

# Special relationships

*Duncan Campbell writes:* It is always revealing and instructive to look in on ourselves from foreign viewpoints. One of the organisations responsible for assessing the state of Britain today is the United States International Communication Agency (ICA), which is responsible for overseas public relations and propoganda work. Last week, we asked the US Embassy to demonstrate open government by showing us the ICA's current 'Country Plan' for the UK. They obliged.

The document describes the basis of the 'bilateral communication relationship' between the US and the UK and enumerates projects, such as exchange visits and publicity activity, to foster US objectives. It is cosy reading these hard times for the like of Jim Callaghan: 'Alone among the major powers, the US and Great Britain share the concept of man's place in nature and government's place in the affairs of men which they separately and together believe worthy of preservation and propagation for its own sake'. Noting in passing that Americans often mislabel the UK as 'socialist', the Agency's summary identifies quickly 'the generation now in charge in the UK... roughly those in their 40s or above, (who) have their attitudes essentially formed. The special relationship rests safely with them for their term as the Establishment (sic)'.

The problem is, however, the 'survival and vigour of the special relationship into the successor generation... whose inclination - unlike that of their parents - is not to give the US the benefit of the doubt... principle or process about which they know so little.'

But this generation is not lost, and 'a more pluralistic, more egalitarian, possibly isolationist Britain will continue to share and enforce our common values.'

The Country Plan, written by Embassy Public Affairs Counsellor Burnett Anderson, is prepared for the ICA office in Washington to approve budgets. There is no connection with the CIA, despite the unfortunate similarity of titles. But the CIA's propaganda plans could never quite express themselves in the way the ICA does: 'The common language (and other features) provide all that multitude of majestic channels and miscellaneous rills over which fly the guidon of the special relationship (which) have created a wealth and variety and depth of bilateral communications among the major powers for which the rest of the world has neither precedent or parallel.'