

## London fears that Clinton may return to FDR's policy

by Nancy Spannaus

In his "America" column, published in the London *Observer* of March 16, Washington correspondent Martin Walker reports on a personal, off-the-record interview he had with President Bill Clinton in the White House. "Bill Revives FDR's Vision," the column is entitled, within which Walker argues that the President is "reading and rereading the last speech of his great predecessor, Franklin Roosevelt," and is likely to be taking the substance of that speech into his upcoming summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

There is no question that Walker intended to issue a warning against such a turn of events. He correctly characterizes the situation at the time of the relevant Roosevelt speech—April 12, 1945—as a period of hope that Russia, Britain, France, and China would work with the United States after the war, to create a lasting peace. But Walker believes that an attempt to create such a working relationship today would be "strategic nostalgia for the world that might have been."

FDR's speech, which was written for radio delivery at Democratic Party events around the country, but was never delivered because of FDR's death on April 12, is short and general. Walker quotes the relevant section, which went as follows: "The mere conquest of our enemies is not enough. We must go on to do all in our power to conquer the doubts and the fears, the ignorance and the greed, which made this horror possible. . . . Today we are faced with the pre-eminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all people, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace."

Walker notes that "some historians have suggested that Roosevelt's peroration might have helped avert the Cold War altogether, had he only survived." In fact, an exhaustive study of the archival material available on FDR's relationship with the other four major powers, undertaken by *EIR* researcher

Lonnie Wolfe, and the testimony of eyewitnesses, as recorded in FDR's son Elliott Roosevelt's book *As He Saw It*, indicates that Walker is understating the case. There is considerable evidence that FDR planned to push through a postwar vision that would have been pivoted on the maintenance of the peace through the breaking up of the empires (British, Dutch, French), and the initiation of an international boom in modernization and economic development.

If President Clinton were to fully adopt FDR's approach, it would mean junking the International Monetary Fund and NATO expansion policies, which continue to jeopardize the potential partnership between Russia and the United States, which the President so clearly desires. Walker gives no hint of this; in fact, he comments on the apparent strong support being given by the Clinton administration to the IMF reforms—which are, in fact, ravaging the Russian nation. But, the fact that President Clinton, a history buff, is studying Roosevelt's work, certainly raises the question.

### Roosevelt's postwar vision

As reported by Wolfe, FDR's postwar vision was based upon an approach that can be summed up in four principles:

First, FDR believed that the economic well-being of the United States was intimately tied to the general improvement of living conditions *everywhere*.

Second, Roosevelt believed that a combination of colonialism and the enforced backwardness that it created was an underlying threat to peace and security.

As a third principle, FDR wanted to make sure that in the postwar period, the British, in particular, would not be able to control world trade, or, through their monopolies in banking, effectively control global resources. This presupposed an end to the colonial system, but with the recognition that colonial exploitation was not merely enforced in the political realm,

but even more important, through economic arrangements.

A fourth principle can be summarized as follows: Western or American scientific know-how must be applied to solve the problems of development and to end suffering.

These principles FDR anticipated as a basis for an alliance between the sovereign nations of China, Russia, and the United States, against the empires of France and Britain. He also favored the launching of large-scale infrastructure projects, as in the deserts of Africa, which are reminiscent of the “peace through development” projects put forward by Lyndon LaRouche today.

The most concrete exemplification of this outlook by FDR, is reported by his son Elliott, in his accounts of the heated conflicts between the American President and the British prime minister, Winston Churchill. Every American should be made familiar with this conflict—which informs the modern British attitude of contempt, and fear, against “American methods.” This British attitude is the one which Henry Kissinger so memorably expressed in his Chatham House speech of May 10, 1982, when he confessed that his outlook (and reports) were much closer to those of the British, than those of the Americans, who were too idealistic and “utopian.”

## Development versus Empire

The following report, from Roosevelt’s meeting with Churchill on an island off Newfoundland in August 1941, picks up after FDR brought up the question of changing trade rules after the war was ended:

“Churchill’s neck reddened and he crouched forward. ‘Mr. President, England does not propose for a moment to lose its favored position among the British Dominions. The trade that has made England great shall continue, and under these conditions prescribed by England’s ministers.’

“‘You see,’ said Father slowly, ‘it is along in here somewhere that there is likely to be disagreement between you, Winston, and me.

“‘I am firmly of the belief that if we are to arrive at a stable peace, it must involve the development of backward countries. Backward peoples. How can this be done? It can’t be done obviously by eighteenth-century methods. Now—’

“‘Who’s talking about eighteenth-century methods?’

“‘Whichever of your ministers recommends a policy which takes raw materials out of a colonial country, but which returns nothing to the people of the country in consideration. *Twentieth-century* methods involve bringing industry to these colonies. *Twentieth-century* methods include increasing the standard of living, by educating them, by bringing them sanitation—by making sure that they get a return for the raw wealth of their community. . . .’

“‘You mentioned India,’ he [Churchill] growled.

“‘Yes, I [Roosevelt] can’t believe that we can fight a war against fascist slavery, and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from a backward colonial policy.’

“‘What about the Philippines?’

“‘I am glad you mentioned them. They get their independence, you know, in 1946. And they’ve gotten modern sanitation, modern education, their rate of illiteracy has gone steadily down. . . .’

“‘There can be no tampering with the Empire’s economic agreements.’

“‘They’re artificial. . . .’

“‘They are the foundation of our greatness.’

“‘The peace,’ said Father firmly, ‘cannot include any continued despotism. The structure of the peace demands and will get equality of peoples. . . .’”

## The continued conflict

This was not the only occasion upon which such a conflict erupted, nor was it simply a rhetorical battle. FDR clashed with Churchill continually—in opposition to British strategy of delaying the second front against the Nazis, in his intention to return Hongkong and Singapore to the Chinese, and in many other ways. There is no question but that Roosevelt was determined to ensure that the British Empire disappeared after the war was over.

In response, Churchill is reported more than once to have fulminated about how he could not preside over the dismantling of the Empire. Elliott Roosevelt recounts Churchill at one point saying: “Mr. President, I believe you are trying to do away with the British Empire. Every idea you entertain about the structure of the postwar world demonstrates it. . . . But in spite of that, you constitute our only hope. You know it. We know it. You know that we know that without America, the British Empire won’t stand.”

With Roosevelt’s sudden death, and Truman’s accession, the United States in fact posed no blockage to Britain’s geopolitical dominance. Despite the formal breakup of the Empire, there was no adherence to the principles which Roosevelt had championed. Instead, the British were able to get the world of geopolitical crisis management which they wanted, through the launching of the Cold War, and the triumph of communism in China.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the British imperialists—now working through the Commonwealth and the United Nations agencies—are seeking to wipe out the last vestige of Rooseveltian ideas, from economic prosperity for all, to the sovereign nation-state.

Is Walker correct, that President Clinton will harken back to Roosevelt’s legacy? Certainly, he sought to do so at the time of his summit with President Yeltsin at Roosevelt’s family home of Hyde Park, New York in October 1995. The Clinton administration has also insisted upon viewing strategic partnerships between China and Russia, and the economic prosperity of Russia and China, as being in U.S. strategic interests. This view directly contrasts with that of the British, whose media outlets are openly agitating for the United States to see China as the new “enemy.”

At Helsinki, it would be more than appropriate to have FDR’s postwar agenda on the table.