AM: David Davis, MPs can't, as it were, prosecute Tony Blair for an illegal war or anything like that. We don’t have impeachment as the Americans do, in this country. So what can you do?

DD: No, we’ve been trying to get that through the House authorities for a while. It’s impossible. I mean, it’s out of date, that impeachment procedure. So what we’re going to do instead is I’m going to put down a contempt motion, a motion which says that Tony Blair has held the House in contempt. Now it’s a bit like contempt of court, the same sort of thing.

AM: By lying to the House? Because the Chilcot report doesn’t say he lied.

DD: Well, this is interesting, Blair claims oh, Chilcot did not say I was a liar. Chilcot wasn’t asked to rule on that. Chilcot was asked to rule on the causes of the war and the consequences of the war, not on whether Tony Blair lied or not. Now, if you look at – just at the debate alone - on five different rounds the House was misled. Three in terms of the weapons of mass destruction; one in terms of the way the UN votes were going; and one in terms of the threat and the risk. Now, the point is, he might have done one of those accidentally. But five? Five different deceptions on the House?

AM: So this is contempt motion in the House of Commons. First of all, do you have the numbers to get this through, do you think?

DD: We don’t know. I mean, the group that started it were about 20 MPs from all parties. But everybody I talk to thinks that there has been, as it were, a trial, but there’s no verdict. And the House
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has to deliver a verdict. I mean, I talk to members of the families, lawyers, soldiers, they all want a verdict, and that’s what this is about. Delivering a verdict on Tony Blair’s taking us into that war.

AM: The next question is when does this happen?

DD: Well, I’m going to put down a contempt motion on Thursday of this week, and if the Speaker accepts it and I think the odds are good because it’s a public interest thing.

AM: The word is that it’s likely.

DD: It’s likely, I think, to be the next week, the very next week, so before the end of term.

AM: So if this happens next week and the Commons votes for the contempt motion, what happens next to Tony Blair?

DD: Well, that’s an interesting area of debate. I mean, the Government might choose to strip him of his privy councillorship, for example.

AM: The Government could do that, and that would be a big deal.

DD: Well, it’s been done before. I mean, Jack Profumo lost his privy councillorship for lying to the House. And that was just about a sex scandal, not about something that led to 150,000 innocent Iraqi’s being killed, maybe millions dying as a consequence, destruction of the Middle East.

AM: Would Tony Blair have to come to the bar of the House of Commons to answer?
DD: That’s another possibility. The reality of this is that the House can’t drag him there. If they summon him and he doesn’t turn up –

AM: Nothing can be done.

DD: - nothing happens there. So it’s a question of persuading the authorities to take the next step. And I think a government would have to take this seriously. They did it with Profumo, and this is much more serious than that. Much, much more serious than that.

AM: Now, you clashed with Theresa May a bit in the old days over civil liberties and other things.

DD: I probably still will in the future.

AM: You’re now backing her campaign. We’ve talked a lot about Andrea Leadsom, she’s a fresh face and so forth. Do you think that she is fit to be a British prime minister?

DD: Well, look, she’s intelligent and charming and so on, but I think what the events of the last week have demonstrated is that she’s come under a bit of pressure because leadership contests, as I know to my cost, are somewhat pressurised. But they’re nothing like as pressurised as being prime minister. What we’ve seen, I don’t think I’ve seen malice in this last incident, the so-called ‘Mothergate’ thing, but inexperience. And inexperience in that, in her response to that, inexperience in her proposals to trigger Article 50 the moment she wins - if she were to win. There are lots and lots of things she’s done in the first week or two which show really she’s not got the experience. I mean, she’s a junior minister at the moment and she’s leaping to the most difficult job in government at the most difficult time in our history.

AM: So people talk about the glass cliff, not the glass ceiling. But you take a women into a really difficult position and there’s a cliff and you push her off it.
DD: Well, it’s – in fact it’s not about whether she’s a woman, but actually the wonderful aspect of this is whoever wins we’re going to have another woman prime minister. And you have to apply the same standards to both Theresa and to Andrea.

AM: And you think she’s just a bit lacking in experience?

DD: I think it’s not intelligence, I don’t think it’s goodwill. I think it’s just experience which is the weakness. And that will change with time of course, but at the moment she’s too inexperienced for a really important job at the most important time in our history.

(ends)