

Barbora Šohájková

B.A. Thesis Assessment

*Britsko-americké vztahy v éře Margaret Thatcherové a Ronalda Reagana: Možnosti a limity zvláštního vztahu*

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Barbora Šohájková chose to write her B.A. thesis about the “special relationship” between the United States and the Great Britain during the Reagan-Thatcher era. As I have taught a course on this topic for some years now, it is an honor for me to read this thesis, which is well-written and based on reliable sources. The work is divided into an Introduction, four main chapters, and a Conclusion.

The Introduction correctly traces the roots of the “special relationship” back to the Second World War. Miss Šohájková correctly states that the relations between the United States and Britain had their ups and downs and that the “special relationship” began to wane in the 1970s only to be reinvigorated in the 1980s thanks to the closeness that developed between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The Introduction fulfills the task of informing the reader of the structure of the work.

Chapter 1 represents an historical recapitulation of the “special relationship” from the beginning until the mid-1980s. Though personal relations between the respective leaders of the United States and Great Britain played a role, the author correctly states that there were other practical considerations, which made the relationship useful during different periods. I agree with the author’s conclusions. Indeed, the relationship may be described as a partnership against first Nazi and later Soviet hegemony until the 1960s. However, Britain began to lose importance for the American side in the 1970s and once the British joined the Common Market, the British also seemed more focused on Europe. In the Reagan-Thatcher era, relations picked up again despite certain bones of contention.



Chapter 2 analyzes U.S-U.K relations during the Falklands crisis of 1982. When the Argentine military junta decided to seize the Falklands by force, Britain was determined to defend its sovereignty over the islands. The United States was placed in a difficult position because, on the one hand, the Reagan Administration wanted to support its British ally, but, on the other, it did not want to damage relations with the Argentine regime, which supported American efforts to stop the spread of Communism in Central America. The United States wisely chose to support Britain in the end and this resulted in British backing of the United States in future conflicts. Miss Šohájková has drawn the correct conclusions and I have no problem with this chapter.

Chapter 3 deals with the issue of Grenada, a tiny island in the Caribbean invaded by the United States in 1983. The Reagan Administration unilaterally invaded Grenada, which was a former British colony and member of the Commonwealth, because the left-leaning military government there was seen as an ally of Cuba and thus perceived as a Communist threat. Though Margaret Thatcher disagreed with the invasion, she was placed in the uncomfortable position of making sure that the "special relationship" remained strong. After all, a former colonial possession was not so important that Britain would risk losing its position as America's top ally. The author clearly demonstrates a firm grasp of the issues at hand and deserves to be praised for her successful efforts.

Chapter 4 discusses the American bombing of Libya in 1986. The United States decided to punish Libya militarily because its leader, Muammar Qadhafi, supported Arab terrorism, which had taken the lives of American citizens. Margaret Thatcher permitted the American planes to take off from Britain and, from the outset, strongly backed the action despite opposition from other West European countries. She came under criticism at home and abroad for unconditionally supporting the United States, but, as Miss Šohájková correctly



points out, Thatcher's move showed that Britain remained a firm ally of the United States and the Americans rewarded Britain handsomely for its loyalty.

In the Conclusion, the author restates her main positions and describes how each of the conflicts mentioned in the thesis demonstrates a different aspect of the "special relationship." She maintains that the good relations between Reagan and Thatcher helped reinvigorate the relationship after the lull in the 1970s.

This work should serve as an example to future students. It is excellently organized and far exceeds the requirements for a B.A. dissertation. I recommend an **EXCELLENT** mark and, after the oral defense, the committee should consider whether or not the work deserves a **DEAN'S COMMENDATION**.

