

The Anglophile Vice President, Al Gore, Jr.

by Scott Thompson

EIR has documented, through the statements of sources close to Buckingham Palace, that Vice President Al Gore, Jr. has met with, and is a close collaborator on ecological issues with Prince Philip and with his son, Prince Charles. According to Johnathon Powell, who has known Gore for more than a decade, and is now British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Chief of Staff at 10 Downing Street, Gore is also a good friend of Blair and a host of officials who have served at the British Embassy in Washington, including Powell (when he was the number-three person at the Embassy) and former Amb. Lord Robin Renwick. The following interviews with Powell and Lord Renwick, conducted by Scott Thompson on April 30 and May 4, respectively, show that Gore is a strong adherent of the U.S.-U.K. "special relationship."

Interview: Johnathon Powell

Q: I understand you were a close friend of Vice President Al Gore, Jr. Is that correct?

Powell: Well, it would be a bit of an exaggeration to say a "close friend," although I would certainly say a great admirer. I first came across the Vice President when I was with the British Embassy in Washington in 1991. And, I was — had the privilege of accompanying him on a campaign swing. . . . I was particularly pleased to be able to do that: to go along on a trip with him campaigning and to also see him relaxed and at his humorous best, as he can sometimes be when he's traveling around like that. . . .

Q: At the time you worked at the Embassy in the United States?

Powell: Yes, that's right. I was the political officer at the Embassy. . . . Obviously, the Embassy is next door to the Vice President's residence. And, I know that the Ambassador there, Robin Renwick, Sir John Kerr, and also his successor, [the current ambassador] Sir Christopher Meyer, have gotten to know the Vice President very well as a result.

Q: I understand that Al Gore's father was a protégé of one of the leading U.S. supporters of Sir Winston Churchill. Did you ever discuss this with Vice President Gore? I understand

that he himself is an Anglophile.

Powell: He's a great Anglophile. I would be pretty — although I can't swear to it — but, I am pretty sure that he has discussed those sorts of issues with the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. As you know the Vice President was here relatively recently — what, two months ago? . . .

And, he was staying at Chequers, and had a really good chance to talk to the Prime Minister, while staying at a place that Churchill himself loved very much indeed. So, I'm sure they would have talked a good deal about Churchill when they were there, as far as his father's relationship with him.

Q: I understand that they put out a joint communiqué on e-commerce. Were there other matters of major importance discussed?

Powell: Yes, well, they did, they really covered the whole range, because of the chance of staying there and having dinner and everything, they had a chance, really, to discuss everything from e-commerce, to the environment, to the international situation (Iraq and so on). They also drove down together in a car, and they had a really good talk. The Prime Minister told me afterwards he'd been absolutely overwhelmed by Al Gore's knowledge of technology and science and the ways they applied to the future. He said he had never met a world statesman who had quite such a breadth of knowledge, quite such a range of subjects that he was interested in and enthusiastic about and knowledgeable about.

Q: They seem to have several issues in common, which I think deal with what Prime Minister Blair calls "The Third Way": the information superhighway, welfare reform, ecologically sustainable development, global warming —

Powell: I would say ideologically very similar, because they come from very similar positions. You know, as a "New Democrat" Al Gore has been one of the first people in the DLC [Democratic Leadership Council], and Tony Blair has been reforming the Labour Party and putting it into this "Third Way" position. And there are also similarities between those two approaches. I think that's something that they find they have in common, and, as you know, the Vice President has been involved in a number of these "Third Way" events, that we've had both in Washington and here in England, and, so, I'd say he's very much in the same sort of stable ideologically as the Prime Minister.

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.