

THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE: A WARY FRIENDSHIP

by

ALISTAIR COOKE

I intend to address mainly the relations—the emotional relations—today between Western Europe and the United States. But we must go back in time, for while treaties and alliances may be concluded—like some marriages—for convenience (or for the practical reason that the father-in-law to be is standing by with a shotgun), the long-standing relations between nations have a history, an emotional history, that begins with the artless lessons, the preconceptions, we learn first at our mother's knee. These preconceptions take root—through jokes, old wives' tales, as well as through school history books—in legends and myths and prejudices. There is not a nation in Europe that does not have some particular affection for, or grudge against, America as a whole. By America, at this moment, I mean the Western Hemisphere.

Napoleon thought he had spotted in Haiti the first foothold for the conquest of the North American mainland. Any bitterness that Frenchmen nursed about that military disaster has long been dissolved by the earlier accident that the Marquis de Lafayette, at the age of 19, became an authentic hero of the American Revolution; and his legend disposed Americans favorably toward the French well into the 20th century. To this day, a Spaniard is bound to feel ambivalent about his descendants who retrieved all of Central and most of South America, just as the British feel about the character of their flesh and blood who beat them on the American ground. I was startled to read, in a biography of the late

Generalissimo Franco, that his military training, in the early years of this century, included not only the anticipation of a new Catholic crusade into North Africa but the fantasy of—at some remote time—recovering some of the American Empire. As it is, the Spanish today must take a rueful pride in the marvelous literary renaissance that is burgeoning in Argentina, and Venezuela and Chile and Mexico.

As for the North Americans, some memories die hard. It was France which persuaded the new United States, 200 years ago last September, to let Spain have Florida in exchange for the claim on Gibraltar. Since the new Americans subsequently kicked Spain out of Florida, Gibraltar—as the British are discovering once again—is a 200-year-old wound that will not heal.

When we come to relations between Britain and the United States, we are touching on what for me has been a lifetime's preoccupation. You will be immensely relieved to hear that I don't propose to go into it at any length, except as it is now inevitably a part of the relation with Western Europe.

But I ought to remind you that for two centuries, the weight of popular feeling in Britain about the United States has oscillated between admiration and contempt, between envy and pretended indifference, between gratitude and wariness. It is, by the way, a mistake to believe that the more educated one person is about another's country, the more certainly he will have shed his early prejudices. As late as the 1920s the Spanish-

born George Santayana described America as "the only country I know that moved from primitivism to civilization without any intervening culture." And only a few months ago, a distinguished English historian told us why he had never bothered to visit the United States. "Because," he said, "it lacks the only two things that now interest me: it has no architecture and no" (this coming from an Englishman) "no food."

Surely, these are irritable, childish reactions? So they are. But like all childish responses, they are instinctive. They come from deep down below. And the wise statesman, the shrewd businessman, should not be surprised when they well up in the unlikely people. Throughout his life, and in defiance of his remarkable intellect, General de Gaulle never shook off the influence of an Anglophobe father and an Irish grandmother, and smelled perfidy whenever he sat down to arrange a deal with Albion. Certainly, leaders who deal with relations between nations in times of crisis should remind themselves that the morale, or should I say the hateful energy, of great nations has been mobilized by childish slogans: "We Don't Want To Fight, but by Jingo if we do . . ." and "The Beastly Hun" and "Hang the Kaiser!" Throughout the mid-1930s when Hitler was regarded in Britain as more of a curse than a present menace, hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of Britons relieved their anxiety and thought they were proclaiming their courage by chanting the slogan: "Against War and Fascism"; which we recognized, only when it was almost too late, was about as sensible as chanting "Against Hospitals and Disease." It was the cry of desperate people who would do anything in the world to get rid of Hitler, except fight him.

On the other, the American, side, there is a peculiar chauvinism, a chronic suspicion of European motives—the wariness of my title—which has a long history. In the early decades of the new nation, Britain retreated into a sulky view of an experiment many believed, or hoped, would not work. It was left to intellectuals like Burke, or enlightened gentlemen farmers like Thomas William

Coke, to make the perverse argument that the American Revolution had been a typically British assertion of liberty and independence.

In the 19th century, thanks first to Charles Dickens, and then to the noisy splash the Robber Barons made when they visited Europe, the British became convinced that the American Revolution had been a triumph of the Philistines—a view tenaciously held today by a large part of the British intelligentsia.

But in continental Europe, the choicest spirits were all on America's side. The French obviously enjoyed seeing their old enemy beaten, but French *philosophes* saw Americans, as Madame de Staël saw them, as "the advance guard of the human race." Goethe was convinced that America was, would become, "a better continent," freed from the drag of hampering traditions.

It was not, however, the sermons or the compliments of the intellectuals that inspired the great westward trek of the common people of Europe. It was an epidemic, in the 1840s, of violence and persecution in Europe: upheavals in Austria, revolutions in Germany and Italy, pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, a famine in Ireland. This view of America, as a haven from oppression and hard times, has held into our own day. It is what all Presidents boast about. In the two

Born in Manchester, England, Alistair Cooke received First Class Honors at Jesus College, Cambridge, and was a Commonwealth Fellow at Yale and Harvard. He became a United States citizen in 1941. A journalist for several British newspapers, he was Chief American Correspondent for the Manchester *Guardian* for 25 years. He has been a special correspondent for the British Broadcasting Company since 1940, and his weekly radio talk, "Letter from America," is heard on every continent but North America. On television, he is best known as host of the PBS *Masterpiece Theater* series, host of the award-winning *Omnibus* series, and writer and narrator of the 13-episode series, *America: A Personal History of the United States*. Mr. Cooke is the author of *A Generation on Trial: U.S.A. v. Alger Hiss*, *Alistair Cooke's America*, *One Man's America*, *Talk About America*, *Six Men*, *The Military Churchill* (written with General Dwight D. Eisenhower), and *The Americans*.



Arnold Newman

THE FAILURE OF ARTICLE 43

decades over the turn of our century, 14 million Europeans arrived in America. After the Nuremberg pogrom of 1938, a hundred thousand German Jews came into New York alone. After 1947, a million Puerto Ricans. After 1956, it was the Hungarians. And since the middle 1970s, it has been Haitians and Koreans and Vietnamese. And, to the distracted embarrassment of the states that border the Rio Grande, seven million illegal Mexicans.

I recite this familiar story only because it still exerts the force of a folk legend, almost of a religious credo, on the men and women who govern America. For nearly three years of the First World War, President Wilson was applauded for saying that America was "too proud to fight": he was applauded most by the millions of first-generation immigrants who wanted no part of the continent they had fled from, the continent they had learned to call "old, sick Europe." Throughout the first two years of the Second War, when President Roosevelt was suspected—correctly—of wanting to move America toward an active alliance with the British and French, scarcely a week went by that an isolationist, some congressman, some senator, did not quote George Washington's warning phrase about "entangling alliances." George Washington never said it, Jefferson did. But it was all the same. Washington, indeed, could have provided a better text, and certainly expressed the same thought more tartly: "Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world"—it being well understood that the foreign world was Europe.

And, it is a shock to discover (it is a shock to me, anyway, to learn from Sir Nicholas Henderson's account of "The Birth of Nato") that so late as 1948, the two most powerful negotiators in the State Department, whom most of us think of as internationalists—Charles Bohlen and George Kennan—were quite willing to encourage the Europeans to promote their own security against the Soviet Union but were dead against a Western Alliance or any direct American commitment to the defense of Europe.

That was only three years after the United States and 49 other nations had signed the Charter of the United Nations and pledged themselves to its crucial Article 43, which envisaged an international force superior to any regional combinations. The word "crucial" is not too strong. The failure to accept the radical proposal of that article, something quite new in the history of the world, outside fictional Utopias, crippled the United Nations at its birth and compelled us, after the Korean War if not before, to retreat into the immemorial game of self-protection, of opposing alliances, of identifying among our neighbors the likely friends and the likely enemies: in a word, of falling back on national rearmament and the calculation of the relative military resources of powers and superpowers—the ancient situation in a uniquely perilous form in which we find ourselves today.

The history of that failure of nerve, in 1944 and '45, is a short tragedy, and it can be told briefly and brutally.

Since Pierre Dubois, in the 13th century, every generation after a great war has had a surge of idealism and tried to set the world in order. In our century, there has been no more hopeful effort at doing this than the nine-week honeymoon which conceived the United Nations at San Francisco in 1945. Those of us lucky enough to have been there can never forget the happy bustle of intelligence and idealism of that founding conference. The UN, we all know, was founded on the assumption that the five who agreed to be the nucleus of the world society—the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China, calling themselves the permanent powers—must agree before any sort of punitive action could be taken. It was a mighty assumption and a forlorn hope, though it didn't seem so at the time. But human nature and self-interest were recognized for what they are, and a concession was made to the likelihood of disagreement in the provision of the Security Council veto.

The principle was accepted at the start, or, rather, before the start. For the structure

of the United Nations was set up not in San Francisco but by a Preparatory Commission in Washington in the summer of 1944. The chief architects were the Americans, the Russians, and the British. And once their delegates descended from the rhetoric of urging peace, and loving it, and got down to the awkward business of securing it, the move that gave a lot of us the most hope was the proposal that eventually turned into Article 43 of the Charter. It says, in short, that all member nations would "undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security." In other words, if the United Nations was not going to have a standing army, navy, and air force, it was going to have them on immediate call of the Security Council. And so, in the first days of the Washington discussions, the Americans, Russians, and British began to compute or guess what sorts of quota—of arms and forces—could be expected from the big and little nations. The meeting had not lasted a week before the chief British delegate, Sir Alexander Cadogan, put down in his diary: "Saw the Secretary of State, who told me that the Administration is getting cold feet about the power of the President to commit the United States' quota of armed forces." He thought there would have to be "a debate in Congress on whether such Presidential initiative was constitutional."

Three days later, Canada wanted a similar qualifying provision requiring her government to be "consulted" before committing her quota. (We can be pretty sure that if other intending members had heard about these misgivings, they would have shared them.) Cadogan jotted down an exasperated entry in his diary. "Bless my soul!" he wrote, "if we put in such provisions, the world will say 'where are the teeth you promised to put into the Covenant?'" If the UN could not call automatically on armed forces from each of its members, then wrote Cadogan, "we shall be back where we started."

And so it was. And so it is. The United Nations has never had the force to exert the authority it claimed. And though certainly the United Nations has bravely prevented quite a number of wars with volunteer forces, Article 43, which was to be "negotiated as soon as possible," has been delayed in its negotiation or even its recognition for 38 years. And, only recently, but at last, a Secretary General of the UN, after a mournful recital of all the disputes around the world which UN members refuse to negotiate or submit to mediation, has had the candor and the courage to admit that in all serious matters of war and peace, the United Nations is either rebuffed or ignored. He has, in effect, bared the gums of a toothless power.

We have all known this for 20 years at least and acted on our own accordingly. We ought to have known it when the United States, in 1946, offered to put nuclear power under international control through United Nations' "inspection"—a word that prompted the first vetoes and a series of very brisk walk-outs by Mr. Gromyko.

So, the various powers, which—after the Russians exploded their first bomb—were reduced to two great powers, squared off against each other and attracted or dragooned their satellites. Western Europe, as a reborn free society, was wedded to the United States, for the first time in an inevitable alliance. I suppose that historically 1917 is the watershed year, when the American entry into the First World War brought a new counterweight to the see-saw imbalance of rival European powers. But then, between the wars, there was a recoil, when America yearned once again to isolate herself from "old, sick Europe," and when Colonel Lindbergh assured the American people it could be done, since no bombing fleet was capable of crossing the Atlantic.

THE COLLAPSE OF FORTRESS AMERICA

I do not believe that the second American intervention, in the Second War, ensured America's permanent link with Europe. It was the bomb and the in-

tercontinental missile that did it. It is an obvious, but no less tragic, irony that the weapons the Americans themselves were the first to develop guaranteed the collapse, once for all, of Fortress America. Today, not even the most canting, the most chauvinist, American believes that the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean can provide a protective moat from the resources of modern war. For all purposes of *realpolitik*, for purposes of our joint survival, the day the Russians got the bomb was the day that America—so far as Western Europe is concerned—became an essential, a vital, extension of European security.

If our mutual dependence, our lifeline, is so drastically dictated by the nuclear threat, you may wonder why I should have spent so much time at the beginning explaining about the big and little prejudices, the preconceptions, the wariness, that riddles so many of the relations between Europe and America. Because they nag, they delay, they confuse, they sour so many of our discussions, our negotiations, our ability to decide on common policies—in defense, in international trade, and finance, in such pressing and threatening matters as the protection of national industries and the dumping of unprecedented farm surpluses. These inbred prejudices are the main reason why the men and women who come to power—certainly the people who conduct negotiations on everything from international trade to the control of armaments—should be Europeans who know America and—even more pressing—Americans who are at home in Europe. It is a characteristic of the dictators of this century, if of no other, that they are profoundly ignorant of the culture, the character, the people of the nations they take to be their enemies. Hitler's dispatch of Rudolf Hess—or Hess's dispatch of Hess—to parlay with an amiable Duke of no influence whatsoever, was only the most gross sign of a grotesque view of British democracy. The Russians' willful circulation of the works of Charles Dickens (to show how the poor are miserably ground down) and the works of P. G. Wodehouse (to show the worthless ninnies

who do the grinding) sets back by a century any real understanding of Britain today. And to set back a fair understanding of America today, the same method is advanced by publishing and popularizing the works of Jack London and Upton Sinclair.

This shrewd propaganda is obviously something we simply have to put up with. But how about the allies—about the way we mobilize public opinion, in our own countries, about ourselves?

We do it, I'm afraid, most of all at election time, by appeals to national pride, to patriotism. We all remember the famous—and at the time the extraordinarily courageous—remark of Dr. Johnson that "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." Well, I do believe that since the invention of the intercontinental missile, patriotism has become the first refuge of unthinking men and women. And it seems to me that among ourselves, among the nations of the Western Alliance, the leaders we have most to fear are those who talk about *national* destiny, who claim for their own people a nature superior to human nature. No Englishman was so English as Winston Churchill, but he was ready, in the crisis of 1940, to welcome an Anglo-French nation as the only true community of free men and women. And it was a true and great moment when John F. Kennedy stood before half a million beleaguered Berliners and proclaimed: "*Ich bin Ein Berliner.*"

More than we have ever been in the history of these two continents, we are—as the Bible puts it—"members one of another." We must hang together or die together. This uncomfortable thought brings me back, as it should every day and all the time, to the overwhelming issue of the old conflict between tyranny and freedom in the new age of nuclear power.

The world is divided, and I suppose has always been divided, between those who believe that if you prepare for war, you will get peace; and those who believe that if you prepare for war, you will get war. The conflict is exacerbated today by the dogmatism of the hawks and the self-righteousness of the doves. It is the curse, as

well as the duty, of all military establishments to anticipate the worst and to draft contingency plans accordingly. Contingency plans are always appalling, and no doubt have been since Joshua fought the battle of Jericho. Only recently has it been thought to be the duty of journalists, their "right" as practitioners of a free press, to purloin such plans and publish them as proof of the madness of *current* policy. Hence the new and alarming reputation of all military men as warmongers. And it is the curse, as well as the pride, of all unilateral disarmers to assert that they alone are sincere and wish to stay alive. Hence, their undeserved reputation as the only peacemongers.

MUTUAL DISTRUST BASED ON FEAR

If we are to reconcile these two extremes with all the rest of us in between—which is to say the profoundly disturbed populations of Western and Eastern Europe and America, *and*, I dare to say, the populations of the Soviet republics—we have to admit to the emotional root of our conflict, something so obvious that it is rarely if ever mentioned by heads of government. It is mutual distrust based on fear. And Americans would do well to learn that today there is a generation of Europeans, in their forties, who have no memory of the Second War, or of the incomparable generosity of the Marshall Plan—young people of great goodwill who yet have come to fear America as much as they fear Russia.

Much is made these days, in the United States, of the Munich analogy. And those of us who heard Churchill ridiculed and booed in the House of Commons have more cause than most to feel ashamed that we looked on him then as a belligerent nuisance. It is evident from the speeches of President Reagan and Secretary Weinberger that they are not only alert to the Munich analogy but accept it as an alarm bell. It must not be pooh-poohed. They may be right. And if the Russians really do want to conquer or dominate the world, then it seems to me there is no hope of averting a choice between the final war or surrendering our freedom to governments agreeable to the Soviet Union.

But I am convinced that there are men on hand, among the Westerners and the Russians, holding their interminable discussions in Geneva and elsewhere, who share the conviction of a former director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that "we must put an end to this madness."

The first essential step toward sanity, I believe, is to begin again. On *our* side, to make an honest effort to understand the Russians' historic and justifiable fear of encirclement, of being hemmed in on their western, southern, and eastern borders; and to remind ourselves of the enormous casualties they have suffered from the invasions of merely the past two world wars. On *both* sides, we should sit down and study the conclusions of the Cambridge conference of Western and Russian physicians, reinforced by the beliefs of 18,000 American physicians, that a limited nuclear war is a near impossibility; that in a general nuclear war, the millions who do not have the luck to be incinerated in the instant will have no medical services, no edible food, no place to hide. When we consider that there are already grave dislocations in the life of the oceans, in the fish of our lakes, in the atmosphere of our cities, and in the rain that falls on our northern landscape—and that these threatening forms of decay are due only to the progress of modern industry, to the harvest of the Industrial Revolution—can we not make the very small leap of the imagination to foresee that after the instantaneous annihilation of many millions of human beings in or near the nuclear targets, a prodigious tidal wave of radioactivity will pass over the onlooking continents and doom countless more millions to a creeping death from the afflictions that will then, without any doubt, invade the human organism down to the marrow of its bones.

There are those, some I'm sorry to say in authority, who have said: "Japan, after all, not only survived but flourished after a nuclear attack." Today, each side has thousands of warheads, each one of which makes the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki look like arrowheads or pinpricks. What sort of governments could survive in either America or Europe in an exchange

which left 140 million dead on one continent and 200 million on the other?

Once the men of Geneva and Moscow and Washington faced this fundamental fact, in all humility, I believe they would then relax the rigidity of their separate formulas—the “freeze,” the “zero option,” or whatever—appreciate the folly of their mathematics (which has become an obsessive form of differential calculus) and start to reduce their arsenals of warheads to the very minimum that would still preserve a protective balance of terror.

In the meantime, I hope I have shown that the pursuit of national ends in everything that has to do with security is a vanished, an impossible, luxury. Western Europe and

America are together living through a chronic crisis of human liberty, in which the only nationality that matters is the nationhood of free men and women.

* * * * *

The foregoing is excerpted from the second annual European Lecture, under the sponsorship of ITT, given in Brussels before an audience made up of ambassadors to NATO, decision-makers of the European Community, members of the European Parliament, and a number of prominent figures from Belgian official and university circles. Mr. Cooke's address is reprinted with the kind permission of ITT.

