

Q: The only “Third Way” event I was aware of in Washington was the one right after the NATO at 50 Summit, at the Democratic Leadership Council.

Powell: Well, no, there was one in the White House in—the last time we were there. . . . That would have been the year before. It was ’98. . . .

Q: Are you aware that then-Senator Gore met with Prince Philip to discuss their mutual passion for ecology?

Powell: I didn’t. That’s interesting. I’d never heard of that. . . . I know that the Vice President is a good friend of Prince Charles here, who also has a great interest in the subject. . . .

I think they [Gore and Blair] didn’t actually meet until after the Prime Minister was already Prime Minister. I know that I did introduce Tony Blair to a number of Al Gore’s aides, after his victory in ’92, when he was in Washington. As I recall, he did not meet Al Gore at that time, but he met people like Elaine Kamarck, and others who worked for the Vice President.

Q: Elaine Kamarck is working on “reinventing government.”

Powell: That’s right.

Q: And, I believe Prime Minister Blair has adopted this program?

Powell: Exactly. We’re also engaged. As he [Blair] said in his speech in Chicago last week, we are very much emulating what Vice President Gore has started. . . .

Q: Do you find that Vice President Gore is very open to Prime Minister Blair’s views on the Kosovo matter?

Powell: Well, I would say that the two of them share a common viewpoint on many of these issues, not just on Kosovo, but also Iraq. But, again, as I say, they come from very much the same sort of ideological stable, so their approaches are very similar. . . . I don’t think they’ve ever discussed the question of ground troops at all in Kosovo. . . . They didn’t during his most recent visit [during the NATO summit], because the Vice President, as you say, was out of town campaigning. So, no, they didn’t discuss it this time, but they have in the past. Indeed, on Iraq and other national security issues, they have often had conversations.

Q: What have I left out that I might find of interest in the relationship between Prime Minister Blair and Vice President Gore?

Powell: Well, I’m not sure. I think we’ve covered most of the territory there. I mean, as I say, I think that it’s a very warm relationship. . . . Both, you know, [are of] the same sort of generation, and come from essentially the same ideological stable. I think it’s a close, warm relationship. I think it’s a close, warm relationship, which we hope to see continued in government for some time to come.

Interview: Robin Renwick

Lord Renwick is a former British Ambassador to the United States. Today, he is with Fleming Bank in London.

Q: Johnathon Powell said that you had gotten to know Vice President Gore when you were Ambassador to the United States. Could you tell me something about that?

Renwick: Right. Well, since Vice President Gore was my neighbor and, you know, a very good friend during my time as ambassador in the U.S.—you know he has this currently rather wooden public image; we all know about that—that, in fact, in private, he is actually an extremely relaxed and entertaining and interesting person. Always very good fun.

He came to dinner with me—I remember—the night before he did his famous debate with Ross Perot. And, we had a whole bunch of Washington dignitaries at the dinner. And, every single one of them was telling him it was a great mistake to be in the debate with Perot, except me. Actually, I was convinced he was doing absolutely the right thing. And, of course, in that debate he did extremely well, and I think it was a decisive moment in deflating Perot. You know, I think that was a favor he did to everybody, actually.

So, my own experience of Vice President Gore has been a very good one. And, I had a lot to do with him about the crisis in Bosnia. He’s a very strong internationalist. He’s an exponent of free trade. He takes America’s security responsibilities around the world very seriously.

And, he’s very, very fortunate in his family, because, as you well know (as everybody knows), his wife, “Tipper” is absolutely charming, extremely good fun, a very dedicated person. And, it is true of the rest of his family, too. You know, his daughter occasionally came to dinner, as well as the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. And, she’s good at dealing with people who come from different political camps.

Sometimes, when I was there, I would take [former British Prime Minister] Margaret Thatcher, whenever she came through town. He got along pretty well with her, not the least because they agreed about Bosnia.

Q: I suppose that as a “New Democrat,” which is similar to Prime Minister Blair’s “Third Way,” they would have had several issues in common.

Renwick: Yes. That’s true. He has established a very good relationship, as Johnathon will tell you, with Prime Minister Blair. And, I can only say that, you know, he was a good friend while I was in Washington. And, my experience with him has been a very positive one. And, as you realize, I’m entirely non-party line. It’s not for me to say whether a Republican or a Democrat should be President. But, I don’t think there’s any doubt that Al Gore has been a very good Vice President indeed.