

by way of preparation for the meeting the prime minister was going to chair. I know that I'm employed by the prime minister and I work for him, but what genuinely struck me, and I've seen him in many many circumstances, was that he was onto all the main points straight away, including some of the longer-term main points. You know, issues to do with weapons of mass destruction that would possibly flow beyond this, problems in relation to Muslim opinion in Britain, potential difficulties of wedges that people might try to drive between different races, [between] different parts of the world, how the Pakistanis would react, how the Russians would react. In other words, their responses to what was going on at that time were going to be very very important and would help to frame the subsequent responses.

You were hearing people who were saying, not least on the media, the Americans are bound to do something very very quickly, and the prime minister's sense even then was that they would want to build as big and powerful as possible a coalition for any action that had to be taken. And also in a sense because it was, in American psychological terms, such a huge powerful, almost cataclysmic event, I think he understood that George Bush would get from the American people whatever he required and that would include time. [He understood] that in a sense, whilst it was the obvious response to say, ah well, the Americans are bound to want the administration to lash out. In fact the response of the American people in his view was quite clearly going to be the American people would let the American administration deal with this as they saw fit.

Q: What happened at the meeting when you got back here?

CAMPBELL: I think my recollections of that meeting were that it was very practical and it was very focused on what we had to do for us, as it were, here and now. It was about airports, it was about police, it was about similar attacks being mounted. It was a very kind of detailed discussion about what we did here.

Right from the start in all the many contacts that the prime minister had, the sense you got was of people really just framing a response in their minds and then working towards how that response would then be executed. In all three of the main areas that people were thinking about at that time, which were obviously the diplomatic response, the way we were then going to have to deal with the specific problem which, by then, I think everybody believed to be al-Qaeda, the Taleban, and then very quickly on to some of the other questions that were going to flow from that.

I was struck, for example, just how quickly many of the other leaders were onto the point about the potential of the humanitarian catastrophe developing fairly quickly.

Q: Did you detect more nerves in Europe than you found here?

A: I think our sense of those early contacts with the French and the Germans and the Russians and others, [was that] they were in the same place as us.

I think I'm right as well - I can't remember which of the discussions with Chancellor Schroeder - but Chancellor Schroeder making absolutely clear,

which was a huge thing for them, that if it got to the point of German military involvement then he was going to do that.

Q; The plane trip to New York and the phone call to Iraq, can you describe how that came about?

CAMPBELL: It just did really. I think the prime minister just thought it would be quite a good idea to speak to Khatami (Mohammad Khatami, Iranian president) and it was fixed. Done like that. We were on the plane and he got onto the phone and it was organised through the switchboard in the normal way, and the interpreters were put on in the normal way and away they went.

Q; Sort of diplomacy on the hoof?

CAMPBELL: I think, as you know, at that point there was this idea of Jack Straw going there which of itself was going to be quite an important thing. But I think it was all part of the prime minister thinking, everybody's going to be in

A; There was certainly at the start a session that the two of them went.. it wasn't in a separate room. I think they went over to a corner of this quite big reception room that we'd been in and they had quite a lengthy time, just the two of them. And you know, in terms of how the prime minister recalled that afterwards, it was really just obvious that they were on exactly the same wavelength in terms of what had now to be done and how you set out towards that.

Q: What was the atmosphere like in the White House because it was the

any other since the first speech that he made as Labour Party leader, was one where he was absolutely clear about what he was going to say and how he was going to say it, and the vast bulk of it therefore was just him sitting down with a pen and a pad and writing it.

And again, in a sense it wrote itself, based upon the responses that he'd had to the events itself, to the discussions that had been taking place between September 11th and the date of the party conference, and to the reality of what he knew had to happen.

Q; You went off to Russia I think pretty much immediately after that.

CAMPBELL: I think again that was important because the prime minister, as you know, has invested a lot in developing a good relationship with President Putin, and has also been keen for President Bush to do likewise which indeed has happened. And there was also the occasion where the three of them spoke on the phone together which again was a pretty extraordinary thing if you think about it, that President Putin had a call arranged with President Bush [who] had happened to invite the prime minister out there pretty late in the evening so that the three of them actually had a three-way call. And again, I can remember the prime minister coming back to the British Embassy that night and being struck by and pleased by the extent to which President Putin was by and large in the same place as we were in terms of what had to happen.

Q: Surprised?

A; Not surprised to this extent. I mean there had barely been a d5db Tmo/P 144 Twr

A; I think again there'd been these efforts the prime minister and the Foreign Office had been making to try to get better relations with Syria, to try to get some sort of proper dialogue going. Again he felt it was worth seizing the moment to try to develop that relationship at that time. And for all the fuss that the press conference caused, he was absolutely clear it was the right thing to do, and in fact has commented on this several times since then, that the unusual thing that this kaleidoscope threw into being, [was that] for the long term it was actually one of the more important meetings.

If it meant getting a couple of days' bad headlines about "President Bashar giving him a bashing", as the press put it, then so what? I also think in part our media are not necessarily used to hearing what the Syrians have to say about us or the way that they say it, and the Syrians are not used to dealing with that kind of event. So I think they've explained it afterwards that our press probably found that very very exciting and very interesting and believing every bulletin. But for a day or two I think they were saying, "What was the problem, what was the fuss?" Surely the fact that we're here together speaking this way is just an amazing thing, which of course it was.

Q: Whose idea was it, the press conference?

A; It was just kind of agreed that we'd do that. I don't know if it was anybody's idea, I think it just built into the programme.

Q: How did you find Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat when you went on to Israel after that?

A; I think that, what was clear from the meetings at that time with Prime Miti.2(o)-u.62ns9u7.6(r)lwa4o17 T7.7(a4(ime)>(762ns9m218.3593 -1.2096 TD99(S

plane, got into the car and, of course, it was the England/Greece game and, in part because we want to know but also because the journalists on the plane were constantly sending notes down to demand to know the score, the pilot had kept in touch.. and, of course, when we got off the plane as things stood England were not going to go through automatically. We got in the car, turned on the radio and Beckham had this free kick and he scored. So that was a very very happy landing.

Unless they were particularly interested in these issues why should they. So they [al-Qaeda] were able to operate a communications policy that consisted of hiding in a cave and throwing out a video every now and again. And you guys were just absolutely fascinated by this and it became another propaganda success for Bin Laden. If our communications strategy had been to hide in a cave and throw out the odd video, you'd have said we'd completely lost it.

Added to which, the Taleban had these briefings in Pakistan which again were a source of fascination to you guys. They were able to operate according to rules that we wouldn't be allowed to get away with. I mean these guys are sat there, Zaif sat there day after day and just told a pack of lies. And you guys let him. You reported them. He was commanding CNN live, BBC World live, Sky live and the rest of it. I think that again was part of our response in the CIC, actually to say look, we can't let these guys get away with it. We have got to be far more aggressive, pro-active about getting the truth about the situation out there.

It was only at that point where I think you were able to say Bin Laden was quotes, "winning the propaganda war". But it was only at a superficial

A;

Yes, but I think one of the purposes of a speech like that is to be noticed

Tucker who would explain to us where they were on it and where the policy was, where the speech was, when it was likely to be, that kind of thing. Likewise he was able to ask us on a daily basis on any issue: what our line was, what we were saying, what the prime minister was likely to be doing. So it was very very open and useful. And in fact he has gone back to do a job that is full-time [on] these issues of global diplomacy, and we're still plugged in on a very regular basis.

We live here in Britain in one of the most aggressive political and media environments anywhere in the democratic world. Tucker spent six months here and he said when he went back to Washington, I don't think I'll ever complain about the American media again. So that is what we live in. I mean it would only matter if it were true, put it that way. If there was substance to it, it would matter but it isn't true. I mean the prime minister is somebody who develops foreign policy or indeed any other policy based upon what he perceives to be the British national strategic interest. That's what he does. He has always been clear that a hugely important part of his job is to have a very good relationship with the president of the United States which is the most powerful nation on earth. We have a very good relationship, and he sees it as part of his job to nurture and develop that relationship.

Now, in relation to what happened post-September 11th, if you talk to people in the American media, they will say to you, look it's incredible that the prime minister of Britain, which after all is in their eyes a medium-sized to large European power, vis-a-vis America.. the prime minister's got, they think, this extraordinary access and influence and all the rest of it. So if he is able by having a good strong relationship with the president of the United States to benefit Britain in its pursuit of the objectives that we hold and which we set out very very clearly in that party conference speech, then that's a good thing. And if it means that some newspapers and some politicians are going to say he's Bush's poodle, well so what.

If you put to him his relationship with any of these other major players around the world he will explain to you why it matters for Britain and for Europe and therefore for the rest of the world, that he gets on with them. And, therefore, you know he works at getting on with them. What we were able to do -because in a sense we've been trying long before September 11th with, I think, we have to acknowledge limited success - we've been trying to improve our outreach to Muslim opinion in Britain and to Muslim opinion abroad. What I think became very very clear to us after September 11th is just how limited our success in that had been and we set up these regular briefings for the Arab media based in London. But we also set up a new Islamic media unit in the Foreign Office which is carrying on and, I think, now will carry on permanently. [Its] job is to try to improve understanding with the Islamic world about what it is that we're about, both the British government but also as Britain. I think that was important, and in a sense, talking to the Americans about that and involving them in that became important as well.

Q; What about domestically? How did you deal with that here?

A; By stepping up our contacts with them and our efforts to reach out to them. And, you know, you're talking often of newspapers that may have very small circulation but they have very high level reach within the communities that they're circulating in. So the prime minister did a number of articles and interviews with the Muslim media here. It was a

challenge because of course the Sikh community, I think, started to feel that we were in a sense neglecting them, and so there's a sort of spill-