the UN route pointed in two
21 directions. It was indeed the means by which Saddam
22 Hussein could peacefully comply with the wishes of the
23 International Community, but because the Security
24 Council was acting under Chapter 7 and had acted under
25 Chapter 7, there was already once you started down the

1 UN route an implicit threat that if you did not comply, then
2, then consequences would follow. It is at that
3 stage President Chirac started to articulate what became
4 a very consistent view from him after that that there
5 had to be a two-resolution approach if there was going
6 to be war, but basically that war was not the answer.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there very much active interest
8 in the negotiation of 1441? Obviously France was very
9 involved in that but other European countries did they?

10 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think apart from those directly
11 involved as members of the Security Council -- I mean,
12 there is a sort of feature of life in the European
13 Union, which is that on big foreign policy issues there
14 aren't many key players. I mean, during the whole of
15 the 2002 Iraq/Pakistan nuclear crisis when we really did
16 think that those two countries were on the brink of
17 nuclear war --

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: India and Pakistan.

19 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I beg your pardon India and Pakistan,
20 when we really did think they were on the verge of war
21 and were prepared to take huge sacrifices in numbers of
22 civilian casualties, the European Union discussed it but
23 there was, I remember this vividly, the sense that these
24 were far away countries of which we knew nothing. The
25 British were doing something and the French were doing

1 something but primarily, insofar as it was not the two
2 countries themselves pulling back from the brink, it was
3 the Americans who were putting pressure on. There are
4 not that many European countries who have a proactive
5 foreign policy in the way -- I think if you ask most
6 member states they would say that the prime movers are
7 France and Britain with others, Spain, Portugal,
8 Netherlands, Italy to an extent, Germany with the
9 caveats around its constitution, you know, much less
10 a role.

11 So generally speaking the attitude of other member
12 states would be one of watching nervously and hoping
13 that agreement could be reached between the big beasts,
14 if you like. When the European Union on occasions did
15 address the issue collectively the language is always
16 very nuanced. It has to satisfy both a French view and
17 a British view and therefore other than saying "The
18 United Nations should be allowed to do its job, it
19 doesn't really say anything very concrete at any point".

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So really the logic of what you are
21 saying is the effectiveness of Europe as a whole depends
22 on the degree to which the British and the French can
23 reach a common position. If they can't reach a common
24 position, then Europe is bound almost then to be
25 divided?

1 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, and I think that particularly
2 applies where we are engaged, which obviously applies to
3 most big international issues, where we are engaged as
4 a permanent member of the Security Council.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a BBC series in 2007 you said
6 that President Chirac had argued that "While Saddam
7 Hussein could be overthrown, subsequent consequences
8 would be disastrous". You mentioned that earlier
9 I think. What specific warnings was President Chirac
10 giving about the aftermath of an invasion?

11 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think there are quite a lot of them
12 starting in September 2002 and then probably three or
13 four occasions in conversation with the Prime Minister.

14 I think my own view then and now was that whatever
15 else you may say about President Chirac, one of the
16 driving motives in his view was a view about war and
17 about the undesirability of war. One of the things that
18 is not in any of the records but I recall him saying
19 probably at Le Touquet at the beginning of 2003 was
20 "I was a young soldier doing my National Service in
21 Algeria. I know what war is like."

22 If you look at Chirac's memoirs, he talks about
23 a 14 year old Algerian boy blown up by a mine dying in
24 his arms. I think Chirac was 24 when that happened. So
25 I think that was real for him. When he talked about

1 "Shia majority is not the same as democracy"; "You will win
2 the war and lose the peace"; "There will be", as he said at
3 the European Council in February 2003, in the British
4 record with quotes around it "tens of thousands of
5 dead", and I think that was -- that wasn't just
6 rhetoric. I think that was a serious view, and whatever
7 else one may think about him as a politician, he did
8 have considerable knowledge of the region. When he told
9 Tony Blair that a resolution that didn't seek to get rid
10 of Saddam Hussein would get the votes of Syrians, it was
11 because the Vice President of Syria had told him that in
12 a telephone conversation. So all that was for real.

13 I don't think we took it seriously, and one of my
14 personal regrets is that I never said to Tony Blair --
15 I wish I had; I didn't -- "Should we not be looking at
16 this more seriously". I think it was viewed partly
17 through the prism that Chirac kept questioning whether
18 Saddam Hussein had WMD and because we were convinced
19 that he did have WMD we kind of wrote that off a bit.

20 Then I think because of all the traditions of
21 Anglo-French rivalry and Chirac's own personality -- he
22 was quite a volatile person and so on and so forth -- we
23 didn't give the things that he said the weight that they
24 deserved, but the thing that struck -- in my
25 recollections, borne out by going back through the

1 records, is how consistent he was over quite a long
2 period in expressing that view.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What you said just fits in with your
4 comment on that same television programme:

5 "Tony Blair never paid any attention to what Chirac
6 said."

7 Was that particularly on Iraq or was that --

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: In that context I meant specifically on
9 Iraq and what I was talking about was those -- were
10 those kind of views. I mean, I never felt that they
11 kind of resonated with Tony Blair. He just thought that
12 Chirac was plain wrong.

13 At one point in, I can't remember whether it was the
14 summer or autumn of 2002 when Chirac floated the
15 possibility of a second resolution because he was trying
16 to avoid a resolution that kind of tried to do both
17 things, and Tony Blair asked him whether he would
18 support a second resolution, and Chirac not surprisingly
19 didn't answer that directly, but he had a feeling which
20 quintessentially Tony Blair did not share, that the
21 American world view was one that was kind of departing
22 from the European view. He said at one point "These
23 guys have never been outside the ranch. What do they
24 know?"

25 He was much more critical of Cheney than of Bush.

1 He wasn't as hostile to Bush, but he was very hostile to
2 that Americana approach. He thought it would be much
3 more devastating in the wider region than it turned out
4 to be in terms of the fall of the Saudi Royal Family and
5 so on, but in terms of his predictions as to what might
6 happen on Iraq he was pretty close to what subsequently
7 happened.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So when Mr Blair told the House of
9 Commons before the invasion that the EU should have
10 spoken with one voice, that really was going to be very
11 difficult?

12 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think there is another issue here,
13 which is Tony Blair's view of the US relationship.
14 I mean, there is a precedent in fairly recent history
15 for a European foreign policy view on a very important
16 issue which is divergent from that in the United States
17 and that is Bosnia in the 1990s where the British
18 Government shared the European view, rightly or wrongly,
19 that it was wrong to arm the Bosnian Muslims because
20 that would create a killing field. That view was
21 maintained, including by the British Government, and led
22 to quite tricky relationships with the US for a period of time.

23 On a lesser issue, after the first invasion of Iraq,
24 when John Major decided to try to do something about the
25 plight of the Kurds through the safe havens policy --

1 this is talking about April 1991 -- we were on our way
2 to a European Council, where he was going to try to get
3 European support for the idea of safe havens.
4 I remember saying to him before we went into the
5 meeting, "Would you like me to call Brent Scowcroft, the
6 National Security Adviser, and tell him what we are
7 going to do?", and John Major said to me, "No. I want
8 to get the support of the European Union behind it and
9 then we will take it to the United States."

10 So that is not an inconceivable way to approach
11 things, but I don't think that was in Tony Blair's mind.
12 I think he saw -- I mean, it starts before 9/11, but it
13 kind of crystallised after 9/11, as there was a vital
14 role in support of the United States. He was the person
15 who could embody that. He was the person who could
16 deliver it to Europe. It was very much delivering
17 a view which he had formed himself and then with
18 President Bush and trying to persuade others of it
19 rather than trying to find common ground with others on
20 a halfway house.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: An example of that might be the
22 article which I think you mentioned before that appeared
23 at the end of January 2003 with the Prime Ministers of
24 the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Poland,
25 Portugal, Spain as well as the UK, which was entitled

1 "America and Europe Must Stand United". This was
2 a Spanish initiative.

3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: It was a Spanish initiative, strongly
4 supported by us. At that point relations had got --
5 relations between Blair and Schröder never really broke
6 down at this time. They broke down subsequently over
7 European issues at the end of 2003, but over Iraq they
8 didn't. I mean, they met on the eve of the war over
9 dinner in Downing Street and had a perfectly amicable
10 conversation, but things did get rather more tense with
11 President Chirac, not least because the French were in
12 a strong position as Permanent Members of the Security
13 Council, and there was a concerted effort by France and
14 Germany to say, "Our view is the European view"; in
15 other words, there is a European view and there's
16 a British view.

17 Part of that was to demonstrate that actually there
18 were two European views, and in those terms and in the
19 short-term -- and I remember there was a story around
20 that when President Chirac had read that letter, he
21 threw his coffee cup at the wall of his office in the
22 Elysee. I don't know whether it is true or not, but it
23 was illustrative of the kind of atmosphere at that
24 particular moment.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The French, Germans and Russians

1 responded on 10th February with a declaration of their
2 own, suggesting that the possibilities of disarmament
3 through 1441 had not yet been thoroughly explored and
4 just allow every opportunity for peaceful disarmament of
5 Iraq.

6 So how are these two statements affecting the broad
7 generality of European Union members? Were they nervous
8 about the polarisation within the organisation?

9 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, but there was a -- the meeting we
10 talked about earlier in late October 2002, where Tony
11 Blair had taken on Chirac on agriculture and enlargement
12 and so on, at the General Affairs Council the week
13 following Jack Straw felt in the room that there was
14 a sort of hostility towards Britain, and Nigel Sheinwald
15 wrote about it, basically saying -- I am not sure I can
16 find it -- anyway Nigel's basic point was, "This is
17 correct. Our partners are not so much giving us credit
18 for bringing the US along the UN route; they see us as
19 having veered westward and being more traditionally
20 British in our alliance with America than European."

21 You have to bear in mind that we are talking about
22 a Prime Minister in Tony Blair of whom the European
23 Union as a whole had had very high hopes in 1997. He
24 was a kind of superstar. I remember the first European
25 meeting he went to at Noordwijk on the Dutch coast.

1 They were all kind of lining up to have their photograph
2 taken with him as the guy everybody wanted to be seen
3 with, and even at this stage there were still hopes that
4 Britain might join the Euro.

5 Just before the war with Iraq when Tony Blair met
6 with Schröder in March, Tony Blair says, "I have two
7 ambitions for Europe. One is to repair the breach
8 between the EU and the US and the other is to take
9 Britain into the Euro. I need your help", and Schröder
10 said, "Of course you will have my help".

11 So there was a sort of feeling that the man they had
12 high hopes of perhaps transforming British European
13 policy had proved to be yet another British Prime
14 Minister in the traditional mould. I think that
15 accounted for the sense of hostility that Jack Straw
16 detected.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: From the British point of view the
18 objection is to the idea, as I think the Prime Minister
19 put it on 18th March in the Commons, of rival poles of
20 power with the US in one corner and France, Germany and
21 Russia in the other.

22 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I am not sure. I mean, I think there was
23 certainly a moment when I think that a number of things
24 combined and that was possibly a gleam in President
25 Chirac's eye, and there was certainly a feeling, you

1 know, around that period of real -- reports were
2 reaching us that he was basically saying, "I am
3 determined to destroy Tony Blair politically", but,
4 I mean, I don't think that there was a really kind of
5 thought-out plan.

6 I mean, Chirac is an interesting person. He is
7 a man who can lose his rag very easily, as we know,
8 telling the Central Eastern Europeans they should kind
9 of "put up or shut up" and, "Why are we letting you in
10 if you don't support the European line?", and then
11 a month later apologising to them and saying, "Sorry.
12 That's just the kind of guy I am. I lose it
13 occasionally".

14 Tony Blair told Cabinet just before the war that he
15 thought the whole row back in October on agriculture had
16 been kind of manufactured as part of this kind of move.
17 I think that was a product of the very heightened
18 atmosphere at the time. I have no doubt back in October
19 that what the French were doing was in a very classic
20 Chirac way pursuing French interests on enlargement, the
21 budget, the British rebate and the common agriculture
22 policy, I mean, absolutely. In fairness to Chirac and
23 to our dismay he was very good at it.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally from me -- and it
25 follows from what you just said -- Sir John Holmes told

1 us that France and Germany misjudged European support
2 for their positions and the consequence of that was that
3 they made the divisions worse.

4 I would be interested in your comment on that.

5 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think that's true. I think because
6 France and Germany had for so long, particularly in the
7 Kohl/Mitterrand era in the 1980s, been the leaders of
8 European thought on so many issues, on classic European
9 issues like political and monetary union, but also in
10 terms of the development of a European security identity
11 and so on. I think they were looking at the world, and
12 particularly pre-enlargement, not really calculating that
13 countries like Spain in particular and Italy --
14 Berlusconi was a very untraditional Italian Prime
15 Minister in his European views. He was the first
16 Italian --

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Many others, yes.

18 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Exactly, and then completely
19 underestimating the views of the Central Eastern
20 Europeans. I think it was a miscalculation. I think
21 they did believe that if they laid down a position,
22 particularly, of course, because for both of them it was
23 hugely popular at home -- you know, Schröder shifted
24 his ground on Iraq in order to win an election. Chirac,
25 reelected in those bizarre circumstances in April 2002

1 because of the Le Pen factor with an enormous majority,
2 but not a huge amount of popular support, found this was
3 an issue. I think he reached his view on it for very
4 genuine reasons, but found it also resonated with French
5 public opinion. I think they were probably misled by
6 the strength of their domestic opinion to think that
7 that would be something that they could take to the rest
8 of Europe.

9 That said, of course, in terms of their estimation
10 of public opinion in countries like Italy and Spain or
11 indeed Britain there was a difference between public
12 opinion, on the one hand, in those countries and
13 government policy, on the other.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

15 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Sir Martin Gilbert is going to take us
16 into the proposed Second Resolution in a moment.

17 You mentioned earlier that you were going to tell us
18 about a conversation you had with John Scarlett. Are we
19 getting to the right chronological point?

20 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Not completely, but near enough. You
21 will see why I say it. We went to Madrid in early March
22 I think 2003 for a meeting with Aznar, and for various
23 reasons, which I will not bore you with, we had to go
24 commercially rather than on an RAF plane. So I found
25 myself sitting next to John Scarlett.

1 John Scarlett said to me, "I really do" -- I can't
2 remember whether he said, "I lie awake at night" or "I
3 rack my brains over whether we have got this right", in
4 other words, whether we have got the intelligence
5 assessments right. He said, "I really do think we have.
6 I really do think we have got it right."

7 It stuck in my mind, because my thought at the time
8 was, "Here is the guy who is the sort of supreme
9 professional and they have really worked on this.
10 Whatever else is said ..." -- I mean, all of us who
11 worked on this issue in any way or in Number 10, and
12 because I had worked on it before for John Major, we
13 never had any doubts that the WMD was there. There are
14 all kinds of criticisms you can make, but that was the
15 given.

16 I can remember the shock, genuine -- I mean, Tony
17 Blair could not have acted the shock I remember when it
18 became apparent after the invasion that it simply wasn't
19 there.

20 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. Martin, over to you.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could turn to the proposed Second
22 Resolution, US, Spain and us tabled it on 24th February,
23 and it was to conclude that Iraq had failed to take the
24 last opportunity to comply.

25 Could you tell us what role you personally took in

1 the lobbying strategy for trying to secure maximum
2 support from the EU?

3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: None. I mean, I took -- rightly or
4 wrongly, I took the view that I was there. If they
5 wanted -- if David -- David Manning and I had adjacent
6 offices. If he or Matthew had said, "Look, we want you
7 to do X or Y", then I would have willingly done it, but
8 they were the people who had the contacts. David
9 Manning was as much in touch with President Chirac's
10 diplomatic advisor as I was, slightly more so, in fact,
11 because he had a separate European advisor who was
12 dealing with the kind of issues that I was dealing with.

13 So although obviously I kind of watched what was
14 happening and the eventual failure to get the
15 resolution, I wasn't involved in any of the lobbying.

16 I can see why it kind of seems -- I mean, I would no
17 more have thought that I should do that unasked than
18 David Manning would have thought that he should lobby on
19 the Agency Workers Directive unasked by me. Even though
20 it was Europe, it didn't mean that I was doing it.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So though there was a period of intense
22 lobbying, in a sense there wasn't a place for you or you
23 weren't called upon to participate?

24 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I wasn't called upon, no.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We have seen quite a lot of evidence at

1 this time that the French and German media were both
2 oscillating between support for their leaders and
3 concern that the strident position which they were
4 taking on Iraq was leaving Germany and France in some
5 way out in the cold, out on a limb.

6 Do you think there ever was a possibility, there
7 ever was an opportunity that President Chirac could have
8 been persuaded to support military action in Iraq with
9 or without a Second Resolution?

10 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Not at that time. I mean, there was
11 a conversation at Chirac's initiative between him and
12 Prime Minister Blair on 14th March, where I think
13 President Chirac was looking for some compromise and
14 said that, provided there was no ultimatum or
15 automaticity, he was open to a Second Resolution, but
16 that was, of course, the whole difference between us,
17 and we had got beyond the point in our own policy where
18 that was possible for us to contemplate, but I think it
19 is probably an indication of the fact that he didn't
20 want there to be a complete sort of bust-up over it.

21 That said, there had been a period before in January
22 where the bid was put in by Number 10 for the Prime
23 Minister to speak to Chirac, and it took three weeks for
24 the call to go through. So it wasn't all one-sided.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of Gerhard Schröder, I see

1 the dinner you referred to took place on 12th March, two
2 days before the --
3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. There was always a difference --
4 there was a difference in -- I remember Tony Blair
5 saying this, rather surprisingly in a way, that George
6 Bush sounded -- George Bush had a much dimmer view of
7 Chirac than of Schröder, which is surprising, because
8 in a sense Chirac had been consistent throughout, but
9 Schröder hadn't, but as it turned out relations were
10 more reparable after on the American side than with
11 France.

12 Interestingly Iraq didn't affect the personal
13 relationship between Prime Minister Blair and Schröder
14 in the way that, in the relatively short-term - because
15 it was repaired - it did with Chirac.

16 I mean, Matthew Rycroft's sort of briefing note to
17 the Prime Minister before that meeting of things he
18 might say says, "One of the things you might say to him
19 is he has almost brought about the downfall of your
20 government".

21 The two of them met privately before the dinner. So
22 something may have passed between them privately, but
23 the record -- I wasn't at the dinner. David Manning was
24 at the dinner, but the record of the dinner suggests it
25 was pretty amicable. Certainly when they get on to the

1 discussion of the Euro, Schröder is offering very strong
2 support and implicit in that means, "When it comes to
3 actually settling the rate between the pound and the
4 Euro zone, I will help you", which is quite
5 a significant thing to say if you are cross with
6 somebody.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You told the BBC that you'd been in the
8 corridor in Number 10 when Tony Blair and Alastair
9 Campbell, and I quote:

10 "... decided effectively to play the anti-French
11 card on the day after President Chirac's television
12 interview."

13 Did you interpret Chirac's words as ruling out the
14 possibility of future French support for Iraq?

15 SIR STEPHEN WALL: No, I didn't. I was absolutely clear he
16 had said "ce soir", "this evening". I can't remember
17 the precise nature of the conversation other than the
18 Prime Minister was giving Alastair his marching orders
19 to play the anti-French card with the Sun and others,
20 but I do recall after Alastair had started doing that,
21 so probably about lunchtime on that day, getting a call
22 from Joyce Quinn, now Baroness Quinn, former Europe
23 Minister, who said to me, "Stephen, do the Prime
24 Minister and Alastair know that what they are claiming
25 Chirac said is not what he actually said?" and I said

1 "Joyce, I believe they do know, yes".

2 So that was certainly my view at the time. I think
3 it's borne out by a telegram that John Holmes sent a day
4 or two later when he talks about "the interpretation we
5 had chosen to put on Chirac's words", and I think if you
6 look back at the text of the interview, what Chirac is
7 saying in response to the question, "Are you going to
8 veto?", he says, "Look there are two issues here. In the
9 Security Council you have to have nine affirmative
10 votes for a resolution and I don't think those votes are
11 there, but even if they are, if one of the permanent
12 members votes "No", then the resolution can't go
13 through. So whatever the circumstances", ie those
14 circumstances, "this evening France will vote "No"
15 because we do not believe that the conditions for
16 justifying a war with there."

17 So, you know, one can pussyfoot around this, but
18 I think there is no doubt that Tony Blair and Jack Straw
19 knew what they were doing. Certainly by the time Jack
20 Straw told Cabinet later in the week about Chirac's
21 outrageous behaviour, he would have known precisely what
22 Chirac had said.

23 You have to remember at this point the government
24 was fighting for its life. I remember about that time
25 Tony Blair coming into my room, because he was looking

1 for David Manning, and I said to him something fatuous
2 like, "You are going through the mill" or something, and
3 he said, "I am like a man walking across a precipice on
4 a tightrope with only a straw to balance with". That
5 was a reflection of how dire the domestic situation was,
6 because they did not know whether they would win the
7 vote in the House of Commons. As you know better than
8 me, in British politics playing the anti-French card is
9 a pretty sure fire successful card to play.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I with like to turn to something you
11 touched on with Sir Lawrence and that is the extent to
12 which EU member states in their own perception of our
13 policy considered that we were more interested in our
14 relationship with the United States than with Europe and
15 to what extent we were able to attempt to redress that
16 perception at this rather crucial time.

17 SIR STEPHEN WALL: It was certainly a pre-occupation, and to
18 his credit Nigel Sheinwald then in Brussels said on
19 a number of occasions that we should be doing more to
20 brief our partners, keep them informed, you know, and
21 there were always positive responses to that, in
22 particular from Peter Ricketts in the Foreign Office.

23 I can't remember that issue ever being discussed at
24 one of my coordination meetings, although insofar as the
25 issue arose out of, say, European Council, we might have

1 done, but I was seeing the correspondence, so I would
2 have seen Peter Ricketts' response, or if I was worried
3 about it, I might have said something to David Manning,
4 but it never became an issue in terms of my being
5 involved in how we addressed it rather than seeing from
6 the exchanges that it was being addressed. I think
7 efforts were made to brief people on the intelligence
8 and so on, but by the time you get to October 2002 and
9 the big bust-up which then led Jack Straw to detect
10 a feeling of hostility I think the different camps had
11 been formed and it would have been quite difficult to
12 shift things at that point.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to come back to the Prime
14 Minister's remarks in the House of Commons on 18th
15 March. I have two questions on them. I would like to
16 just read the whole passage, if I may:

17 "What Europe should have said last September to the
18 United States is this. With one voice it should have
19 said, 'We understand your strategic anxiety over
20 terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and we will
21 help you meet it. We will mean what we say in any UN
22 resolution we pass and will back it with action if
23 Saddam fails to disarm voluntarily. However in return',
24 Europe should have said, says the Prime Minister, 'we
25 ask two things of you: that the US should indeed choose

1 the UN path and you should recognise the fundamental
2 overriding importance of restarting the Middle East
3 peace process, which we will hold you to'. That would
4 have been the right and responsible way for Europe and
5 America to treat each other as partners and it is
6 a tragedy that this has not happened."

7 My two questions are. First of all, do you think it
8 is a realistic perception of what could have happened
9 and, secondly, in September 2002 was this something
10 which efforts were being made to put on the agenda?

11 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think it wasn't, and that's -- I mean,
12 the proximate cause of that is the difference of view
13 between ourselves and the French, and the French
14 obviously having a very decisive role in influencing
15 quite a lot of other members of the EU, if by no means
16 all or even necessarily half.

17 I think the flaw in that argument to my mind anyway
18 is the one that dismisses implicitly the Chirac view as
19 being an irresponsible view. I mean, although we chose
20 to interpret Chirac's view as there was no way he was
21 ever going to be prepared to go to war, that's not what
22 he said. What he was consistently saying was, "You have
23 to do this in two different ways" and, being strongly
24 against war, he said he was against war unless Saddam
25 Hussein did something disastrous.

1 So a more realistic European policy would have been
2 to say to the Americans, "Yes, we are with you, but in
3 our view war has to be the last resort, and while the
4 inspectors are there and the inspections are working we
5 have not got to that point. Therefore, this is not the
6 moment to go to war".

7 Now because we never entertained, or at least we got
8 ourselves into a situation where, even if we wanted to
9 entertain it, we couldn't, because we were on a kind of
10 rollercoaster leading to war, that would have been
11 a perfectly respectable view. It might not have got the
12 American -- the other shoe to drop in terms of the
13 Americans actively engaging on the Middle East peace
14 process, but their performance on that was not that
15 impressive anyway. I am not sure even if we had
16 followed Tony Blair's route that the Americans would
17 have made that deal in a way that they could have
18 delivered on.

19 The thing that -- I mentioned one thing I regretted
20 not saying. The other thing I regret never saying to
21 this day to Tony Blair was: "Are you really, really
22 convinced that we have got to the point of last
23 resort?", because -- I mean, I said it to others in
24 Number 10, because I didn't myself believe we had got to
25 that point actually. We could do enough to continue

1 disrupting Saddam Hussein for him not to represent
2 an immediate threat, and, you know, the fact remains --
3 this is slightly departing from your question -- my
4 personal view is this is not a matter of good faith or
5 anything of those things. Tony Blair, as you know, is
6 an honourable and decent man who had the interests of
7 his country at heart, but I do think that that issue of
8 judgment and the way that issue of judgment was tested
9 or not tested rigorously in the kind of way it might
10 have been is to me at the heart of it.

11 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much. That is very
12 helpful indeed.

13 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Right. Across to Sir Roderic Lyne.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just to wind up on the effects of Iraq on
15 our relations with Europe, you wrote in the Independent
16 in 2005 after your -- were you retired by then?

17 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I wouldn't have been writing in the
18 Independent if I had not been retired by then.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I assume not.

20 "The division of Europe over the Iraq war had turned
21 a crack into a fracture",
22 which you describe as "hugely damaging".

23 You also talked about how the Prime Minister was
24 able to repair -- he didn't fracture his personal
25 relationship with Schröder and you said he eventually

1 repaired his personal relationship with Chirac.

2 How long-lasting was this damage and particularly
3 obviously within the context of our relationship with
4 France and Germany?

5 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Well, we had -- there was -- I mean,
6 starting really with the October bust-up and then
7 carrying on and before the war started there was
8 something of a debate in Whitehall certainly between
9 Number 10 and the Foreign Office at official level about
10 what our stance should be after the war.

11 I did a minute to Tony Blair shortly before the war
12 in which I -- because I claim no foresight -- although
13 I was not in favour of going to war, I claim no
14 foresight in thinking if we did go to a war, it would be
15 a disaster. I did not foresee that in any way.

16 I thought quite quickly people would see that the
17 French view wasn't as dire as -- sorry -- what was
18 happening was not as dire as the French predicted, and
19 that we ought to construct a relationship which, while
20 obviously including good relations with France and
21 Germany, paid some regard to those who had been our
22 allies, notably the Spanish, Italians and Dutch and so
23 on.

24 That was quite a common -- it was a sort of shared
25 view, I would say, with the Foreign Office, and I think

1 John Holmes, as Ambassador in Paris, bought into it.
2 Clearly we had to repair relations with France, and
3 France and Germany would always be important, but the
4 idea of trying to construct a tripartite group that
5 would run Europe was simply not realistic. At that
6 stage I think that was also in Tony Blair's mind.

7 What actually happened, in a very Chirac way, Chirac
8 quite quickly said to the Prime Minister as early as the
9 first European Council in March, where they met kind of
10 privately -- the record says that he wanted
11 a relationship of a partnership and cooperation with the
12 US. I am sure it is a misprint. I am sure it means the
13 UK. The context is clear. He is talking about the UK.

14 I think what had happened in Chirac's mind -- and
15 this was certainly Tony Blair's view -- was that he had
16 actually kind of tried the idea of going back to a
17 Europe run by France and Germany, and however wrong we
18 might be over Iraq, it clearly had not worked in
19 European terms. Therefore if he couldn't beat us, he
20 had to join himself to us in some way.

21 There was a kind of *diner de reconciliation* in Paris
22 in June. David Manning and I went there, but we had
23 a separate meeting with officials while the two of them
24 met on their own. At that dinner President Chirac
25 basically said to Tony Blair, "Look, this enlarged European
Union is

1 going to be completely unmanageable. The only people
2 who can run it are you, the Germans and ourselves.
3 That's the way we want to do it. We want to have the
4 closest possible relationship with you".

5 Tony Blair was very taken with that. I have to say,
6 having lived all my life as a civil servant being
7 envious of this Franco-German relationship, I didn't disagree.
8 We all saw the dangers -- how do you square Aznar? How
9 do you square Berlusconi and so on -- but we thought
10 that was manageable. It did lead for a period to a very
11 concerted effort by the three countries to reach
12 agreement on a whole range of issues.

13 In particular, there had been a move by France,
14 Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands¹ earlier in the year
15 to offer their kind of facilities for European
16 headquarters for the European security operations, ie
17 not NATO, not national, but kind of EU headquarters. We
18 were virulently opposed to that. It was one of the
19 issues which was reflected in the draft of the European
20 Constitutional Treaty, and division between us and some
21 of our supporters like the Dutch and the Poles, on the
22 one hand, and France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg,
23 on the other, was holding up that very crucial bit of
24 the constitution. We were then under the Italian
25 Presidency.

¹ Sir Stephen Wall subsequently confirmed that this should be "Luxembourg".

1 As a result really of this meeting between the Prime
2 Minister and Chirac, Nigel Sheinwald and I on the Prime
3 Minister's instructions were sent to negotiate with
4 France and Germany a way through on this particular
5 issue, which we did, and which was endorsed -- the final
6 negotiation had to be done by Tony Blair and it was
7 endorsed by a meeting between the three of them in
8 September in Germany.

9 I mean, two things happened. One, I think that it
10 put the kibosh on Tony Blair's relationship with Aznar,
11 although Aznar lost office not long afterwards. It
12 didn't put the kibosh on his relationship with
13 Berlusconi, but Berlusconi was extremely and almost sort
14 of personally upset, and we went to Rome, and I remember
15 Tony Blair coming out of the dinner saying he was quite
16 sure when we got back to the hotel he would find
17 a horse's head in the bed, so upset was Silvio
18 Berlusconi. So that was a factor which made it more
19 difficult.

20 There was also the factor that France and Germany
21 had a decades-long history of cooperation across a whole
22 range of issues and were prepared to make real
23 sacrifices one to the other, which we in the British
24 system, partly because we are so intensively
25 coordinated, found it difficult to do.

1 So it started to get a bit scratchy quite early on,
2 but it was still there at the end of 2003 when Silvio
3 Berlusconi, as Chairman of the European Council, was
4 trying to put together the deal on the Constitutional
5 Treaty, and Chirac and Tony Blair and Schröder met for
6 breakfast on the first morning, and it was absolutely
7 clear that Chirac and Schröder were not prepared to do
8 a deal under Berlusconi's chairmanship.

9 That was not Tony Blair's view, but in a sense he
10 became the person who had to say to Berlusconi, "In
11 terms of Realpolitik you have simply got to recognise
12 that this is not going to happen".

13 So they were working together and they also kind of
14 reached a sort of informal understanding at that stage
15 that none of the three countries was going to have
16 a referendum on the eventual Constitutional Treaty when
17 it emerged.

18 So it was pretty close, but it came completely
19 unstuck in the first part of the following year, because
20 there was a big disagreement, which was more than about
21 personalities. It was about the direction of the EU,
22 over who should be the next President of the Commission.
23 Basically Berlusconi and Tony Blair led a group which
24 set out to defeat the candidature for the presidency put
25 forward by Schröder and Chirac and that did lead to bad

1 blood, but, of course, subsequently personalities
2 changed and I think by the time I left Angela Merkel was
3 really kind of on the horizon, as it were. Although
4 Tony Blair had got on well with Schröder, he was
5 beginning to think he would have to start afresh, as it
6 were, with a new German Chancellor.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So effectively then Iraq as a divisive
8 issue was fading into the background.

9 If I can now just look across the Atlantic briefly,
10 you talked earlier about the European disappointment
11 that in the end like previous British Prime Ministers,
12 Tony Blair had actually aligned himself with the United
13 States.

14 You have been quoted by Andrew Rawnsley as saying:

15 "Mr Blair was seduced, as most British Prime
16 Ministers are, by the relationship with the United
17 States and also his preference", and here you were
18 referring to discussing disputed trade issues in
19 a meeting with President Bush, "was to duck and weave
20 rather than have a confrontation."

21 Do you have feel that having declared after 9/11 in
22 particular and then consistently from then on that he
23 would be with the Americans, he would stand shoulder to
24 shoulder with them, he would support them in military
25 action, if that's what it came to, that Tony Blair

1 failed to use that influence to influence the Americans
2 on points that really mattered to us, including the
3 Middle East peace process, including planning of the
4 aftermath? Obviously he did achieve agreement with them
5 on going down the UN route?

6 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes. I wasn't at those meetings.

7 I think my particular comment did relate to trade issues
8 where from the records it seemed to me -- it seemed to
9 me that very occasionally in politics there is a moment
10 where you do need to say "Get your tanks off my lawn",
11 as it were, and there were moments in terms of the
12 American trade policy particularly when they were taking
13 retaliatory action against the European steel when that
14 was such a moment but, in general I think that within
15 the constraints of a policy that committed ourselves to
16 support of the United States, Tony Blair did try to use
17 his influence both in terms of the Middle East peace
18 process, certainly in terms of the aftermath. I mean,
19 I was not involved in any of the aftermath events, but
20 I can recall the intensity of the effort he made to try
21 to get a view across to the United States of what needed
22 to be done, and again in fairness, and slightly against
23 what I have said in that thing you quoted, on the issue
24 I mentioned earlier, namely the deal that we with the
25 French and Germans over European headquarters in the

1 context of security policy, they then rightly left it to
2 us to sell it to the United States and in particular to
3 Tony Blair to sell it to President Bush.

4 A lot of the British press, British conservative
5 press were desperate to get the Americans to say "The
6 British have abandoned the true path". I did sit in on
7 a video link conference between Tony Blair and President
8 Bush where Tony Blair did have to use all his very
9 considerable powers of persuasion to get George Bush to
10 agree this was the right way forward, and in the end
11 President Bush said: "I don't agree with you, I think
12 you are wrong but we just have to trust you on this
13 one".

14 In the end I think they subsequently thought they
15 were right to do so because the events that unfolded
16 were less dire than they feared in terms of primacy of
17 NATO and so on and so forth.

18 I don't want to -- I think the remarks you quoted
19 were probably too dismissive in that sense, but it is
20 certainly true that by comparison with some of his
21 predecessors Tony Blair was not a man who used tough
22 language in dealing with people, and certainly on the
23 whole tried to avoid confrontation.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Finally from me I would just like to go
25 back over some of the ground we were actually discussing

1 this morning with Tom McKane about his perception of the
2 decision-making process leading up towards the conflict
3 at Cabinet level.

4 Now you were able to observe from a very experienced
5 viewpoint those Cabinet discussions. Again you've been
6 quoted as saying that Tony Blair made up his mind in the
7 middle of 2002 that he was going to go to war. He
8 conducted the whole of the subsequent Cabinet meetings
9 very skilfully, but on the basis that he was driving the
10 policy and others were acquiescing.

11 That's a quotation from Andrew Rawnsley's book
12 again. Is it an accurate quotation?

13 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, it is, and I think that Tony Blair's
14 view was never that it's war, come what may. I mean,
15 it's absolutely the case that his view was consistently
16 that if Saddam Hussein complied and came clean about his
17 weapons of mass destruction and allowed them to be
18 dismantled, then there would be no war, and that was as
19 true on 18th March 2003 as at any time previously, which
20 is not to say he was not in favour of regime change, but
21 the objective of regime change was not the primary
22 objective.

23 I think from roughly speaking the middle of 2002
24 and, as I said before, in a way the espousal of the UN
25 route is part of that, I think we were committed to

1 military action if by peaceful means Saddam Hussein
2 could not be persuaded to give up his weapons of mass
3 destruction.

4 Alistair Campbell in his diary records Tony Blair
5 saying at the beginning of September he, Tony Blair, was
6 developing the line that the UN route was fine if it was
7 clearly a means to resolving the issue but not if it
8 means to duck the issue. I think that was always part
9 of his perception, and the letter of eight -- the
10 eight countries later on carries within it that
11 implication that the UN has to step up to the plate, but
12 if the UN doesn't step up to the plate, then there is
13 an obligation on those of us who take this issue
14 seriously and see its danger to do something about it
15 and in a sense we will become the bearers of the
16 responsibility of the international community.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: A point that really came out of our
18 conversation with Tom McKane this morning was that
19 through 2002 -- he left that particular post in the
20 autumn of 2002 -- you had an evolving process, but one
21 in which it is difficult to point to -- to identify
22 clear points -- points or point of decision.

23 Where you talk about the Prime Minister driving the
24 policy through Cabinet and others acquiescing in it, did
25 you feel, sitting in Cabinet meetings, that the Cabinet

1 were being briefed and carried along or were they
2 actually being asked tacitly or actively to give
3 approval, positively to endorse what was happening?
4 Were they being told "You don't have to decide now", or
5 were they being asked to decide, before you obviously
6 get to the very last moment in March 2003?

7 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Well, I think that at that stage you have
8 got -- you have got an approach which is saying here is
9 somebody who is a threat, a threat which has grown
10 considerably in the new circumstances post-9/11, and
11 whether you accept that or not that was very much Tony
12 Blair's view and on the whole, as I recall it, it was
13 not disputed in Cabinet, and therefore there is a very
14 important British and international interest in ensuring
15 that he cannot continue to develop those weapons of mass
16 destruction, which represent a threat, and if they fell
17 into the hands of terrorists, an even greater threat.
18 Something has to be done about that, and clearly what we
19 want to do is get the inspectors back in and use that
20 route to disarm him, but I think as soon as -- once you
21 are on that UN route you are very clearly also talking
22 about the enforcement of the will of the international
23 community.

24 So I think that while people were not -- people were
25 not being asked to take a decision, "Are you prepared to

1 embark on a route that could lead us to war?", because
2 although that was there in the background, what we were
3 striving to do was to achieve disarmament by peace.

4 I mean, I don't know. You would have to ask
5 individual Cabinet members, but I think it sort of -- it
6 didn't come on us by stealth in the sense something
7 dishonest was going on but there was never a moment when
8 Cabinet sat down and actually examined the issues one by
9 one. What is the real nature of the threat to the
10 United Kingdom interests? Is it so great that war is
11 a prospect that we should now be contemplating? Is our
12 approach of commitment to the United States the right
13 approach or is there a different approach? What are the
14 legalities? Those kind of structured discussions never
15 happened. At least as far as I am aware they didn't
16 happen.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. We have been told the subject came
18 up in Cabinet in a series of meetings, over 20 meetings,
19 but what is much less clear and is not terribly clear
20 from the opaque way that Cabinet meetings are written is
21 that these were substantive discussions of the kind you
22 describe.

23 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I can't -- I certainly can't remember
24 such a discussion, but that doesn't mean to say that --
25 that in itself is not an indication that it didn't

1 happen.

2 I think even reading the Cabinet minutes, knowing
3 the way these things are written, and having written
4 Cabinet minutes myself on Europe, not on this issue
5 self-evidently, you can see where dissenting or at least
6 doubting views are expressed and I think occasionally
7 you can -- at least you can think you hear the voice of
8 Clare Short or the voice of Robin Cook in those: 'On the
9 other hand, it was thought that ...' I don't think it was
10 more than that.

11 There is a factor here about the influence, or to be
12 honest, the lack of it within Cabinet of Clare Short and
13 Robin Cook. Very early on in the New Labour
14 administration when I came back from Brussels and I was
15 an ex officio member of the Europe sub-committee of the
16 Cabinet which Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary chaired,
17 there was an issue, which I will not bore you with, that
18 divided views. I from Brussels took the side of, as it
19 happened, the view which has been promoted by Robin Cook and
20 Clare Short in that meeting and Robin Cook summed-up in
21 that sense.

22 Peter Mandelson, who was a Minister in the Cabinet
23 Office and was at that meeting, said to me afterwards
24 "You should never intervene in meetings like that ever
25 again", and I said "Well, my job is to tell you how it

1 looks it me from Brussels". He said "No, no, you must
2 not forget that Clare Short and Robin Cook", and I can't
3 remember the precise phrase he used: it was not "They
4 are not one of us." but "They are not part of the inner
5 circle." He said "If you have a view in the future,
6 give it to me or you give it to Tony Blair". If I knew that and
other people

7 knew that, you could see when Clare Short intervened on
8 something, which, as I say, was usually rather germane.
9 She put her finger on things generally which were
10 politically significant, but not necessarily on the
11 agenda. People kind of rolled their eyes. Robin Cook
12 having been effectively dismissed as Foreign Secretary
13 in 2001 and was kind of in a backwater effectively.
14 However important the job of Leader of the House is, in
15 political terms he was in a kind of a bit of
16 a backwater.

17 So in a Cabinet of people who looked to Tony Blair
18 as the man who had led them to a massive victory in 2001
19 and was seen as a huge success, the fact that they² were
20 giving a contrary view would not have resonated as much
21 as might have been the case -- certainly would have been
22 the case, if say, in March Jack Straw had been
23 expressing in Cabinet opposition to the war going ahead.
24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So at what point do you think, perhaps
25 leaving on one side Robin Cook and Clare Short, Cabinet

² Robin Cook and Clare Short

1 members appreciated that they had endorsed a policy that
2 was very likely to lead us to war for which they would
3 share collective responsibility?

4 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I would say probably not before
5 January 2003.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did we by then have -- did they have
7 options at that point or had the dye been cast?

8 SIR STEPHEN WALL: They didn't have an option I think at
9 that point of going in the direction -- a different --
10 well, if Tony Blair had gone to the Cabinet -- and it
11 would still have been possible for Tony Blair to go to
12 Cabinet on the back of the failure of the second
13 resolution and say "This requires us to take a different
14 course". Indeed, as we know, that was what Rumsfeld was
15 kind of offering. It never, I think, entered Tony
16 Blair's head for a second to do something. He was very
17 determined.

18 Let's say for the sake of argument he had decided to
19 do that, I think he would have carried the Cabinet;
20 because of his majority, he would have carried the House
21 of Commons. It would have obviously been a huge
22 political issue in terms of his general standing, but if
23 you are asking me could he have done that and survived,
24 I think he could, but that was -- I mean, he had formed
25 a view with absolute conviction. He was convinced that

1 his view was the right view, and if that meant the end
2 of his career as Prime Minister, then that was the basis
3 on which -- it wasn't just gamesmanship. For him that
4 was really -- he saw these things as really fundamental
5 issues. So the notion for him of compromising in the
6 way I have suggested I don't think he entertained it.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

8 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Right. I think we want to turn in our
9 last set of questions to the reconstruction issues.

10 Usha.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Before I do that can I just ask
12 a question, because earlier on you said that you wish
13 you had sort of challenged him.

14 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Not so much challenged him. It is just
15 that, you know, this has turned out to be the biggest
16 foreign policy issue of my lifetime with a huge, huge
17 loss of human life. It was my view at the time
18 expressed to colleagues within Downing Street that I did
19 not think that war was justified at that point, because
20 I thought that war should be the last resort and we had
21 not reached the point of last resort.

22 Now I am not suggesting for one second that if I had
23 said that to Tony Blair it would have influenced him,
24 but I just wish that I had had the courage of my
25 convictions to do so, given what subsequently happened.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you don't think he would have
2 changed his mind?

3 SIR STEPHEN WALL: No, I am sure he wouldn't have changed
4 his mind. I mean, he was -- he was not a man impervious
5 to argument, but he was a man who made up his own mind,
6 didn't on the whole take you into his confidence.
7 I felt he had confidence in me to do what he wanted me
8 to do, but I never felt, for example, on the Euro,
9 although I knew he wanted -- his expressed view was that he
10 wanted to do it, I never really felt I was privy to the
11 innermost workings of his mind. Ditto when he decided
12 in the end to offer a referendum on the constitution.

13 I recall one meeting where Jonathan Powell asked him
14 something about strategy of a fairly basic kind and he
15 said "That's for me to know and you to find
16 out", which was a fairly odd way to respond. That was
17 very much -- you know, once he had made up his mind,
18 then he drove with great conviction and great
19 determination and skill to the end that he had set out.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Let's now turn to the EU's
21 involvement in the reconstruction of Iraq.

22 How accurate do you think was UK's analysis of
23 whether EU member states and the EU institutions would
24 help in the aftermath?

25 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I think fairly so. We had all kind of

1 frightened ourselves in terms of the bad blood between
2 European members. Even at the first European Council in
3 March there was on Day Two the beginnings of a sort of
4 thaw, both at personal level and in terms of the EU as
5 a whole wanting very much, with the UN in the lead and
6 an important role for the UN, to support the aftermath
7 process, and I think Chris Patten as the Commissioner
8 responsible for Foreign Policy had already started to do
9 some sub rosa work on that. There were particular
10 issues I was not directly involved in as to how far the
11 French in particular and the Germans were prepared to go
12 and how far the UN was involved on the ground doing
13 support out of Iraq and so on.

14 I mean, I think there were two factors. One was the
15 genuine factor of wanting to help rebuild Iraq, and the
16 UN -- sorry -- the EU's humanitarian effort worldwide is
17 second to none in general, and I think also the fact of
18 the matter is that most EU member states are members of
19 NATO. The Transatlantic Relationship is hugely
20 important to them for all kinds of reasons, defence
21 policy, policy more generally, economics and commerce.
22 So a desire to find some common ground with the United
23 States where relations could be repaired. I think all
24 those factors were at work, and it would certainly have
25 been very much part of Chris Patten's mindset and Javier

1 Solano as High Representative to make that work.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think we were effective on

3 the way we consulted the member states and the EU

4 institutions on proposals as to what became the EU

5 Security Council Resolution 1483?

6 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Again I wasn't directly involved.

7 I think so. In that kind of operation particularly in

8 kind of actually putting together something which can

9 work in terms of the way the institutions can respond,

10 you know, on the whole the British machine has been good

11 at doing that.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think the resolution 1483 had

13 an impact on the attitude of members towards

14 contributing to the reconstruction effort and did that

15 translate into any tangible support?

16 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I can't say. I don't know. I am afraid

17 I don't know.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you have any idea what the views

19 of the EU were on the role of the United Nations in

20 post-invasion Iraq?

21 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Well, the EU wanted -- I can't remember.

22 I mean, there was a debate about the exact formula, as

23 you know, but the common point of agreement within the

24 EU in the run-up to war had been the role of the UN and

25 the UN Security Council that had to be expressed in

1 words that could embrace both us on the one hand and the
2 French on the other, but that was a focal point for most
3 member states.

4 So coalescing round the language of a resolution
5 that embraced that and that did put the UN upfront,
6 because that then was -- that gave everybody something
7 around which they could form without kind of losing face
8 or without sacrificing a point of principle, because the
9 UN was obviously the responsible organisation, seen to
10 be impartial, have the wherewithal to do it, etc, etc.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did we convey that to the US in were
12 we acting as a proper conduit in terms of building that
13 bridge post aftermath?

14 SIR STEPHEN WALL: My recollection is yes. It was important
15 for us. I mean, one of the consistent points of British
16 policy, and this was very much Tony Blair's view, was
17 always to try and have an international coalition. That
18 was the main reason why, starting with David Manning's
19 visit in July 2002, he had argued for the UN route, that
20 that was the obvious way in which you built a coalition,
21 or possibly the only way you could build a coalition.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The fact that the EU, and we wanted
23 the UN to have an important role after the invasion, did
24 that make any difference to the US's attitude towards
25 the UN role? Did that influence how the US viewed the

1 UN role?

2 SIR STEPHEN WALL: Yes, I think so. I mean, as you know,

3 there were divided views within the administration, and

4 the UN generally was not the flavour of the month. I think
5 from an American perspective also it was quite important

6 to get -- once the invasion happened - to get the

7 international community engaged, I mean, for political

8 reasons as well as economic reasons.

9 So I think they could see that the UN route, even if
10 it might not be their preferred route if they could have
11 found another way, was the way you had to go. In terms
12 of realistic assessment my recollection is that they
13 were certainly persuaded of that.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: A number of military witnesses have

15 spoken about assuming that other nations would

16 contribute militarily to Iraq after the invasion and the

17 rapid withdrawal of UK military troops was in part based

18 on this.

19 From your perspective to what extent was the

20 expectation of military contribution from others among

21 the EU member states well founded?

22 SIR STEPHEN WALL: I find it hard to remember. I have

23 admittedly a rather vague recollection that our hopes

24 were higher than the reality, but beyond that I can't at

25 this distance recall I am afraid.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Thank you.

2 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Well, I think we have come pretty much to
3 the end of this session. I would like to ask you,
4 Stephen, whether there are any final reflections you
5 want to share. We have heard a great deal I think in
6 the course of this afternoon, but if there is something
7 that's particularly at the front of your mind that we
8 have not gone through, now would be a opportunity.

9 SIR STEPHEN WALL: No. I made a note of the things I wanted
10 to say and I think I have said them. Thank you.

11 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: In that case thanks to you, Sir Stephen
12 Wall, as our witness and to all who have been present
13 throughout this afternoon's session.

14 We will resume again at 9.30 am on Friday this week,
15 Friday, 21st January, when our witness will be the
16 former Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair.

17 I need to emphasise that entrance is limited to
18 those who have been allocated seats by the ballot.
19 There will be no admittance to the QE2 Centre for the
20 public in general on Friday.

21 With that I'll close the session. Thank you.

22 (Hearing concluded)

23 --ooOoo--

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