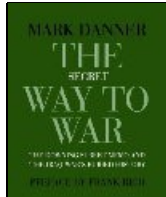


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Book Review
The Secret Way to War
The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History
by [Mark Danner](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: October 10, 2006

In July 2002, eight months before the US invaded Iraq, senior British officials met with Prime Minister Tony Blair. The minutes of the meeting, now known as the Downing Street Memo, include the summary of a visit to the US by Sir Richard Dearlove, known as "C." Dearlove was the head of MI6, the British equivalent of the CIA. Here is an excerpt from the memo:

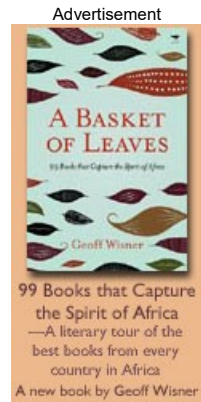
C reported on his recent talks in Washington. There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy. The NSC had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime's record. There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action.


When the Downing Street Memo was revealed, it received extensive coverage in Britain but was largely neglected by the US media. Although it proved that critics of the war were right all along, the press argued that it was "old news" — those points had been made long ago (though drowned out by administration propaganda) so why bring it up again? The memo was just a painful reminder that the news media had let themselves be duped.

This short book, which includes the full text of the Downing Street Memo and other relevant documents, is important not just because it makes a concise, solid case for one of several impeachable offenses, but because it lays bare how journalists and politicians struggled not to understand what was going on. We have been treated, says Mark Danner, "to the vaguely depressing spectacle of a great many very intelligent people struggling very hard to make themselves stupid."

About the Reviewer

Geoff Wisner is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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