DGH-6
Attitudes to Anglo-Saxons

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Dear Mr. Nolte,

"Oh, yes, we favor British entry into the European Community; but -- "

Several weeks of questioning people in EEC countries on this subject almost always brought such a first sentence in response. Some few individuals, mainly Dutchmen, voiced no reservations to their enthusiasm for Britain joining the Six. These were balanced by equal numbers, usually Frenchmen, who preferred to treat the issue as one for the impenetrable future. For the rest, questioning stimulated so many contradictory remarks that one was soon left wandering in a fog of inconclusiveness. If the attitudes of the Common Market countries toward Britain had to be expressed collectively in one word, the word would be ambivalent.

These reactions were not unexpected. But one impression derived from those weeks was mildly surprising: on the whole there seemed less interest on the Continent in Britain's role than the moderate amount I had anticipated. Immediate qualifications have to be entered here, because the degree of concern among the Six regarding British policies is a fluctuating equation. Certainly there was a surge of sentiment late in March favoring British initiatives toward Europe, when the activation of General de Gaulle's program for withdrawal from NATO practically coincided with Britain's elections. The noted Fontaine article in Le Monde, in effect pleading with the British to save France from herself, was the most dramatic instance of such sentiment. Developments over the succeeding months have not been illuminating, however. The British Government's maneuvers toward the EEC apparently have been viewed by the member countries as something of a mixed bag, but with perhaps a plus for Britain emerging from the confusion. And now the ELDO fiasco threatens to wipe out that small gain. The question of attitudes toward Britain held across the Channel may have moved back roughly to where it stood early in the year.

These qualifications having been stated, the fact remains that during the spring a limited sampling of opinion on the Continent regarding the British revealed less interest

and, concomittantly, more scepticism than seemed justified by a detached assessment of the public record. There appeared to be general agreement that the time just wasn't right for getting down to business on EEC membership for Britain.

No simple explanation can be offered for this finding. Indeed, it may be that much of the answer lies in the long and tangled historical record of England's dealings with the Continent. A great many Europeans either assume or fear that Britain cannot abandon traditional thought processes and diplomatic habits despite all the changes in its position brought by the twentieth century. This apprehension is not allayed by their uncertainty and relative ignorance with regard to the current British social and political scene.

Oddly enough, there persists a communications gap between Britain and the Continent which people most involved in this area of inquiry assure me is relatively greater than that between the United States and Europe. A natural gravitation of press coverage on both sides of the Channel toward domestic affairs and the activities of the great powers may provide one major reason for this gap. Another possibly is the much-noted "inward-turning" quality of life in the Western European countries and the individual desire to concentrate on partaking of the benefits offered by the affluent society. Whatever the reasons, the Channel seems to form a physical and psychological barrier of greater dimensions than present-day geography and communications warrant. The ELDO affair is a good illustration of the lack of rapport.

One might think that the heavy volume of tourist and business travel in both directions long since would have made any such talk about the Channel anachronistic. It has certainly made a difference, but has had less impact than popularly supposed. For one thing, many more Britons visit the Continent than other Europeans come to Britain. A French acquaintance of mine remarked on a recent trip here that it was his first in over a dozen years; an Englishman of comparable means and standing would probably have visited France a half-dozen times in that period. For another, a majority of those not travelling in a business or governmental capacity (and doubtless some who are) make their journeys for the express purpose of savoring the differences between the homeland and other countries. Within the EEC countries the trend is toward minimizing the distinctions and easing transit across the borders. The continental visitor here is more likely to find reinforced any pre-existing notions that Britain is both retaining and cherishing its separate and often unique qualities. Moreover, there are

instances where this latter tendency seems to cloud the British ability to appreciate progressive developments within the EEC. Both in Italy and France, for example, I was told about Englishmen thoroughly familiar with the Continent who insisted on overemphasizing the problems the Community experienced with language differences.

These are relatively minor points compared with the overall implications of the distinctive and sometimes awkward position which continentals see Britain maintaining vis-a-vis Europe in terms of institutional arrangements as well as policy: one foot in and several limbs out. To say the least, reactions among the EEC countries to Britain's "world role" are varied and uncertain. They see Commonwealth ties as slowly becoming less important intrinsically and less a barrier to British entry into the Common Market. The perennial "East of Suez" debate which from time to time raises temperatures in Britain raises only a few languid eyebrows across the Channel -- so long as the question of Vietnam is kept to one side. The status of Britain as a nuclear power is a more controversial subject. Although it is not one on which comment is freely offered, several attitudes seemed to emerge from the sparse amount of commentary. Britain's retention of its nuclear status, regardless of the reasons, tends to sustain long-held suspicions on the Continent -- again regardless of their justification -- that Britain still prefers to be a world rather than a European power, expects to have a special position in Europe even if it dissolves its remaining global commitments, and essentially believes more in self-reliance than in integration in the defense field. In the latter connection, a number of people, especially convinced supranationalists, felt the British were not in the best position to criticize French policies when they had done so little to provide a better example.

None of these views bulks as large as the reactions on the Continent to the so-called "special relationship" between Britain and the United States. Outside of France, few people regard Britain as a "Trojan horse" for a putative U.S. interest in dominating Western Europe. Yet the majority view is that the power and influence of the United States is so pervasive as to constitute unwitting domination, and that Britain, if far from content with the situation, is the major European nation least prepared and able to change it. Feelings are mixed on this score. To the degree that the British could claim that their intimacy with the United States was successfully exercised on behalf of caution and restraint, many on the Continent have been inclined to regard the special relationship as consonant with Europe's best interests. The efficacy of the claim is fading rapidly, however. Only in portions of the British Labour Party is it an article of faith that former Prime Minister Attlee's flight to Washington prevented nuclear weapons being used in Korea. Several government officials in the EEC countries

chuckled as they expressed admiration for what they called British diplomacy's ANF ploy, which supposedly permitted the Americans to withdraw the MLF proposal without intolerable loss of face. But for the most part people on the Continent believe the drawbacks of the special relationship outweigh the merits, even for the participants themselves.

Their opinion seems rather to envisage Britain as Laocoon struggling with the consequences of its financial and economic weakness -- and certainly no one would be so ungenerous as to label the serpents "made in USA." Earlier this year most continental officials appeared to give Britain credit for more strength and vitality than did a majority of British commentators. Now, as the payments problem and the overall economic malaise deepen, the benefit of the doubt is being withdrawn. The view is growing across the Channel, as it is here, that Britain's independence of action in all spheres for some time is likely to be severely limited by a subordination of external policies to the defense of the pound. And this in turn is taken to mean that whenever the chips are down, and unless new European arrangements are made, Britain will be forced to place its relationship to the United States above its ties to Europe. Nothing could be less conducive to EEC membership for Britain than a spread of this sentiment on the Continent.

This does not imply, however, that the Continent of Europe is commencing or likely to engage in an anti-American campaign. Undoubtedly there are differences that could be capitalized upon: about Southeast Asia and other far-flung foreign policy issues, the means of ending the cold war and the division of Europe, and questions arising from American economic pre-eminence. But, even in the one country where they have been carefully nurtured by government policy and control over communications, emotional reactions to the United States do not seem strong enough to sustain more than demonstrative flurries against American policies, as distinct from Americans themselves. There is no explosive love-hate relationship between Europe and the United States; the much gentler term, affection-irritation, appears more applicable.

What lies behind the low-keyed but persistant sniping at U.S. policies and American manners and mores is not just substantive differences, the age-old resentment directed against the obvious seat of power, or the frustration of knowing that interdependence currently is inescapable; there is a subtler factor at work. The problem of establishing identity and status is growing in Europe. And one, perhaps partly subconscious, response is to stress those

regional characteristics which are not held in common with the most influential of the great powers. The more Europeans voluntarily copy from the United States the outward trappings of life in an affluent industrialized society, the more they resent the prototype and enlarge the importance of non-material distinctions. Of course, there is less of the real than the ideal in this thought process, but that does not lessen its significance. With General de Gaulle rather successfully invoking the vision of a Europe which historically has never existed, the impetus to seek definition and identity is unlikely to diminish in force.

Efforts to describe the distinctive qualities of present-day Europe, which appear sporadically both in learned and popular journals, often are based on contrasts between European and American life. In my opinion these articles usually end up making two main points which are not necessarily intended: first, that the qualities which are described as most typically European in great part are Mediterranean or latin in character; second, that the more such attributes are examined in relation to the British, the more Britain seems a half-way house between the Continent and the United States. To be facetious, since so many educated young Britons return from a visit to the United States saying that nothing in their experience had made them feel so European, maybe mass exposure to life in Manhattan would bring the British to commit themselves wholeheartedly to Europe. In any event, people on the Continent by and large see Britain looking two ways and genuinely unable to make a definitive choice, and they assume such a choice is required at the present time. This overall issue may help explain why Britain's recent prominent role in defending NATO has not gained the British a comparable amount of credit in Europe.

At some future date current attempts to divide European civilization from its American component conceivably may appear in somewhat the same category as Greek efforts in, say, 50 B.C. to retain identity in a world becoming dominated by Rome. The peoples of Greece then presumably would have found the equivalent of "Greco-Roman" applied to their culture as distasteful as the peoples of Europe today would regard the ascription to theirs of a phrase like Euro-American -- indeed, not an appealing sound -- though no one seems bothered by Euro-dollars, except for the problem of getting enough of them. In the present climate of European opinion, however, there is no disposition to regard the issue as settled; and the future role of Britain could be an important factor in its resolution. Besides, there is the latitude provided by a comparatively more powerful Parthia to the East nowadays

and by the fact that Americans just don't behave like ancient Romans, certainly not in Europe at any rate.

Moving to less amorphous ground, I hazard the guess that a single equation goes far toward summing up the problem which EEC countries confront in judging the case for British membership: namely, that their interest in Britain joining is primarily political, while they see the British interest in the Community as primarily an economic one. Too neat to be entirely true, this parallelism still may contain the heart of the matter. It also contains the paradox that the Six among themselves and individually have been passionately devoted to economic affairs.

Although I always found an assortment of opinions about Britain in individual EEC countries, this was less the case in Italy than in most others of the Six. Enough Italians spoke in the same vein to permit the following freely interpreted paraphrase:

> "We of course would like to see the British make the firm decision to join the EEC with an absolute minimum of conditions. We don't enjoy our position between France and Germany. Frankly, we're not ready to trust the Germans completely as yet, and we don't really like the French very much; we will need Britain in the Community as a counterweight. Also, the Community would benefit from British democratic and parliamentary biases. But no one should doubt that when the time comes to negotiate Italy will fight as hard for its interests as any member. As you know, in numerous ways our economies are far from complementary. In any case, British entry is not an immediate issue. The EEC has plenty of unfinished business in Brussels, we have a lot to keep us busy here in Rome, General de Gaulle is unlikely to change his attitude toward British membership, and we honestly can't understand Britain's policy and terms."

With variations and qualifications a number of the points brought up in this summary were repeated in discussions in other EEC countries. While the Dutch and the Germans showed a good deal more interest than the others in gaining increased access to British markets, in neither case did this appear as the paramount concern. Again and again conversations which began along economic lines quickly veered onto different grounds, partly because of the complexity of the financial, agricultural and industrial factors involved, but mainly because those being interviewed regarded the question of British entry basically from a political standpoint. It seemed to me that the German interest could be

described as psychological as well. Because of Britain's reputation as a democratic and liberal nation, and because the public (or at least the popular press) here has been one of the slowest in Europe to relinquish its memories of Germany's role in two world wars, many Germans regard close relations with Britain as the touchstone of international acceptance. It is an open question how long this attitude will persist. As one high German official said in effect: "The British for a long time now have patted us on the head one month and kicked us in the teeth the next. What do we have to do to prove our respectability?"

But this almost comes under the heading of gossip. The intention in this letter is not to report on the number of continentals who think the British a fine people, on the number who consider them infuriating, or on the much larger number who regard them as fine and infuriating. It can be taken for granted that there is continuing respect for Britain on the Continent.

Neither is there an intention to deny any significance to the Commonwealth and agricultural issues as roadblocks to British EEC membership. At the same time, as noted above, officials on the Continent generally believe that the Commonwealth question is in the process of solving itself; and there seems to be tacit agreement that the special problem of New Zealand can be managed without undue strain. Moreover, the gap between the British and the Community agricultural methods is quietly being diminished. According to Jean Rey, for example, the EEC is beginning to use the U.K. deficit payment system. A clear majority of these officials agree that by far the most important economic question concerns the financial implications of entry, especially for the British balance of payments. In this sphere all the EEC countries have joined in the most recent arrangement to bolster the pound, and there are rumors of new and more far-reaching moves to help Britain in the offing. Under these circumstances, the British Government's emphasis on agriculture and the Commonwealth is regarded with some suspicion on the Continent. Mr. Wilson is not noted for his tender treatment of the farmers, and the recent Anglo-Irish trade agreement showed readiness in a different context to subordinate agricultural interests to broad political ones.

If this seemingly misplaced emphasis were an isolated instance of its kind, and if there were more confidence in Britain's intentions, presumably officials in the EEC countries might feel that the prime minister's reputation for tactical brilliance should be relied upon. But it is not an isolated instance. The same sort of reaction is aroused by the British Government's stressing of its commitments

to the European Free Trade Association. By itself -- and overlooking the surcharge episode -- this display of a sense of responsibility to trading partners would probably appear natural and necessary to the EEC members. As matters stand, it generates fears that Britain is thinking more of special association arrangements than of full membership in the Community.

British ministerial statements to the public about the proper national stance on negotiations are particularly baffling to people across the Channel. Every official I met on the Continent who had more than casual interest in the subject agreed that negotiations would have to take place prior to a formal British entry into the Community, and that a transition period would have to be arranged. Equally, these officials were positive that changes in the Rome Treaty were not to be considered at this stage, and certainly not as a British condition for entry. Yet Prime Minister Wilson and Mr. George Brown merrily play duets on the themes that Britain will never crawl across the EEC threshold, will never join because of economic weakness, and with head held high will negotiate its way into a wider community. A good deal of this is discounted by EEC officials as hyperbolic doubletalk for public consumption and to soothe the traditionally insular elements in the Labour Party. Moreover, one assumes the informal tentative probings now being conducted by the British can be placed on the positive side of the ledger.

Still, there remains an irritated feeling that Britain as a prospective club member is behaving strangely. Making it appear that the applicant is doing the membership a favor by joining, seeking changes in the club rules, and declaring that the membership rolls should be opened are not regarded as promoting friendly sentiment or acceptance. While the club analogy is not a close one, neither is it far-fetched; and it is felt that Britain -- clubland personified -- should have a better understanding of EEC attitudes. British failure to display greater sensitivity makes a further contribution to the view that Britain is not certain it wishes to join.

But what about the behavior of the country which is already a member and keeps telling the other members that it must be a different kind of club than they wanted? On the one hand, the apparently continuing veto of British membership by France seems to cause the other EEC countries to regard Britain as a more attractive partner than they otherwise might. There is certainly full sympathy with the British position that another rejection like that of January 1963 cannot be risked. On the other, these countries are apprehensive that Britain and France may find they have more in common than the policy of the latter has allowed

to emerge. This largely unspoken fear probably is one of the many reasons why, at times of crisis, there has been relatively so little interest among the Five in any scheme to bring Britain into the EEC over French objections. The most important reason obviously is the extent to which the continuing process of economic integration has bound the interests of the Six together despite French foot-dragging.

It may be objected that France has been changing its attitude toward Britain during the year and no longer really interposes a veto (French officials of course protest that the veto never existed; that Britain excluded itself through its attitudes and policies -- and by not taking the Norman Conquest seriously enough). The best response to the objection is simply that a remarkable number of people in the EEC countries, including France, seem to "come from Missouri." Insofar as the case depends on the tumultuous long weekend less than a fortnight before the British election, no one I encountered in Paris and Brussels at that time believed General de Gaulle had changed his strategy in the slightest, although it suited his tactical purposes for such a belief to gain currency. And it is now generally accepted that the British Foreign Minister, in the heat of the electoral campaign, was drawn into seeing a new French attitude which did not exist. With the French currently mounting a campaign of gentle murmurings, preceding a ministerial visit to Britain, the question arises whether a page is being turned or whether there is forthcoming merely a hint of an invitation to a "pas de deux." The record to date would seem to encourage continued scepticism.

Despite the misunderstandings of the lost weekend, there is no mistaking the importance of succeeding events in terms of British opinion about joining the EEC. There undoubtedly was a rush of public sentiment favoring membership, highlighted by a heavy degree of support from the popular press. The excitement fairly quickly receded, but it has left a big assumption in its wake: the normally well-informed person now seems to believe that Britain will have become a member of the European Community within the next five years; a good number of very well-informed people would cut that time span in half. Mind you, behind this comfortable assumption there is a marked absence of definition, of knowledge about arrangements and costs, and, most important, of understanding of attitudes and objectives on the Continent. Taking this public blandness in conjunction with the British Government's intricate maneuverings and confusing statements, it is no wonder that one finds among the EEC countries restrained enthusiasm and continuing doubts about Britain's position.

A few weeks ago, on an unusual BBC television program devoted to Britain and the Common Market, former Euratom President Hirsch stated calmly from across the Channel that the biggest problem in this regard was the British not having made up their minds. Showing considerable dismay, Chatham House Director of Studies Schonfield expostulated: "Don't people on the Continent realize that the British attitude has changed?" The question was left unanswered, and perhaps better so; for the response probably would have set off an extensive exchange of further questions, leaving the audience totally befuddled.

My own partial answer is to report the gist of a conversation held not long ago with an experienced Dutch civil servant concerned with the EEC negotiations in Brussels. For the sake of convenience let him be called Mr. Van, though it is no part of his name.

He began by supporting the surmise that EEC officials and national representatives were far too occupied with extremely complicated Community business to cope with negotiations deriving from a British membership application, and that this was likely to remain the case for at least the remainder of 1966. He then underlined the urgency of this business. To him, it was the most important response that could be made to what he regarded as General de Gaulle's desire to create a cooperative rather than integrated Europe with France first among equals. While Mr. Van personally did not believe a federated Europe was attainable, at least in this generation, he felt that the alternative to the Gaullist program was quietly to keep up the pressure for as much supranationalism as was humanly possible (he noted that the Dutch themselves tended to balk at times). Without it, even a confederated Europe was unlikely to emerge in the aftermath of de Gaulle's reliance upon and promotion of nationalistic sentiments. Only by aiming recognizably too high was there a chance of achieving something more than a confederation. He said this with the observation that such descriptive terms were not very useful; one hoped that EEC progress would include new and better phraseology.

Mr. Van went on to acknowledge that much steam had gone out of the supranational boiler just as the hardest problems of integration were coming to the fore. On the other hand, there was deep and widespread appreciation of the EEC role throughout all six member states. Although not much could be statistically proved, few people disputed the contribution made by the Community to their growing prosperity. As a result, there was a fund of public loyalty to be drawn upon if the leadership were provided.

He had long hoped that Britain would finally move to accept a full role in the Community and to provide such leadership. That hope was nearly exhausted by the failure of successive British governments to enlighten their public about the political and institutional importance of the EEC; for a concentration upon economic factors alone might well lead to stagnation instead of growth within the Community. It was for this reason that he believed preparations for a membership application from the United Kingdom -- which was not a certainty by any means -- had to take second place to efforts to encourage momentum in the Community. He felt that, by the same token, the British Government would consider it necessary to give priority to its urgent domestic concerns for quite a while to come. In short, the Five would have to rely on their modest degree of solidarity and their own capacities for leadership.

In Mr. Van's opinion, the current spate of talk about a wider community was excessive, premature and therefore dangerous, since it acted in favor of the Gaullist concept of Europe. He felt no personal animosity toward General de Gaulle and was prepared to admit that, if one scentically assessed national practices and human nature, the general's ideas had a sound pragmatic base. Perhaps Europe would go in the direction prophesied by the French President, who so busily worked to fulfill his prophesy, but it would most likely lead to a condition of quarrelsome, fragmented impotence for the Continent in its internal dealings and in its relationships with the great powers. Mr. Van saw no grandeur or vision in this policy, but a certain meanness incompatible with de Gaulle's great personal qualities and his actions within France itself.

He thought, in sum, there was a slow-paced race going on between what many people would describe as the most desirable and the most likely future for Western Europe. He himself was not ready to accept the latter description, but foresaw an enormous amount of hard work involved in keeping it from becoming valid. Specifically, he believed that the Community had to be placed on a more solid and permanent basis before it could expand much more. Otherwise, a plethora of agreements on economic association, as contrasted with full and unmitigated membership, could only diminish the strength and attractive force of the central core.

It was in this context that Mr. Van found British attitudes and actions worrisome. In particular, he thought it well-nigh impossible to reconcile ministerial pronouncements with the government's declaration of interest in membership. Mr. Wilson's Bristol speech and its continuing echoes

were bad enough. But what was one to make of "pro-European" Mr. Brown's assertions that: "The United Kingdom will join a wider community," and "I want the Continent to be a different kind of Continent." The suspicion was taking root in Mr. Van's mind that Prime Minister Wilson might intend to stall for time, both in order to concentrate on domestic tasks and to see the way the wind blew in Europe. He did not believe the British in the short term would agree to play any bilateral game with France, yet he wondered if British and French policies toward European unity might not increasingly coincide over the next several years. In that case, Mr. Van was inclined to reason that the organization of Europe in the last analysis would more closely resemble the design laid out by General de Gaulle rather than the concept promoted by Jean Monnet.

All I can assert about his views is that they represent a fairly substantial element in attitudes toward Britain held on the Continent. They cannot be described as majority thinking. They do not help the British to clarify their own confusions and frustrations regarding the European Community. They do, however, partially explain why people on the Continent are ambivalent and almost always attach the qualifying "but" to their reactions toward Britain as a prospective member of the EEC.

It may well be that informed Britons are correct in assuming that their country somehow will be in the European Community by the end of the decade. Yet the burning question remains: what kind of community?

Sincerely yours,

D. G. Henderson

Donald G. Henderson

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