TRUST SERVICES, S.A.

Fiduciary and Corporate Services to
Professional Firms, Institutions and Individuals since 1981.
Small by Design. Built on Expertise.

OFFSHORE PILOT QUARTERLY

Commentary on Matters Offshore

June, 2010.

Volume 13
Number 2

The Dog's Tail

It has been said that two hundred miles is a long journey in the United Kingdom but a short one in the United States of America; 200 years, however, unlike in the US, is a short period in the UK. (Cambridge University celebrated its 800th anniversary last year.) So Donald Rumsfeld, a former US secretary of defence, was right to once refer to "old Europe", but wrong to adopt a pejorative tone when he did so. In recognising that the young and the old can learn from each other, it is difficult to deny the value of a wealth of history and centuries of experience which can sometimes help the wise reach reasoned conclusions.

The US, historically, has its closest connection with the UK and in recognising that the vibrancy and innovation of the US is an immeasurable benefit to not just the UK but the West, it should be appreciated that the UK's (not to mention Europe's) encyclopaedic experiences over the centuries can offer sage counsel. It is an accident of circumstances that today's superpower, unlike those in the past, has a shallow (in relative terms) history; it was a German historian of Prussian heritage, Professor Rudolf Von Thadden, who once observed that the US has "lost the memory of ancient history". History can sit alongside modernity but prejudice sits alone and it is fair to say that, unfortunately, many Europeans do feel threatened by this 21st-century dominant power.

As long ago as the 1950s the British writer and politician Harold Nicholson referred to people being scared "that the destinies of the world should be in the hands of a giant with the limbs of an undergraduate and the brain of a peahen". Americans, without any help from Mr. Rumsfeld, have reciprocated in kind; several years ago, for example, an article in the National Review called the French "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" – admittedly at a time when international relations were strained following the 2001 US terrorist attacks. Consider Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, who once said that the US had "rabies" and Europe should step away in case it was "bitten and infected next". The French (as well as the British) owe much to America as it does to them but being different, with their respective weaknesses and strengths, is no reason to build walls of hostility. Ambrose Bierce, the late American journalist and author, was right to remind us that education "discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding".

Whether or not Winston Churchill's belief in a special relationship between his country and the US still remains in place today, it cannot be disputed that Britain's successor owes most of its identity to its Anglo-Protestant roots. The late Arthur Schlesinger, US historian and writer, described how America's language as well as its customs, its literature, its precepts, its prayers, its laws, its institutions and its political ideas "primarily derived from Britain". Because of this, it was possible for Winston Churchill in a speech in Fulton Missouri in 1946 (often called his famous "Iron Curtain" speech) to forcefully assert that the great principles of freedom and the rights of man which "through Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, habeas corpus, trial by jury and the English Common law find their most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence". More than 160 years

©2010
Trust Services, S.A.
All Rights Reserved