

Private and personal10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Director of Communications and Strategy

19 March 2003

Dear Richard:

You may have seen David Aaronovitch's column in the Guardian yesterday, I hope that it was considered seriously in the BBC. The point he was making was underlined several times on this morning's Today programme. First, when it continued to refer to out of date polls which predate polls showing growing support for action; second in giving far greater prominence to the Commons vote on the amendment, than the motion which authorised military action, which attracted a far smaller rebellion. Nor could I help noticing that the paper review was largely about Clare Short, when the papers were dominated by the vote and the Prime Minister's speech.

Put all that to one side. I would like you to justify the following five incidents.

1. John Humphreys to Mike O'Brien: "You went into the process determined to have a war. That was the point I was making and that is the way it has turned out, hasn't it". We are all well used to the contempt Mr Humphreys displays to elected politicians (unless they are "rebels") but this was particularly contemptuous. How, given the extraordinary efforts the Government made to secure a new Resolution at the UN, can such a "point" be justified?
2. John Humphreys today: "The Conservative Party effectively saved their (the Government's) bacon. "True or false?".
3. Tom Carver at the UN on the day we withdrew the draft SCR.

"A clear majority in the Security Council basically said that George Bush's idea and concept of pre-emptive military action was just as dangerous to law and order throughout the world as Saddam Hussein."

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"This is not diplomacy that we're witnessing here but rather an unseemly scramble by individual countries to salvage their own reputations in all this for the history books. The attempt to blame the French is frankly a canard. The reason that the British and the Americans killed off their own resolution is not because of the threat of a veto but simply because it didn't have the support in the Security Council. And the longer I have watched this go on the more obvious that has become. Frankly they would have been better off if they'd never tried this at all."

"America came here to try to sell its view of the world. But failed to make the sale. Its diplomacy was heavy-handed, even inept at times. Many of Bush's own team were openly scornful of the whole diplomatic process. They talked all the time about the need for American security after 9/11 but very little about the global context. Yet despite all of that, we all assumed the sheer weight of American power would prevail. But it didn't. Five months of bargaining and arm-twisting produced the staggering result of winning over Bulgaria".

This is not reporting, but editorialising. Could you justify each of these three statements.

4. Andrew Gilligan said on the Today programme today that "innocent people will die here in the next few hours". Could you justify that statement to me.
5. Ragab Omar in Baghdad on Tuesday quoted what he called an "ordinary Iraqi" as saying "I know that British and Americans say they'll spare civilian targets this man said but few of us believe them. I think they're just going to bomb everything and most of us are going to stay in our homes".

As I have said to you before, and as John Simpson has acknowledged, reporters are not free in either their movements or who they speak to. What is more, any "ordinary" Iraqi who speaks to the media knows that if they say anything that would offend the regime, they risk punishment up to and including death. This is why it is so important that restrictions are referred to. I regret that in your previous correspondence you fail to see this point. For my part, I feel you are in regular breach of your own guidelines.

Finally, let me just take one issue in more detail, namely the legality of military action without a new SCR, to illustrate the selection towards anti-war, anti-government stories.

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Coverage on the 'legality of the war' has been heavily biased toward stories asserting the war would be illegal without a second resolution.

7 March: 16 lawyers write to Guardian warning pre-emptive self-defence would be illegal.

Today programme and WATO gave widespread coverage to this story - interviews with lawyers, lengthy discussions etc. It was high up their running orders.

- Today only interviewed anti war lawyer
- WATO interviewed on anti and one pro (but concluded that without 2nd resolution the case for action not as strong)

13 March: John Humphreys Speaking to Ann Clwyd: "I repeat that there are horrible leaders all over the place and in this particular case it appears that the government's own legal advisers are telling them that this would be an illegal war. You support it none the less?" Based on what, might I ask? His assertion has never been corrected.

14 March - calls for government to publish legal advice

The tone of the reports was that government is concealing advice because it doesn't back war without a 2nd Resolution.

The Today programme gave this widespread coverage, interviewing anti war Labour MP and Tory MP who asserts the rumour is the AG's advice is at odds with Cabinet.

WATO interviews anti war lawyer.

17 March - AG publishes legal advice making clear the above stories were wrong.

Hardly any coverage on the BBC.

Today interviews Lord Goodhart (LD legal affairs) and Ross Cranston (Labour MP and QC) (pre publication)

WATO don't cover the story.

One liner on R5: AG to set out grounds in Lords statement (1200)

One liner on PM: Goldsmith says war legal w/out 2nd resolution.

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I know you will try to justify this. You always do. But it is wrong.

You may be interested to know that the Prime Minister has also expressed real concern about some of the reports he has seen and heard. I feel strongly that if the BBC reporting continues as it is, this will become a public controversy, which I am sure neither of us particularly want.

You are

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Richard Sambrook
Director of News
BBC

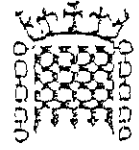
RS

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cc Richard Sambrook

From: The Rt. Hon. Gerald Kaufman, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20 March 2003

Private & Confidential

Gavyn Davies
Chairman
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place W1A 1AA

Dear Gavyn

I have been in touch with Alastair Campbell, as a result of which he has shown me a letter dated 19 March that he has sent to Richard Sambrook concerning violations of the BBC's war guidelines. I have myself been watching and listening to the BBC coverage of the prelude to the war and now the war itself, and I am extremely concerned at what appear to me to be blatant violations of the guidelines. This is a very tense time. The BBC has been trusted over the years, and violation of these guidelines is in my view a violation of that trust. I therefore look to you, as a matter of high speed and urgency, to have this situation rectified. If I feel it appropriate to do so, I shall be in touch with you over the next few days with further examples.

Yours sincerely

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