

AMERICA'S ONE WORLD

THE outspoken BBC talk by A. J. P. TAYLOR on the need for controversy in foreign policy, which we published recently, has aroused so much interest that we are now publishing another of his talks given in the same series, and heard originally in the BBC's Third Programme. Mr. Taylor, a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, is here equally outspoken on the subject of British foreign policy in relation to America.

I PROPOSE to talk here principally about British relations with the United States; a silly arrangement to talk about a single country to the exclusion of others, but perhaps it will do as a convenience. America is now the greatest Power that the world has ever known. She produces more than half the coal in the world—600 million tons a year against our 170 million or the Russian 160 million. She produces more than half the steel in the world—80 million tons against our 12 million (when we are lucky) and the Russian 12 to 16 million. She has a navy six times the size of ours, which is the only other navy in the world. She has at least a hundred atom bombs and the capacity to produce many more; no one else has any or will have any for some years. The United Nations have discovered to everyone's embarrassment that if all paid their fair share the Americans would have to pay more than half the expenses of the United Nations—yes, the 140 million Americans (or mainly the richer of them) have 55 per cent. of the income of the whole world. And don't think that this wealth is being used solely for peaceful purposes: the United States spend a larger proportion of their budget on armaments than either we or the Russians: they spend 33 per cent. of their budget, we spend 30 per cent., the Russians 24 per cent. (a surprise to you, perhaps, that Russia is the most peaceful of the Powers. I daresay that it's just that they cannot afford any different; they will catch up to the standards of Western civilisation in time). America could, in fact, if really determined, united and aggressive, conquer the world; or at least get much nearer it than ever Hitler did.

American Economic Policy

But of course American policy is not determined and united, let alone aggressive. Whatever its phrases, its practical trend is to withdraw from world affairs or rather to prepare to do so. Just like the British in the 19th Century, the Americans think that peace and world trade are "normal," that they can be secured by the beneficent working of automatic "natural laws." They think in terms of a Balance of Power and of independent countries pursuing independent policies; you can see this idea that peace is "normal" working in Germany, where the Americans are trying to put things back to where they were before Hitler—it does not occur to them that if you restore the circumstances that existed before Hitler you restore the circumstances that created Hitler. Similarly, American economic policy assumes that a free world market conducted by private enterprise is "normal" and that "equality of treatment" is a fair system between nations. This is like saying that teeth may be freely used for biting both by wolves and

sheep. And the Americans use their vast economic wealth to enforce this equality of treatment. For instance, only countries that allow unrestricted foreign trade, such as Italy and Greece, are going to receive help from America; in countries that are trying to plan their foreign trade—Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia—the children must starve. When I say "The Americans" I do not overlook the fact that there are many Americans who are as disgusted and ashamed of this policy as you or I would be. But they are the defeated of the recent election and their influence is declining all the time. The American policy of the next few years will be increasingly selfish, harsh and self-centred; but it will not embark on aggressive war. That is why I think those are wrong who suggest that American aggression is likely to cause a new war. American policy will use every resource of economic blackmail and political threat to get its way; but, so long as America remains a democratic country, it will not start a war. That's an important proviso: the coming economic catastrophe in America may destroy the American democratic system and in that case—but what's the good of trying to cross bridges which have not been built yet. We have quite enough to do crossing the bridges which we ought to have crossed some time ago.

"Pretence and Weakness"

For, up till now, British policy has been hypnotised by the new world situation. In regard to America, British foreign policy is a mixture of pretence and weakness: a pretence that we are still a Great Power on the scale that America is a Great Power, that we can negotiate with America as equals. Yet, on the other hand, a timidity which believes that we are helpless in face of America and must do whatever American policy demands. The pretence obviously does not correspond with the facts: we are—at present—economically dependent on America and our existence is at the mercy of the American navy. Were we somehow to drift into conflict with America we should be defeated and destroyed, with hardly any American effort, even if we had all the rest of the world on our side.

But the timidity which has led the British Government into accepting American dictation of our international economic policy and into making our armed forces American auxiliaries—for that is what the combined Chiefs of Staffs Committee and the standardisation of arms with America means—I don't believe that this timidity has resulted in a possible policy either. The present policy of becoming an economic and military satellite of the United States is neither necessary nor workable. Take the military side first. The starting point of our strategic dependence on America is this: the Russian army—it does not matter whether you accept Mr. Churchill's figure of 200 divisions or Stalin's figure of 60, in

either case it is the army which fought and defeated three-quarters of the German army single-handed—the Russian army can occupy all Europe at will, and our eight or ten divisions in Germany can do nothing to stop it. Therefore we must have American backing. Even were the assumption of Russian aggressiveness right (and I believe it to be altogether wrong), the conclusions would be false, just as it was false for the French to rely exclusively on the British alliance before 1939. The Americans cannot save us from the results of a Russian attack—their forces are not prepared for the purpose; the most they can do is to "liberate" us (as we and the Americans liberated France in 1944) after two or three years, when London and all the great cities would have been destroyed by Russian rockets from the French coast. That's not good enough: if there really is a Russian danger, then we must defend ourselves; we must concentrate in this country and western Germany the forces concentrated in the Middle East.

"All the Disadvantages . . ."

On the other hand, if Russia is not aggressive, then there is no point in concentrating forces in the Middle East. In fact our Middle East strategy is full of contradictions. We protect the American oil reserves in Arabia in order to earn American help; but if we did not protect these reserves we should not need this help. We maintain our strategic positions in the eastern Mediterranean and refuse to give Russia security at the straits—a policy which would make sense if we were projecting (and this idea is seriously canvassed publicly in the United States) an attack on southern Russia through the Black Sea. No wonder this policy makes us apprehensive of a Russian attack in western Europe. There's really no escaping it; if Russia is aggressive, we need a strategy different from the present one; and if Russia is not aggressive, our strategy has no sense. For—make no mistake about it—American strategy and policy are not concerned with our security; they are only concerned to use this island (like Japan on the other side of the world) as an aircraft carrier from which to discharge atomic bombs, and the Americans appreciate quite well that all the cities of England and Japan will be destroyed in the process. There are enough people in England who realise this to make a policy of strategic dependence on America impossible; as a result we may have—in fact are moving towards it already—all the disadvantages without the advantages of an alliance.

That is even truer in economic affairs. The American loan was carried in this country with the argument that it was essential, that we had to have it, whatever the conditions attached to it by the Americans. But as the result of the rise in prices in America we are not getting the loan as we imagined it—we are getting at most three-quarters of what was stated to be our rock-bottom needs. This has unpleasant results—continued petrol rationing, for instance, and a host of shortages. Still worse, even though we have the dollars, American industry very often cannot meet our orders—in the vital matter of steel, for instance. Therefore in practice we are often having to make do as though we had not got the loan. But the conditions attached to it still bind us; we are still pledged to go back to