ALLIES *ARE* DIFFERENT

by

GENERAL SIR THOMAS MORONY, BRITISH ARMY

It is useful to be reminded occasionally that NATO is an alliance of sixteen free, independent, and democratic countries. Because they are free they deeply resent any suggestion of control by others. Because they relish their freedom they feel driven from time to time to display their independence, and because they are democratic their governments must always respond to the mood of their electorates, for like all governments their principal preoccupation remains the need to get themselves reelected to office. The pursuit of the domestic national interest will therefore be each country's theme.

Further, we shall not easily understand the workings of this or any other alliance unless we accept that there is in truth a real distinction between the word "ally" and that other word "friend." On the one hand, friends are friends—haphazardly—because they are friendly, because they like each other, because of a natural sympathy, because they think the same way. On the other hand, allies are allies as a result of political calculation, in spite of their differences, and because they need each other's assistance to gain a prize or to defend interests they share. Thus while I hope friends will always be predisposed to be allies—allies will not always necessarily behave as friends. We shall save an awful lot of disappointment about each other if we accept this clear distinction between allies and friends.

In this instance, each one of the sixteen nations in NATO—my country as much as your country, and your country as much as my country—we are all of us allies in the defense of Europe purely because it is necessary to our own national interest that we should be allies in that defense. Moreover, the reason that we each of us have chosen to sink our many differences to remain in NATO is quite simply that those differences are less important to us nationally than our perceived need for a corporate deterrence. However, because the differences between us still remain it would be unreasonable to expect, to imagine, or even to hope that our alliance can always be a comfortable one.

In fact and paradoxically, NATO is at its most uncomfortable precisely when its effectiveness as a deterrent is at its best. For the solidarity of our defensive alliance today stems only from, and varies only with, the clarity with which each member perceives the threat to his national interest on his own. The higher the risk of war the closer the alliance that binds us: it's as easy as that. Indeed, it is because the perceived risk from Russia is not for the moment high that NATO feels safe enough to indulge in one of its periodic bouts of anti-Americanism.

We can, of course, none of us have any doubt that without the support of the United States the rest of us in NATO would not be able to present any significant defense against the Warsaw Pact. We can, none of us, mistake the size of the American contribution in terms of military effectiveness or in terms of its annual capital contribution. We must all agree that there is no precedent for the commitment which the United States has made and indeed makes every day to the NATO defense.

But the fact still remains that there is an unhelpful and indeed distasteful level of anti-Americanism around in the Scandinavian countries, in France, in Greece, in Germany,

and indeed in the United Kingdom itself. Of course one has to keep these things in perspective: observe that in Greece they are what you might call anti-Turk as well as anti-American. Moreover lots of people still harbor deep suspicions about the Germans too—perhaps particularly in Norway and Holland. Then again many of us have the gravest reservations about the French (I really did have an uncle who pulled down the blinds in the railway carriage as he traveled through France). Finally, there can be little doubt in the mind of anyone who works in NATO that the British, while highly regarded as functionaries or staff officers within the alliance, are still, as a nation, commonly believed to be perfidious, duplicitous, arrogant, and interested simply in their own advantage, cost what it may to this ally or that.

Now one should not deduce from that sorry catalogue that NATO is sickening or indeed suffering from any new malaise. All that is roughly par for the course in an alliance because as I said earlier alliances are still based, as they have always been based, on national self-interest and because allies are not necessarily chosen from the ranks of friends.

When NATO was founded, the Russian threat was stark (it is sometimes salutary to think back to those early days and recollect just how stark the Russian threat then seemed). Europe at that time was on its knees after the war and the United States was helping us to put ourselves to rights once more. Moreover, America was also able at that time to offer Europe the complete protection from Soviet domination which its, for the moment, unique nuclear capability provided. There was no mistaking where national interests lay when NATO first began. It followed that the alliance was as solid as any rock.

But note how perceptions about national interests have altered since then. For a start, and critically, the Soviet acquisition of tactical, theater, and strategic nuclear weapons has confused the clarity of our vision. Because, as you have the best of reasons for knowing, since the Soviets acquired these things all of you in the United States have had to accept that your determination to defend Europe must expose your homes in the heartland of America itself to a risk of Soviet nuclear attack. This really is a huge commitment that you in the United States are making in our defense. To quote, "It is rare for one major nation to depend on another for a form of strength that is vital to its survival. It is unprecedented for any nation, however powerful, to pledge itself in defense of another to a course of action which might entail its own nuclear destruction."

This quotation in fact spells out the position very exactly, and every one of us who are European partners in NATO should recognize that it is indeed a unique commitment that the United States has entered into on our behalf. But even so it illustrates the point I am making about national self-interest that the passage I have quoted comes in fact from an article by Mr. Robert S. McNamara—no less—in which he argues in favor of an agreement with the Soviets to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons.

Now, I don't myself think that there is any prospect at the moment of a declaration of no first use of nuclears, or NOFUN as the ghoulish acronym goes. But the fact remains that because of the obvious danger implicit for America in the US commitment to NATO we hear American cries that Europe is doing far too little to defend itself conventionally. Because of the obvious danger implicit for

General Sir Thomas Morony, KCB, OBE, ADC Gen, is the United Kingdom Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee, in Brussels. Educated at Eton College, he enlisted in the Royal Artillery in 1945, was granted an emergency commission in 1947, and received a regular commission in 1948. He has served with various regiments in Palestine, Tripoli, Germany, Africa, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom. In 1980 he was appointed Vice Chief of the General Staff, a position he held at the time of the Falklands Campaign. In 1983 he received his present appointment. This article was adapted from the Kermit Roosevelt Lecture presented at the US Army War College on 23 April 1986.

America, we are witnessing its attempts to develop some strategic defense. And because of the obvious danger implicit for America, we in Europe continue to worry about the real reliability of the United States if it comes to the crunch. After all, can the offer of self-immolation ever be wholly credible? Does the United States really mean what it says? If it came to the point could the President actually dare to risk a nuclear release?

This worry of ours in Europe is very acute because whilst we—like the Americans—dread the moment when nuclear weapons have to be released for the first time on a Third World War battlefield, all of us in Europe and in particular those who live in the Federal Republic of Germany have to accept that before the nuclear question even arises we shall be ravaged and savaged anyway in the conventional phase of any war. It follows that we Europeans are determined (and for the very best of reasons determined) that any release decision must be given in time for us to survive in some recognizable form.

Thus it is actually only logical (and indeed if you are a German you will say it is also profoundly necessary) to insist that the main defense of Europe must start in earnest against the first echelon of the Soviet attack and on the inner German border line itself. For, if the release of nuclear weapons to stem the Russian advance is going to be a very deliberate business, if authority to use the things is likely to be delayed until the conventional battle is almost lost, then the conventional battle in the Central Region must be joined and fought to its finish as close to the inner German border as may possibly be. Thus, militarily inconvenient though it may be, you can see that forward defense is really as essential to European thinking as our nuclear capability in the last resort must be to the whole alliance.

There is another kind of doubt too that arises—and remember it is doubts about each other which cause our distress. This time the doubt is about whether Americans understand war as Europeans do. Of course, the United States knows about fighting, no one questions that, but we in Europe often doubt that the United States understands war itself. In Britain we have experienced global conventional war. We have "stood alone" and we have been very close to defeat indeed. Some of us can actually remember all that, but even so compared to the rest of them we only know the half of it. The rest of Europe has actually been defeated. They know what invasion is like, they know what occupation is like, they know what hunger is like, they know what terror is like, and they know what destruction means when one's nation becomes a battlefield. No one in Europe has any doubt what war is like at all. On the other hand, and in contrast, while war comes to Europe the United States has hitherto been able to make the choice whether to go to war. Moreover—and this is the vital distinction—while the European experience is that everyone, just *everyone*, comes out a loser in one way or another, it has been the American experience that you can actually win world wars.

And it follows from that, because we each have this quite different experience of what war means, that we also react quite differently to the very risk of war itself. To those in the United States the Soviet Union, or at any rate the Soviet leadership, has been presented as nakedly hostile, ideologically and materially. And the United States has spoken and acted accordingly—and in spades. Contrariwise (and to your people it does seem contrary and no damned wisdom about it), contrariwise, the Europeans mostly wish that the United States would modulate its response. After all, European nations have been dealing with Russia and the Russians for some centuries now and they think they know how to do it. Some of them have been alarmed by the warlike (and sometimes actual frightening) noises emanating from the superpowers. Many of them fear that the United States is becoming a victim of its own rhetoric, and they make no secret of their continuing anxieties about arms control, sensible dialogue, and a more discreet diplomatic exchange.

Some Europeans—very dangerously as I see it—are even beginning to cry "A plague on both your houses" as though it was somehow reasonable to equate the United

States, the principal architects of our recovery after the Second World War and the principal defenders of our freedom today, with a Soviet system which has subjugated Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the rest of Eastern Europe, and now Afghanistan. Some of the European nations who profess such a view, indeed, seem almost to be copping out. Because the consequence of nuclear attack wherever it falls must be catastrophic, some nations want to stop the world and delicately to step off. And while these nations continue to claim membership of an alliance which is committed to their protection, they will have nothing to do with the nuclear forces which are such a critical part of its strength. Now Europe may sometimes question the commitment of the United States to our protection, but by heaven there must be real doubts in America about the commitment of those nations to their own defense.

But there is another difficulty here which must today give us all the very greatest cause for concern. When NATO began, the Russian threat lay in Europe and was directed at Europe. India to be sure was newly independent, but for instance Indochina was French, Aden was British, Portugal had an empire, and Cuba was free. It thus seemed sensible that the NATO area of interest, influence, and responsibility should be geographically and very specifically limited. And indeed this was done very largely at the insistence of the United States which had always been anti-colonial and would have no truck with world policemen who at that time spoke respectively English and French.

Since then, however, the Soviet navy, the Soviet air force, Soviet surrogates, and Soviet advisors have begun to project Russian influence and power all over the globe. And their challenge demands—or in the perception of the United States it most certainly exacts—a global response. Moreover, quite separately, as we have now the best of reasons for knowing, terrorism of all kinds is posing a real threat to our societies in the West. And here we have a somber difficulty festering within the alliance. For while the East-West confrontation in Europe is easy enough for any moderately instructed child to understand, and while any Soviet aggression against the alliance would be easy to identify and to comprehend, we have recently seen that there is a dangerous scope for bitter argument about, say, the relevance to NATO of communist activity in Central America, the importance to NATO of resisting Argentina's attack against the Falklands in the South Atlantic, or most obviously about the action to be taken to curb Colonel Gadhafi in his murderous terroristic war.

This out-of-Europe difficulty can now be seen to be particularly dangerous. For if we cannot arrive at a common appreciation of the relevance, importance, or degree of menace offered by the various threats or regional conflicts around the world, NATO solidarity will always be at risk. Moreover, it remains to be seen for how long, for instance, the US Congress will be prepared to support Europe in NATO at such enormous risk to itself, when Europe in NATO continues to prevaricate, to shuffle its feet, and even to criticize American actions taken in response to threats which seem to the United States to be both actual and very real indeed. Put it another way: if America is to defend Europe in Central Europe, is it not to be supported by Europe for example when it defends America in Central America? Indeed, sitting where Americans sit, what looks like the vacillation of some European allies must lend a new luster to the presidential vision of the sunny uplands which will follow from the successful conclusion of the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, and the emplacement of some defense against nuclear weapons at least in the United States.

Since the beginning it has always seemed to me that SDI was a natural phenomenon about which we should none of us be surprised. After all, both superpowers are in Europe because that is in their national interest, or more exactly because they both perceive Europe to be an area where their essential national interests are involved. In defending those interests they have achieved at least a nuclear parity with each other. But

while both countries have now more than enough power to defend their interests in Europe, if they unleash that power they must at the same time expose their own homelands to nuclear attack. It follows—it must follow—that both countries will want to develop an umbrella system to protect their own territory in case that may be necessary.

Indeed you can take this further. You can argue that once the merest possibility of such an umbrella system existed, both Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev would be failing in their duty to their people (and they have no higher duty) if they hesitated to research that possibility to the full. This argument about the President's duty to his people does not commend itself to some Europeans, but in terms of the overriding national interest of democratic Americans, and indeed of the overriding national interest of far less democratic Russians, it seems to me to have no answer at all.

But that does not make it any better for Europe. Americans, if I may say so, are great ones for novelties. They seize any panacea at hand: they actually invented the term quick-fix. But we in Europe are more cynical. We have been around a long time: we have seen a lot of things. Nothing is ever as good (or as bad) as one thinks it is going to be. We have not found a panacea yet. We have learnt by bitter experience the wisdom of the skeptic. It was after all two Europeans (both Irish) who found themselves marooned in mid-Atlantic on an iceberg some eighty years ago. One turned to the other and cried "We are saved. Paddy, we are saved: here comes the *Titantic*!"

No, to Europeans, SDI is certainly no panacea. Indeed, for Europeans SDI seems dangerously destabilizing. To be sure, there is little they can do about it, but there are several difficult questions which arise in their minds. If, for example, the United States and the Soviets do both achieve some immunity to strategic attack, will the world not become safe once more for limited warfare on the familiar European battlefields? Again, if a single superpower achieves some immunity, will it start trouble while it enjoys the advantage, or will the other be tempted to preempt his competitor's success? You can see that these are uncomfortable questions and that there is indeed precious little about SDI which has for Europeans any comfort at all.

Moreover, these uncertainties in Europe will certainly add to our other concerns. People have fears about nuclear war, fears about war in space, fears about war in Europe, fears about American attitudes in Europe, fears about the value to Americans of the European stake—and all these fears are adding to that general concern with SDI. It follows that all democratic governments in Europe are beginning to feel themselves increasingly driven by public opinion along the road to arms control. That impulse is becoming all the stronger because of the popular perception of a success achieved by President Reagan at the Geneva Summit.

Now all of us should appreciate that nothing of substance was in fact agreed to in Geneva at all. Moreover, no one should be in any doubt about the still existing threat expressed in terms of guns and tanks and ships and planes and men and nuclear missilery of every kind. That threat has not reduced. But we have to remember that numbering that threat and recognizing it is the military's own peculiar trade and that lay people, or less peculiar people, prefer to consider instead quite simply the risk of war itself. Of course, this popular measure of "risk" is subjective, it is a matter of mood, it is imprecise, and most importantly it is liable to rapid change. For all these reasons it is also unreliable. But the fact remains that it is on a balance between this popular measure of risk and our military measure of threat that defense policies have teetered in every democracy since democracy began.

Military specialists can mark the threat up, but ordinary people in Europe at any rate are still inclined to mark the risk down; we are going to hear a lot about this wish of ordinary people over the next year or so. For it seems to me that, in Europe anyway, too many people feel in some muddled way that they have heard too much about the threat

for too long. The emphasis on defense, the stridency of argument, the level of spending, the cost of readiness, and above all the evidence of nuclear proliferation are being seen in themselves, and by themselves, to add both to the risks in war and to the risks of war itself. To be sure the defense of our people remains the greatest social security program of them all, but just try to get that idea widely accepted for example by the bench of Bishops of the Church of England today.

We may be sure, therefore, that arms control will figure very largely on NATO's agenda in the months ahead, and I am afraid that it will expose further differences between us. For some of the European nations will want more and more arms control, quicker and quicker—there are after all some countries who feel that they have been dragged along too far, too fast. Other countries will want a deliberate advance—and here I am thinking in particular of the Federal Republic of Germany, which feels itself, and is perhaps right to feel, still, to be in danger every day. Finally and most importantly, the United States, because it perceives that there is at present a real Soviet challenge for world domination, will not be inclined to reach any easy, loose, or premature accord. Thus the alliance's path to armament reductions is likely to be quite as stony as the road on which we have traveled as we built up our strength.

In drawing attention to the divisions between America and its NATO allies, I have aimed to show the different perceptions from which those divisions spring. In exposing the clash of those individual national interests which we each pursue, I would stress nonetheless how well our conflicts have so far been resolved—and generally towards our common good. In airing the doubts that lie between us as friends, I am also proclaiming the trust that has held us together as allies. For it is a great thing that we have all achieved as allies together since NATO began. If you think back to Stalin and to the Berlin Airlift, to the war in Korea, to the rape of Hungary, and to the subjugation of Czechoslovakia, and then consider the world as it is today—truly it is a great thing that we have achieved together in that time.

Again, if one considers how much there is that divides us in our separate geographies, our histories, our cultures, our sizes, our strengths, our wealth, our friends, our enemies, our temperaments, our traditions, and our beliefs, you must expect us to have differences, for we are very different indeed.

But the fact remains that the alliance remains. After more than 35 years we are still together offering our sort of defense of freedom. Of course, we have arguments; of course our interests conflict. But those arguments and those conflicts spring from the very freedom we defend—the freedom of sixteen free and independent nations to have differences; the freedom of sixteen free and independent nations to have minds of their own; the freedom of sixteen free and independent nations freely to join together to defend the very nature of freedom in the world.