CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION:

A 'TACIT ALLIANCE'?

On 1 February 1938 William Borah, the veteran isolationist from Idaho, stood up in the Senate and, in the words of the *New York Times*, accused the Roosevelt Administration of 'risking war by letting the world believe that the United States was in a "tacit alliance" with Great Britain'. Borah was referring to a statement by Anthony Eden in the Commons on 21 December, in which, according to the Senator, he implied 'a secret understanding between Great Britain and the United States'. The Foreign Secretary's comments needed clarification, argued Borah, as he had said that 'Britain and the United States had an understanding and were in consultation. When asked what that relationship was', Borah continued, 'Eden replied he could not reveal it'. Borah felt that this statement was disturbing 'because there has gone to the world an understanding that the United States and Great Britain have a working relationship of such a nature that it must be secret'. [1]

Borah's outburst came in the wake of the fierce debate in the United States and abroad that ensued when Franklin Roosevelt said in his Chicago speech on 5 October 1937 that the peace-loving countries of the world should 'quarantine the aggressors'. The President's announcement on 28 January 1938 that the United States now required a much larger defence budget, including a 20 per cent increase in the size of the navy, to cope with the dangers inherent in the international situation, together with reports of a meeting between US and British naval officials, confirmed the suspicions of isolationists that Roosevelt's 'quarantine' speech was the harbinger of a more interventionist policy. Borah now accused the Roosevelt Administration of having an understanding with the British whereby both powers would enlarge their navies so as to counteract the expansionist policy of Japan. Senator Hiram Johnson, another well-known isolationist, took a similar view and demanded a public statement confirming that the President had not abandoned the traditional American policy of avoiding entangling alliances with the nations of Europe. [2]

Both Borah and Johnson had been amongst the so-called 'Irreconcilables' opposed to US entry to the League of Nations in 1919-20 and ever since they had been suspicious of any sign of American political co-operation with European powers, especially Britain. Nor were the two Senators thinking only of naval relations and Japan. It is clear from their private

papers as well as their speeches that they felt that the Roosevelt Administration was co-operating too readily with the British Government over a range of issues relating to Europe as well as the Far East. Other signs of a close Anglo-American relationship that suggested an 'informal alliance' were felt to include the Tripartite Currency Agreement of September 1936 with France and the periodic speculation that a deal might be in the offing to settle the British war debt that was suspended in 1934 following Johnson's War Debt Act. The visit to Washington of Walter Runciman, the British Trade Secretary, in January 1937, also caused concern. A trade agreement had been concluded with Canada in November 1935 and there were suspicions that one with Britain would have more than economic significance. The increasingly friendly relations with Canada, which was the senior Dominion in the British Empire, and the continuing efforts of the Roosevelt Administration to gain more discretion in interpreting the Neutrality laws were also noted. Above all, the President's 'Quarantine speech', in October 1937, and the revelation of secret naval talks in London in January 1938, aroused deep suspicions among the isolationists.
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Borah and Johnson would have been even more alarmed had they been aware of Roosevelt's initiative in January 1938 when the President sent a secret message to the British Government suggesting that he call a conference to discuss the international tensions at that time. In fact, this initiative was rebuffed by Neville Chamberlain – much to the chagrin of the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden – and the President agreed to postpone it. Eden's subsequent resignation in mid-February 1938 highlighted the fact that there were divisions in London at this time, as well as in Washington, as to the best strategy to adopt towards the growing threat from Germany, Italy and Japan and the role of the USA in that strategy. Chamberlain's preferred policy was one of direct negotiations with the dictator powers to gain their cooperation in bringing about a peaceful readjustment of the international status quo. This approach was not popular in the United States, especially at the time of the Munich crisis, and it did not sit well with Roosevelt and his administration. But nor did the policy of American isolationism favoured by Borah and Johnson.[4]

The main aim of the current work is to examine Borah's view that a 'tacit alliance' existed between the United States and Britain at this time for the purpose of deterring the dictator states of Germany, Italy and Japan – a purpose that in his view brought with it the prospect

of American involvement in another world war. For the historian, such a claim raises several key questions about the nature of Anglo-American relations on the eve of the Second World War. Firstly, was Borah justified in his suspicions of FDR's foreign policy and especially the fear that FDR was working towards a closer relationship with Britain than the administration was admitting in public? Secondly, how did FDR's foreign policy square with the policy of appeasement being pursued by the Chamberlain Government and with the views of the Labour and Liberal Opposition, and Conservative critics such as Churchill? Thirdly, how important was the role played by Canada in Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s, and especially by William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister in this period? Fourthly, what was the attitude in Berlin at this time towards Anglo-American relations and the existence or otherwise of an understanding between London and Washington? The answers to these questions will help to answer a fifth and final question - was there a 'tacit alliance' between the United States and Britain in the late 1930s that acted as a precursor to the 'special relationship' identified by Churchill in his post-war Fulton speech? [5]

DEFINITIONS

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to establish clear definitions - as far as possible given the controversy surrounding them - of the key terms used in the debates of the 1930s. The contemporary meaning of these terms is the one favoured by the current writer rather than any later variants suggested by historians or political scientists. Five terms in particular were much used in the 1930s, ranging from total non-intervention in international conflicts to a readiness to intervene 'when and where necessary' - pacificism, isolationism, appeasement, internationalism and interventionism. There was some overlap between them and especially between pacifism and isolationism and between internationalism and interventionism. FDR regarded himself as an internationalist who wanted to cooperate with Britain and France to contain Nazi Germany. He rejected the idea of isolationism but was also opposed to outright interventionism – in the sense of sending US troops abroad – until 1941. At the same time, he was reluctant to support the kind of appeasement policy favoured by Chamberlain prior to the outbreak of war. [6]

Pacifism – Although the pacifists of the 1930s do not receive much attention today they were an important factor in both the United States and Britain until at least 1939. For

example, the ‘Keep America Out of War Congress’ (KAOWC) was officially founded at a rally held on 6 March 1938, in the New York Hippodrome. The main sponsor was the Socialist Party, and the chairman was the veteran pacifist reformer Oswald Garrison Villard. For most of its life, the KAOWC was a coalition composed of the Socialist Party and six militant peace organizations: the Peace Section of the American Friends Service Committee; the Fellowship of Reconciliation; the World Peace Commission of the Methodist Church; the American Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the National Council for the Prevention of War; and the War Resisters League. Like many other pacifist and isolationist organisations, it was dissolved when the US joined the war following Pearl Harbor. Pacificism was also a significant force in the Labour party for much of the 1930s and it handicapped the party’s attitude towards rearmament until at least 1937. The best-known pacifist in Britain was George Lansbury, the erstwhile Labour party leader, who Ernest Bevin famously criticised for ‘hawking his conscience from one conference to another’. [7]

Isolationism - It has been suggested by some historians that ‘isolationism’ is a misleading term because the United States has never been completely isolated from the affairs of other countries, especially since the war with Spain in 1898. It is also true that ‘isolationists’, including Borah and Johnson, often disagreed on specific issues. Other terms such as ‘non-intervention’ and ‘unilateralism’ have been put forward as representing the real views of the isolationists. However, ‘isolationism’ was a ubiquitous term in the 1930s and therefore cannot simply be ignored. It also had a reasonably clear meaning at that time which was the view that the US should hold to the advice of the Founding Fathers to avoid involvement in the political affairs of Europe, especially Britain, and to shun ‘entangling alliances. These familiar warnings of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were frequently quoted by Borah, Johnson and other isolationists throughout the 1930s. Less often quoted by the isolationists was the rider added by Washington about ‘temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies’. Whatever their disagreements over specific issues most isolationists shared a deep suspicion of Britain and, to a lesser extent, France. Historians have sometimes referred to ‘the myth of American isolationism’ – but it was no myth as far as Franklin Roosevelt was concerned. [8]

Internationalism – The term ‘internationalism’ has also been criticised because of its very broad and variable meaning, But, like isolationism, it was one of the key terms used in the

1930s and therefore it must be defined as clearly as possible rather than disregarded. In the 1930s most 'Internationalists' argued that, even in their own day, Washington and Jefferson had been unable to avoid the US becoming involved in European events and that the growth of American economic and strategic interests since then had made it impossible for the US to ignore political rivalries in the wider world. However, the degree of involvement that the US should undertake was a continual matter of debate. Critics of such a policy in the 1930s tended to use terms 'internationalist' and 'interventionist' interchangeably – or, to describe 'interventionists' as 'extreme internationalist'. The definitional goal posts also moved as public support for aid to the Allies increased between 1939 and 1941. Many of the self-identified internationalists of the 1930s were supporters of Woodrow Wilson – Democrats like Cordell Hull, Norman Davis and FDR himself – who maintained their faith in the value of international cooperation and wished to cooperate with the League of Nations and its leading members, especially Britain, as far as was politically possible. What this meant in practice, given the strength of isolationism, especially in Congress, was a policy of parallel rather than joint action, both in Europe and the Far East. [9]

Appeasement - As had often been pointed out, 'appeasement' was the accepted term in the early 1930s for a desire to achieve international peace and stability, especially in Europe, by redressing legitimate grievances amongst dissatisfied nations. In this sense, most public figures were in favour of 'appeasement', which was partly a response to the view that the Paris peace settlement was flawed and needed to be amended. Similarly, 'economic appeasement' was seen by many, not least Cordell Hull, Roosevelt's Secretary of State, as essential if international peace and stability were to be achieved. This notion of general or international appeasement was rather different from the direct or bilateral appeasement policy towards Hitler and Mussolini that became such a prominent feature of British and French foreign policies during the late 1930s, culminating in the Munich agreement of September 1938. It was this trend towards direct concessions to the dictator states, especially Germany, under the threat of force rather than a greater focus on rearmament and deterrence that gave appeasement the unenviable reputation that it still has today. [10]

Interventionism - In his attitude towards Europe, Woodrow Wilson moved from internationalism during the early years of the First World War, when attempts were made, notably by his special envoy, Colonel Edward House, to broker an agreement between the

Allies and the Central Powers to end the war, to interventionism in April 1917. The US then became a belligerent, joined the Allies as an 'Associated Power', and sent an expeditionary force to the battlefields of Europe. Military intervention had already been urged by Theodore Roosevelt, and admirers of TR – such as Henry Stimson and Frank Knox – were to be among the leading interventionists in the late 1930s. The line between internationalism – i.e. co-operation with like-minded nations that might include financial and economic aid – and interventionism, was a flexible and rather subjective one. If this line was occasionally straddled by Wilson between 1914 and 1917 it was deliberately obscured by FDR after January 1939 when he announced in his State of the Union address that there were 'many methods short of war, but stronger and more effective than mere words' that the US could employ against 'aggressor governments'. However, interventionism, in the sense of sending an expeditionary force to Europe, had very few advocates prior to 1940 and FDR was not one of them. [11]

The question of whether there was, in fact, a 'tacit alliance' between the United States and Britain prior to the outbreak of the Second World War is one that is situated at the junction of four historical debates, that together have generated a very large body of writing and scholarship. Firstly, there is the US isolationism debate regarding the nature of FDR's foreign policy in the 1930s, and the extent to which it was constrained by the strength of American isolationism at that time. Secondly, the British appeasement debate has examined Neville Chamberlain's foreign policy, its causes and consequences and whether there were any alternatives to appeasement. Thirdly, the North Atlantic Triangle debate has explored the role of Canada's, especially while Mackenzie King was Prime Minister – in acting as a bridge between the US and Britain. Fourthly, there is the debate about what might be termed 'the view from Berlin'. What was the attitude of the German Foreign Ministry and of the Nazi regime, to British and US foreign policies in the 1930s and the possibility of American intervention in another European conflict? Each of these debates has influenced historians writing about Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s. [12]

AMERICAN ISOLATIONISM

As regards US foreign policy, Borah's notion of a 'tacit alliance' between the **US and GB** in February 1938 represented an early manifestation of the 'isolationist' school of thought that

was critical of Roosevelt's diplomacy. Borah's views were echoed by 'isolationist' historians such as Charles Beard, who argued that Roosevelt had acted and spoken in public like an 'isolationist' during his first term but reversed this policy and took the United States into war in 1941. Many of the early isolationists were progressives like Senator Burton K Wheeler who argued that involvement in European affairs had mainly benefitted financiers and big business, especially arms manufacturers, etc. New Left historians echoed these views and interpreted US intervention as being largely driven by economic imperialism. This interpretation of US foreign policy was championed by William Appleman Williams in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, while Lloyd Gardner's *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* deprecated the traditional emphasis by historians on isolationism, interventionism and internationalism and argued that more attention should be paid to American economic diplomacy. More specifically, he stressed the role of FDR's Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, whose trade agreements programme aimed to promote a free trade or 'Open Door' policy, especially with Britain. [13]

More recently, the main line of attack on FDR's foreign policy has come from what might be termed 'the interventionist school' of historians. Arguing the opposite of the isolationists, these historians have criticised the Roosevelt administration for not doing more to stand up to Germany, Italy and Japan rather than for doing too much. They have taken the view that FDR effectively pandered to isolationism by not taken a stronger stand against them, and in favour of the democracies, until 1939. There were not many contemporaries who took this view although erstwhile TR supporters such as Henry Stimson and Frank Knox were often frustrated with FDR's cautious policy during the 1930s. Robert Divine, a leading member of this school of thought, portrayed Roosevelt as a genuine 'isolationist' in the early years of his Presidency who, after 1939, became an 'internationalist'. Divine and other 'interventionist' historians pointed to Roosevelt' Bombshell message to the London Economic Conference in 1933 and his signing of the neutrality acts as evidence of FDR's isolationism during his first term, and to US policy during the Spanish Civil War and the Munich crisis as indications of his isolationism during his second term. [14]

Finally, there is what might be termed the internationalist school that has broadly supported the record of US foreign policy in the late 1930s. This school argues that the Roosevelt Administration did as much as it could within the limits of US isolationism,

especially in educating American public opinion. This was the view of the State Department as set out in *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*, published in 1943. This view gained strong support from Basil Rauch who argued that New Deal foreign policy, rather like the domestic New Deal, while not being perfect, managed to achieve as much as was possible at the time, given the circumstances of the time. He argued that Roosevelt had always been an 'internationalist' and had tried to educate American public opinion towards a more realistic foreign policy while striving to keep the United States out of war until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. William Langer and Everett Gleason, although more critical of FDR, were still essentially sympathetic is their early study. Similarly, Robert Dallek's major work is critical of Roosevelt for pandering to the isolationists in Congress but defends him from his most outspoken critics. More enthusiastic recent defences of FDR's foreign policy include the **monograph *work*** by Dominic Tierney on the Spanish Civil War and the broader analysis of Roosevelt's foreign policy by David Schmitz.[15]

BRITISH APPEASEMENT

Turning next to British foreign policy, the appeasement debate has been central to writing on the Chamberlain Government's foreign policy ever since the collapse of France and the desperate Dunkirk evacuation in May-June 1940. The polemical *Guilty Men*, written under the pseudonym 'Cato - taken from the name of the principled Roman Senator who opposed the ambitions of Julius Caesar – denounced 15 key figures who were deemed especially culpable for the situation in which Britain found itself. These were headed by the three prime ministers who had office up to 1940 – MacDonald, Baldwin and, above all, Chamberlain. The list also included Lord Halifax, Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare – key figures in the National Governments of the 1930s. *Guilty Men* was followed by many other works on British foreign policy in the lead up to the Second World War including the multi-volume opus of Sir Winston Churchill, knighted in 1953 for his service to the nation. Although by no means as polemical as *Guilty Men*, Churchill's writings left little doubt as to where the failings lay for Britain's perilous position in 1940. Nor did A J P Taylor who, while pointing out that Chamberlain's appeasement policy was popular at the time, also argued that Hitler was essentially an opportunist and that Chamberlain had led him to believe that GB and France would not fight for Poland, just as they had not fought for Czechoslovakia. [16]

Such views were met by a sustained defence of British appeasement policy on the grounds that it was the only viable option at the time given the threats confronting British power in Europe and the Far East, the attitude of the Dominions and the lack of Allies apart from France. Chamberlain's defenders also pointed out that he had a dual policy of rearmament as well as appeasement and that the extra year gained by the Munich agreement at least gave Britain more time to rearm and enable a united response by Britain and the Dominions, given the lengths to which Chamberlain had gone to achieve peace. Such views were championed, amongst others, by Donald Cameron Watt who identified what he saw as 'the rise of a revisionist school' in the 1960s. Since then a wide-ranging debate over British appeasement has continued unabated between 'revisionist' historians and 'counter-revisionists' who adhere to a more nuanced version of the original orthodoxy that judged Chamberlain and other key figures in the National Government as guilty of serious misjudgements in their handling of Hitler and Nazi Germany, a debate well reviewed in Sidney Aster's essay. Recent contributors continue to disagree. Stedman's work on 'the alternatives to appeasement', while not uncritical of Chamberlain, concludes by defending Chamberlain very much along revisionist lines. Whereas two other recent works by Tim Bouverie and Adrian Phillips essentially support the Churchillian critique of appeasement and underline Chamberlain's shortcomings. [17]

CANADA AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC TRIANGLE

In terms of Canada's role, the Canadian historian C P Stacey once referred to 'the peculiar relationship of Franklin D Roosevelt to Canada'. Pointing out that 'Mr Roosevelt is perhaps the first American President of whom it could be said that he was genuinely popular in Canada', he raised the question 'how is one to explain Roosevelt's evident special interest in Canada? He was certainly not obsessed with the country, but he seems to have had a more genuine interest in relations with Canada than any other President has ever had' – especially in the case of defence. Stacey had no answer to this question himself beyond saying that the enigmatic FDR was often difficult to fathom. While stating that too much influence on US foreign policy should not be attributed to the Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, he argued that 'possibly as good an explanation as any is the one he himself gave during his visit to Quebec City in 1936: "since the age of two I have spent the majority of my summers in the Province of New Brunswick"'.[18]

In fact, FDR's attitude towards Canada needs to be seen within the context of the 'North Atlantic Triangle' – a term coined by John Bartlet Brebner in 1945. Brebner argued that a significant triangular relationship had emerged between the US, Britain and Canada – politically and economically – during the late 19th century. This development was underlined by Canada's strong contribution to victory during the First World War, her status at the Paris Peace Conference, and her membership of the League of Nations. The uneasy relations of the 1920s between the US, Britain and Canada were followed by 'the perplexing triangular interplay during the prelude to war' but cooperation was much closer between 1939 and 1945, including a 'triangular economic integration for war'. This broad canvas has been filled by several later historians and political scientists and while opinions vary on the usefulness of the term there is no doubt that Mackenzie King saw Canada as a bridge between the USA and Britain, and that the Canadian role in the years 1937-1939 therefore needs to be addressed in order to examine fully the notion of an Anglo-American 'tacit alliance'. [19]

NAZI GERMANY AND THE VIEW FROM BERLIN

Finally, the perspective of the enemies of an Anglo-American alliance, tacit or otherwise, needs to be borne in mind, as well as the perspective of an important ally such as Canada. Given that much of the driving force behind closer Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s was provided by fear of Nazi Germany in Washington and London, and that the US President's words and deeds suggested that, as in the Great War, US neutrality was unlikely to prove permanent if war broke out in Europe, were these warnings heeded in Berlin? What was the attitude of the German Embassy in Washington towards the signs of a closer relationship between Washington and London in Roosevelt's second term as President, compared with his first? To what extent did the Embassy warn the German Foreign Ministry about the growing closeness between Britain and the United States and how far were any such warnings heeded by the German Foreign Ministry and by the Nazi hierarchy, especially the Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and by Hitler himself? [20]

Early authorities such as Gerhard Weinberg and Saul Friedlander, argued that Hitler had a low regard for the United States as a military threat in 1939, especially as he was convinced that Britain and France would not fight over Poland. However, when the Allies declared war and refused his peace offer, Hitler took more notice of the United States and was keen to

keep it out of the war. This view has been elaborated upon by later writers such as Ian Kershaw but not changed in its essentials. Klaus Fischer, for example, has provided a very detailed and nuanced picture of Hitler's image of America, including his disdain for the bureaucrats in the German Foreign Ministry. Even Ribbentrop, his Foreign Minister, although hardly a bureaucrat, lost influence after 1939 as Hitler turned more to his military advisers for support. Nor did he have a very high opinion of the diplomats at the German Embassy in Washington, with the exception of the Military Attache, General Friedrich von Bötticher, whose views he was more ready to read and take notice of. However, the reports of the Washington Embassy provide important evidence as to how well Berlin was informed about FDR's foreign policy and Anglo-American relations. [21]

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1937-1939

Most of the recent historiography on Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s has tended to stress the policy differences between the Roosevelt administration and the Chamberlain government, with individual historians empathising more with one side or the other. Relations between Britain and the United States was certainly troubled for much of the 1930s. One early historian, Harry Allen, even referred to the 'almost total lack of Anglo-American history in these years' – presumably meaning political cooperation, as he was well aware of the economic and naval issues involving the two governments. Herbert Nicholas, on the other hand, argued that there was continuous diplomatic activity between Washington and London which contributed to the close relations between the two after war had broken out. While David Adams, **editor of the Confidential State Papers**, saw Roosevelt as an internationalist whose 'attempted policy of parallel action was doomed to failure because, quite apart from the problem of internal American dissent, the powers with whom he hoped to become aligned were themselves following a policy of appeasement'.[22]

A.J.P. Taylor's **controversial** work **on the origins of the second world war**, while critical of British policy, also maintained that the Roosevelt Administration made no worthwhile contribution towards dealing with the European crisis. 'The vote of November 1932 was a victory for 'isolationism', he claimed, arguing that Roosevelt's election in 1932 was soon followed by the end of American cooperation in disarmament and reparations. Referring to the Neutrality Acts, he continued, with more force than accuracy: 'President Roosevelt

accepted these measures without any sign of disagreement. Their effect was reinforced by the intensely nationalistic economics of the New Deal'. Roosevelt could provide only oral exhortation during the European crisis but what Britain and France required was material strength. 'None was forthcoming from the United States'. Lack of American support contributed towards the British and French retreat at the Munich conference, he argued. 'Roosevelt, entangled in troubles over domestic policy, had no mind to add to his difficulties by provoking controversy over foreign affairs. Europe could go its own way without America'.[23]

Taylor's reputation was not based on his knowledge of American history. But his opinion on American appeasement received strong support from influential American historians such as Robert Divine, who saw Roosevelt as a genuine 'isolationist' in the early years of his Presidency. Divine argued that by the time of the Munich conference in 1938 'American isolation had become the handmaiden of European appeasement'. Similarly, Arnold Offner, who traced American policy towards Germany from 1933 to 1938, wrote: 'A.J.P. Taylor is correct: Americans, whatever misgivings they might have had at the time, only later condemned the British and French for doing what they would have done in their place'. Following Taylor's thesis that Hitler was essentially an opportunist who was frequently fearful of foreign response and prepared to alter his immediate policy, and arguing that 'Roosevelt perpetually inclined towards appeasement', Offner added: 'Bolder American policy might not only have encouraged others to greater daring and resistance, but could have changed, in a way highly advantageous to the democracies, the critical political circumstances in which German, and European, policy developed.' [24]

The first detailed treatment of Anglo-American relations in the 1930s based on newly-released British documents in the UK National Archives, and still a significant contribution to the field, was by Ritchie Ovendale. Like much of the new scholarship of the 1970s it was undertaken following the 1967 Public Records Act in the UK which reduced the 50-year rule for the release of British Government records to 30 years. Ovendale's book focused more on Chamberlain and British policy, including the influence of Canada and the other Dominions, rather than on Roosevelt and US policy, and found more cooperation between London and Washington than some earlier – and later – works. Ovendale gave Chamberlain much of the credit for this. 'It was largely Chamberlain's policy of appeasement which ensured that when

war came in 1939 the commonwealth was united. Britain, too, had behind it a sympathetic United States, and Roosevelt's assurance that the industrial resources of his country would be at Britain's disposal. This was a considerable achievement'. Callum MacDonald, on the other hand, stressed the tensions between FDR and Chamberlain, arguing that American policymakers believed that the Prime Minister was 'the agent of selfish City interests'. Differences in policy towards Europe and Far East 'explain the considerable degree of mistrust which marked the attitude of the Roosevelt administration towards the Chamberlain government', MacDonald wrote. [25]

Not long after the publication of the works by Ovendale and MacDonald, another very significant book appeared, by David Reynolds, on the 'creation of the Anglo-American alliance'. Reynolds' book, which he has supplemented with a number of other important writings, traced the development of Anglo-American relations from Chamberlain's appointment as Prime Minister in 1937 to American entry into the Second World War. The book's sub-title 'A study in competitive cooperation' was also revealing. Reynolds main focus was British foreign policy and, adopting a broadly revisionist stance, he was generally sympathetic to Chamberlain and the problems he faced that led the British Government to pursue a policy of appeasement. One of these problems was a tradition of American unreliability, dating back to Woodrow Wilson's failure to secure American membership of the League of Nations, that had given rise to what Reynolds characterised as **'Doubts, Hopes and Fears'** in London about the reliability of US foreign policy in the 1930s. Reynolds argued that FDR's efforts to reassure Chamberlain about US support for Britain and France were undermined by the strength of US isolationism and the President's own lack of a clear policy until the crisis of 1940 made this an urgent necessity. [26]

Reynolds work, with its emphasis on the problems affecting Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s, has been followed by a number of important works that have tended to adopt a similar interpretation. Donald Cameron Watt, a leading advocate of the revisionist view of Chamberlain, was more critical of Roosevelt's policy, prior to 1939 at least. William Rock's very detailed treatment of Anglo-American relations during Chamberlain's premiership, again focused mainly on the British perspective. While critical of both Chamberlain and Roosevelt, he agreed that the 'doubts, hopes, fears' of the British Government in its attitude towards the US was an important factor in hampering their cooperation. Brian McKercher**,**

examining the Anglo-American relationship in the context of the 'transition of power' from Britain to the US in the period 1930-1945, has also been very critical of Roosevelt's foreign policy as being generally unhelpful to Britain and thereby contributing indirectly to the appeasement of the dictator states. Robert Self**,** a biographer of Chamberlain, has excoriated FDR and US policy towards war debts. More recently, Stedman's discussion of 'alternatives to appeasement' has largely supported Chamberlain's foreign policy while downplaying the value of the United States as an ally. [27]

This is not to say that Roosevelt has been without his recent defenders amongst historians of Anglo-American relations in the 1930s. Edward Bennett has written: 'If a judgement must be made concerning where the Anglo-American relationship broke down in the 1930s there is blame a plenty, but the main culprit must be judged to be Neville Chamberlain'. According to Bennett, Chamberlain was the 'miscreant' who refused to work more closely with FDR and frustrated the President's attempts to bring pressure to bear on the aggressor nations. Greg Kennedy, while critical of Chamberlain, has maintained that Anglo-American relations became much closer during the 1930s and that the situation in the Far East was more important than Europe in facilitating this improvement. 'The basis of the "special relationship" of the Grand Alliance had been formed in the Far East by the events between 1933 and 1939', he wrote. Simon Rofe has also blamed the British Prime Minister for the limitations on Anglo-American cooperation in the late 1930s. 'Chamberlain exhibited a lack of understanding of the complexity of American opinion and how it informed US foreign policy. In turn this meant that cooperation between President and Prime Minister was minimal'. [28]

THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

Having briefly reviewed the historiography of Anglo-American relations in the late 1930s a final point needs to be made about the legacy of the 'special relationship' label used by Winston Churchill in his Fulton speech in March 1946 to describe Anglo-American relations during the Second World War. This description has resulted in what might be termed the 'glass half-full or half-empty' syndrome, i.e. the tendency to measure the closeness of the Anglo-American relationship against impossibly high standards. No one was more aware than Churchill that the wartime relationship was far from harmonious even though it was

ultimately victorious, in conjunction with rest of the United Nations, including Canada and the Soviet Union. There were frequent disagreements between the two sides over military, economic, financial and political issues – for example, the 'imperial preference' system of the British Empire and the timing and location of 'the Second Front' to help relieve some of the pressure on the Soviet Union after 1941. Historians of the War are obviously aware of the constant in-fighting that took place amongst the allies as can be seen in the titles of many of their works. And yet there was a high degree of cooperation, albeit on the implicit understanding that once the immediate crisis was over less urgent issues such as trade relations, and the future of the British colonial empire, would come to the fore. This needs to be borne in mind when evaluating the closeness or otherwise of the Anglo-American relationship in the late 1930. [29]