

→ AJC

Have we taken the full measure of the events of the past 5 years

A.D. PARSONS

7 November 1983

DRAFT

The international scene of today has no precedent in modern times. The maxim that history always repeats itself has lost meaning. For the last 30 years we have become accustomed to a world dominated by two super powers, states, each with a military capability inconceivable to previous generations. We have to look back two or three thousand years, to the Empire of Persia or Rome to find anything like a parallel. <sup>power just comparable</sup>

parallel. We have to look back centuries to the great wars of religion to find an analogy with the ideological conflict which has for nearly 40 years divided Europe <sup>into two halves</sup> as it has never before been divided in times of peace. This competition has now reached out to all the continents of the earth.

This is not all. In one generation, the tidal wave of decolonisation, ~~the almost universal consummation of the principle of self determination~~ has brought into being a far greater number of sovereign independent states than have existed at any period since the evolution of the nation state. Who would have thought, when the United Nations was founded in 1945 with a membership of 51 states, only 11 of which came from Africa and Asia, that less than 40 years on the membership would have amounted to 158 including 90 African and Asian states?

→ ~~I have described a world of dangerous diversity.~~ Europe, the traditional battleground, has been spared the horrors of war for nearly 40 years. The strength and resolution of the West has deterred further expansion from the East. ~~But this peace~~ <sup>has been</sup> maintained at great cost. The build up of armaments including nuclear weapons, <sup>of</sup> the East has necessitated a response from the West which has imposed a heavy burden on our economies and a searching test of our courage. ~~But it can at least be said that we have not had to live through a major East/West crisis in Europe for some years.~~ <sup>will</sup> <sup>nevertheless</sup>

The rest of the world has been less fortunate. ~~The proliferation of new states, some large and powerful, others small and vulnerable, with extreme variations in population as well as economic and social development, has brought with it parallel divergences of national and regional interests.~~ Decolonisation has uncovered sources of mutual hostility which have been masked by an imperial presence. There have been many savage and costly wars, particularly in the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa. Millions of people have died and millions made homeless. In some wars, particularly the Middle East, parties to disputes have sought and found outside help, thus planting the seeds of wider conflict in areas of local tension.

Where does Britain stand in this troubled scene. We have been a strong and loyal member of the Western Alliance since its foundation. We have divested ourselves of an empire and have found a new role as a leading partner in the great experiment of the European Community. In the diplomacy of persuasion, the alternative to war, we are in a unique position to make our views heard world-wide to help reduce tensions and bring about the peaceful resolution of dangerous disputes. We can and do play a major part in the process known as European political cooperation. Our indisputable historical ties with the United States give us as much if not more influence in Washington than any of our partners and allies and the legacy of history has bequeathed to us, particularly inside but also outside the Commonwealth a degree of intimacy with and freedom of access to a great majority of the 90-odd member states of the Non Aligned Movement. This enables us to give and receive advice and help in friendship and without rancour or resentment on a scale denied any of our partners, let alone our adversaries.

*Margaret Thatcher*

This does not of course mean that our views are always accepted and acted on. I wish they were. We have recently experienced an instance in which they were not! But this does not mean, especially in the present turbulent state of the world, with war and civil strife aflame in all the continents outside Europe, that we should not continue to make full use of our considerable diplomatic assets.

[Lead into message to Caribbean and confirmation of solidity of Anglo American alliance.]