

This association is now being subjected to new strains which may well determine its strength and its permanence. In the first four years of its existence it has stood the test of threat, bluster and direct political assault. It is now, apparently, to be subjected to the test of peaceful blandishment and disarming gestures.

The purpose in both cases may well be the same; to weaken the strength and unity of a group of free states, whose determination to come together and pool their growing strength for collective defence is, at the present time, the strongest obstacle to aggressive communist imperialism.

This co-operation, however, I repeat, must express itself in some more enduring form than a military association of sovereign states. If such a development is impracticable now on a broad international basis, then the way should be shown, and a good example given, by strengthening further the ties which have already drawn together the English-speaking members of the free world; ties of sentiment, history, geography and national self-interest.

However it may be done, on a broader or on a narrower basis; slowly and gradually through the evolution of events, or more speedily under the spur of fear and insecurity, the trend is towards closer co-operation and greater unity, especially between those states, such as the English-speaking ones, where the conditions already exist that make such a development natural and practicable.

The physical basis for such greater unity already exists, the political compulsion for it grows, the necessity for it on grounds of security and stability becomes more and more apparent. The facts of modern national life combine to minimize national boundaries and make unrealistic and out of date many of the ordinary manifestations of national sovereignty.

Professor Toynbee has recently shown us how the revolution in technology and communications has operated to "shrink the geography of the globe". The former English Channel, he writes, which was still an effective strategic obstacle as recently as 1940, has now become almost as invisible as the jet plane that now streaks across it at 40,000 feet and at 600 miles per hour. The British Isles have been reduced to the former dimensions, and have been parked in the former location of what used to be called the Channel Islands. North America has now succeeded Britain as an island moored between two oceans. The Atlantic Ocean is now the channel, and the West is now surrounded by the world.

It is as futile, and as dangerous, to ignore the effect of these changes on international political developments as it was for Canute to try to hold back the tides.

Will this inevitable development towards closer unity among the English-speaking and other free states be postponed by the removal of that fear of aggression from Soviet imperialism which, as I have said, has been one of its main incentives?