

The 'Special Relationship'

Why restoring the special relationship might save Britain from dissolution

by Merrie Cave

Any comprehensive account of the relationship between America and Britain would need to start with the Pilgrim Fathers, but I shall confine my observations to the 20th century. However, America's British culture must be emphasized, and as Adlai Stevenson pointed out, America is a political and moral fact as well as a geographical one — the first community in which men set out in principle to institutionalize freedom, responsible government and human equality. The efforts of the Founding Fathers, who were practical men, aware of original sin, produced the most successful and wealthy society of modern times, unlike the mythical paradise still promised by followers of Lenin or Castro. According to Dicey, an understanding of the rule of law is peculiar to England and those countries which, like the U.S., have inherited English traditions. This concept is completely different from the European (Napoleonic) tradition.

These circumstances mean that someone like myself, who grew up during the Second World War, regards Americans, even those not of British origin, as part of the extended British family. Memories of friendly GIs throwing chocolate, oranges and chewing gum from tanks gave way to a profound admiration for President Truman whose courage ensured that western Europe did not face the Communist threat alone — we would surely have lost if we had.¹

'We won't go back 'til it's over over there'

One of the big "ifs" of history is whether America's withdrawal from the European stage would have made the League of Nations a success and stopped the rise of Hitler. Fortunately for us, isolationism did not recur after

the Second World War.² But in the 1940s, Marshall Plan aid ensured that Western Europe, unlike Eastern Europe, did not starve, although of course it was initially offered to all countries irrespective of ideology. It only became an exclusive Western European enterprise because of the Eastern countries' refusal to accept it. The establishment of NATO, one of the most successful defensive alliances ever, was the diplomatic arm of economic recovery.

Some of us resented the fact that many Americans wished to see the end of the British Empire. But its continuation was not really an option. We were financially and in every other way exhausted by the European wars. Lack of support for the Suez adventure in 1956 rankled with diehards determined to stop Nasser in his tracks, but the episode served to show that no military action of this kind could be undertaken without American support. Staying on longer in Africa, however, might have saved that unhappy continent from some of the horrors it later experienced.

The special relationship survived the storms of the Cold War, helped by the close rapport between individual leaders: one thinks of Attlee and Truman, Macmillan and Kennedy and above all Thatcher and Reagan. Their successful partnerships helped to bring about the death knell of the Soviet Empire. Eastern Europeans of my acquaintance still refer to Reagan and the "Star Wars" program as the decisive factor that accelerated the end.

The Cold War brought into being an international system which was logical and easily understood. The collapse of Russia and events elsewhere, like the break-up of Yugoslavia and the war in Iraq, have brought uncertainty and confusion, making the world in many ways a more dangerous place than hitherto. At the same time both our electorates seem complacent and only interested in economic advantage; everywhere nations lack strong moral leadership and particularly in America and Britain.

Only a few of us here in Britain are aware that the

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European Union threatens the extinction of Britain as a sovereign nation. Mr. Gorbachev has been reported as saying that he finds it particularly surprising that our leaders are trying to construct a European Soviet after he had overseen the fall of the Russian one. My impression is that not many Americans have grasped this fact either. Ironically, it was the United States that encouraged

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Britain’s membership in its early stages. Fear of Germany starting another war, and the growing menace of the Soviet Union, inspired early moves towards integration.

These post-war circumstances are now out of date.³ The polls indicate that at least some 50 percent of the British people want either to leave the European Union or to reduce our connection to one of free trade. We do more trade with the United States than we do with France and Germany combined, and the UK economy continues to diverge from those of the European Union but to converge with that of the United States.

Our interests and those of the English-speaking world would be better served if Britain were to quit the failing, sclerotic, corporatist economies of the EU and join NAFTA and the successful free market economies of the Pacific rim. The political and economic future of the special relationship would surely be enhanced. And we would be a free nation instead of a subservient region of the European Union megastate. •

NOTES

¹ The Truman doctrine was a response to the Greek civil war, which would have spread communism over all the Mediterranean had the communist guerrillas been successful.

² I can understand, however, why many Americans felt and still feel that Europeans should sort out their own problems

and not come whining to Uncle Sam for funds and assistance. Their ancestors had gone to America to escape European conflicts.

³ The process began with the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, then evolved into the bogus Common Market that Britain joined in 1975 — incidentally the CIA generously funded the “Yes” campaign — with a directly elected Parliament in 1979, then developed by way of the Single European Act of 1987 and the Treaty of Maastricht. The Treaty of Nice in December 2000 will drag us into the EU legal system, *corpus juris*, which threatens *habeas corpus* and trial by jury. These developments have all taken place by *diktat* and without a popular vote. The EU has not been discussed in any election campaign and, as with the immigration issue, both the main political parties have lied to or concealed the truth from their electorates. The BBC, often called by Eurosceptics the “Brussels Broadcasting Corporation,” and independent television are now more strongly biased in favor of integration than they were in 1975.

The Death of Citizenship

“History is replete with the sagas of great defeats, of peoples wiped off the face of the earth, and of cultures transformed through clashes with others. Across and throughout history, nations fell, disintegrated, lost their nerve, made disastrous decisions, fought wars of self-destruction, and were not wise enough to sustain themselves, But I, at least, have never been able to discover another nation in human history, much less a great and powerful one, that literally *willed* itself out of existence through lethargy and, worst of all, guilt over things that it did not even do.” (page 252).

— Georgie Anne Geyer in
Americans No more: The Death of Citizenship
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