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Not surprisingly, at this stage, those actually running the banks found their nerves and judgement extremely tested. They did not know the scale of the crisis they faced and yet had quickly to reach some very tough decisions about the government's involvement in their businesses.

HBOS's chairman was my old friend, Dennis Stevenson. I did not speak to him, or his chief executive Andy Hornby, at this stage but later he described to me the 'perfect storm' that had engulfed their business. I also knew the Lloyds TSB chairman, Victor Blank, because he also chaired the company that owned the Mirror newspapers. Victor, rather unfairly I thought, did not survive his bank's merger with HBOS following an outburst of shareholder discontent. In the case of RBS, there was a wholesale and deserved clear out of executives and board members with Stephen Hester coming in as new chief executive. In Stephen's case, it was striking to me, just as in politics, what a difference the strength of personality and calm people skills of a business leader can make to perceptions of their business. The same was true in the case of Stephen Green of HSBC and Peter Sands at Standard Chartered, and John Varley at Barclays.