

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minute

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MR. COLES ✓

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ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

This minute, which is partly heretical, is not intended to have a drastic effect on current policies. It is aeroplane reading for the Prime Minister.

I do not in any way underestimate the importance of the Anglo-American relationship in all its aspects. On the central issue of NATO, East/West relations etc, I have no quarrel with our present policy. Subject to atmospheric changes from one Administration to another, there is a broad consensus in the United States which is favourable to NATO and Western Europe and which is complementary to the analogous British consensus. We may object to American tactics from time to time, but we are united on principles. In this central area of our foreign and defence policies, we are therefore right to be the most loyal and the least difficult of the allies of the United States.

What worries me is the tendency which has built up for us to yoke ourselves to American policies in the Third World. Here, I believe that we should take a more independent line based on our own assessment of our national interest and on our own perception of events in areas most of which are more familiar to us than to the Americans. The problem is that, for complex historical reasons, there is no national consensus in the United States over Third World questions comparable to the consensus regarding Western Europe. Hence, ethnic minorities and other pressure groups in America can and do exercise a disproportionate influence on American policies. This leads to distortions and bungling. For example, for many years American policy towards Greece and Turkey has been unduly influenced by the power of the Greek lobby. The same is true, a fortiori, of American policy in the Middle East which has been dominated by the Zionist/Israeli lobby. In Africa, Carter's policy was over-influenced by the black lobby led by Andy Young and his like, whereas Reagan has been similarly over-influenced by the racist extreme Right - Senator Jesse Helms and Co. In Central America, successive Administrations have for decades been too much in the grip of the short-term greed of American business interests. This factor has, at least in part, led to the ghastly morass in which the present Administration is struggling.

/If we tie

CONFIDENTIAL

If we tie ourselves too closely to the Americans in such crisis areas, we find ourselves drawn into situations which do not necessarily suit British national interests (nor indeed the true interests of the United States) and which have been to a great extent created not by a detached consideration of foreign policy desiderata, but by domestic American pressures. Furthermore we diminish our own standing in areas of the Third World where we are in the process of developing satisfactory post-imperial relationships.

The following are specific illustrations of what I am driving at:-

i. The MFO in Sinai

American pressure on Sadat led to the conclusion of the Camp David Agreements in such a form as to preclude UN involvement in the "peace-keeping" force in Sinai following Israeli withdrawal. Because of American pressure, we now have a very small contingent there with no likelihood of being able to withdraw it in the foreseeable future. Admittedly, there are only a handful of British troops involved and it is not for the moment a controversial issue. But we are stuck.

ii. Lebanon

In the past 18 months, the Americans have made four major blunders, starting with connivance at the Israeli invasion, which have helped to lead us to the present situation. To put it in crude terms, we are now stuck as part of a multinational force with no clearly defined role except to be increasingly identified with the Phalange against the Druze, the latter having been for the last 100 years or so one of the most pro-British minorities in the Arab world.

iii. Belize

We kept a garrison in Belize after independence as a strictly temporary measure; we are now stuck there for mainly American reasons, thus running the risk of joining the Americans in the Central American morass. It is going to be extremely difficult to extract ourselves.

/iv. Namibia

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

iv. Namibia

Under pressure from the extreme Right, Reagan played the Cuban card as soon as he came to power. The Cubans in Angola were the one issue which the South Africans had never raised in the previous four years of negotiation. We are now stuck with this "linkage", an American not a South African invention which the South Africans have exploited to the full.

Conversely, it was only when we broke the Anglo-American connection in the late summer of 1979 that we were able to press ahead independently and bring about a solution to the problem of Southern Rhodesia.

I am not proposing that we should immediately adopt radically different policies over the issues which I have mentioned above. We have to confront events as they are, not as they would have been if we had acted differently earlier. Nor am I suggesting that we should publicly cross swords with the Americans as the French are disposed to do. What I am suggesting is that our dialogue with the Americans on the existing problems should be conducted more regularly at a higher level and more frankly than it has been hitherto. For the future, I believe that we should give more thought to the above considerations before allowing ourselves to be dragged into further American adventures. A dangerous possibility is the Gulf. If, thanks to French irresponsibility and Iraqi military desperation, something happens which provokes the Iranians into threatening shipping in the lower Gulf, the Americans, in an election year, will be likely to want to do something virile with the RDF. If they do, they are bound to try and involve us. We should approach such a situation entirely from the point of view of British interests, buttressed by a far deeper understanding of the region than the Americans have.



A.D. PARSONS  
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