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Anglo-American Relations

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ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The Forum on Anglo-American Relations could not be more timely and pertinent. This is more so in view of the recent release of the text of the controversial Yalta Agreements. There is some doubt in my mind that this action on the part of the State Department will have an effect on the intimacy of British-American diplomacy.

All of us know that the history of Anglo-American relations has not always been tranquil and serene. Our alliance has not always been intact. There have been ups and downs and elements of strain.

The warmth of official relationship that was so paramount during World War II, lapsed after the end of the war, only to be remarkably rekindled in the formative years of NATO and the Marshall Plan. I have sensed a growing fear among some that our close association with the British people is again beginning to wane. Perhaps we can come up with a partial analysis of this matter today.

There was a long period of distrust of British policy, from Palmerston to Chamberlain prior to the second World War. Great Britain and the United States are direct competitors for world trade markets over an important range of industrial products, including aircraft and armaments -- a fact that is becoming daily more evident.
as the American aid programs draw to a close and world trade returns
to its normal pattern. The similarity between the economic structures
of Britain and the Western Commonwealth countries and that of the
United States constitute a source of perennial friction. This seems to
be an unsurmountable problem, but it can be overcome by continual
willingness of the governments involved to make adjustments in their
own economies -- something that is not politically easy. Trade is an
important problem, but it seems unlikely that it will cause any great
rift in international relations.

I could spend a great deal of time pointing out many differences
of small and large magnitude, but our primary purpose should be the
preservation of the Anglo-American working alliance. There has been
no time in history when more depended on it than at the present time.

The two most troublesome aspects of Anglo-American policy
are the policies on the H-bomb and the Far East. On the H-bomb
Winston Churchill, in an address to Parliament, allied his Government
firmly with United States policy but Her Majesty's Government was and
still is under heavy attack on this issue. In the Far East, differences
are evident between London and Washington over how to deal with the
communist threat in Asia.

The two issues are closely related. I may be wrong, but I feel
that the basis of British criticism of the United States' Far East policy
is the belief that the doctrine of "massive retaliation" makes for inflexibility on dealing with the situation in Asia. London seems to see Washington as caught on the horns of a strategic dilemma. The British sense that massive retaliation is no real answer to communist infiltration or the rice paddy warfare of Southeast Asia. Recent press releases indicate that the Administration is moving away from complete reliance on massive retaliation to increased dependence on tactical weapons and a review of manpower cuts. In addition, the British people obviously fear that Asian brush-fires may produce a thermonuclear holocaust, not an entirely unfounded fear.

A great debate has been taking place in Britain because of misgivings over the problems raised by the H-bomb. The debate has revolved primarily around the related questions of negotiations with Russia and relations with the United States. It appears that one of the major fears in the British Isles is that the United States, which has bomber bases in Britain, may become involved in war more quickly than Britain thinks necessary, and thus may bring thermonuclear destruction upon the island. In this case I think it is fundamental to remember that the British have suffered the devastations and destruction of war and it is fresh in the memories of the English people. Americans have not witnessed such destruction. If there should be another war, I fear Americans will not be isolated from the horrible experiences of thermonuclear warfare.
Here, we find an area of dispute; the British, more than the United States, believe in negotiation with the Russians as an avenue of escape from thermonuclear destruction. The Administration has been lukewarm to this approach. However, all are agreed that such negotiation may come after ratification of the London-Paris Agreements.

At this point I might say that we in this nation are extremely glad that such men as Sir Winston Churchill and Sir Anthony Eden are at the helm of the British Government. They are universally admired and respected in America.

In Anglo-American relations the area deserving of the most serious concern is Asia.

The American and British Governments are trying to prevent general war in Asia by related but different roads to Peking and Taipei. The American Government is, by declaration, warning the Chinese Communists that we will absolutely defend Formosa and the Pescadores if they attack them. We do not say whether we will defend the Nationalist held islands, the Quemoys and Matsus off the coast of China, but it is implied.

The British Government, through Foreign Secretary Eden, appealed to the Chinese Nationalists to relinquish the Quemoys and the Matsus, and to the Chinese Communists to refrain from any attacks by force on Formosa and the Pescadores. This approach to the Chinese Communists has proved futile.
The American approach to Asia is based on the philosophy that related issues are possibly soluble by adoption of a broad general policy. The British consider that the issues in individual areas can and should be settled individually by diplomatic negotiation.

A policy cleavage between the United States and Great Britain is reflected most clearly on the issue of Formosa and specifically on the question of the Quemoyas and the Matsus. Both nations are seeking guarantees against war over Formosa and neither has succeeded at this point.

The British view -- seemingly colored by a general desire not to become identified with the fortunes of the Chiang regime which is regarded as anathema in India and throughout much of Asia -- is that the Quemoyas and the Matsus are tinderboxes which may set the whole Far East aflame. Britain indicates that the Nationalists should withdraw from the islands even at the loss of some prestige and regardless of whether the Communists give a prior guarantee against a Formosa attack.

Neither Great Britain, nor any of our allies who favor negotiation, are prepared to abandon West Germany to the Russians or Formosa to the Communist Chinese, but many are convinced that discussion would ease the tension over both areas. Again I wish to say that I think that one important motivation in this instance comes from the terribly exposed position of Britain in the age of thermonuclear weapons.
The Administration in Washington sees the abandoning of Quemoy and Matsu resulting in military and political repercussions, cries of appeasement and the like. It would very definitely have a psychological effect on the Nationalist Chinese, to whom the United States is committed.

The British profess that the abandoning of the islands would bring peace, lessening the possibility of fighting and that this settlement would affirm separation of China and Formosa.

Another matter of concern to the British in Asia is the American approach to military and economic aid in the Far East. They feel that more emphasis on economic aid would do more in the long run than emphasis on military aid in meeting the threat of Communist subversion in these countries. Tied up in this respect is the appeal coming from the British, suggesting that America make a greater effort to win over Nehru and India. The government of India is much more interested in economic defense against communism. I think the British have shown a great deal of intelligence in this respect because in the long run resistance to communism in Asia cannot be truly effective without Indian cooperation.

But the basic fact for all to bear in mind is that the great majority of Britons are no more pro-Communist than we are. They feel it is imperative to the survival of Western civilization that some sort of formula be devised for honorable coexistence.
While a large number of Americans are sharply critical of the British for this and have accused them of being naive, the probability is that relations between Great Britain and the United States are not nearly so strained today as they have been in the past.

There have been serious storms in the sea of Anglo-American relations before, but the storms were weathered. There is reason to believe that current disagreements over Red China and Soviet Russia will be equally short-lived. For above and beyond all else is the fundamental fact that the historical, cultural and ideological ties which bind the United States and Great Britain together are far stronger than the temporary differences which divide them.

I sincerely hope that those of us gathered here will leave this conference with a better understanding of this phase of international relations.

I do not think I am making an understatement when I say that the working alliance between Great Britain and the United States has been the bastion of strength among freedom-loving peoples of the world. The girders of a free democracy are founded on this relationship.