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## Interview: Lord Home of the Hirsal

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# On the Soviet threat and prospects for survival of the Western alliance

*Former British prime minister Lord Home of the Hirsal (then Sir Alec Douglas-Home), gave this interview to EIR in London on Dec. 5, 1985. Lord Home was first elected a Member of Parliament in 1931 for the Scottish constituency of South Lanark, was Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (1955-60), Conservative leader of the House of Lords (1957-60), foreign minister (1960-63 and 1970-74), and prime minister (1963-64). The interviewers were Laurent Murawiec and Michael Liebig, of EIR's European bureau.*

### The Strategic Defense Initiative

**EIR:** Lord Home, what is your view of SDI?

**Lord Home:** It is a perfectly respectable thing to use conventional weapons to shoot down nuclear missiles. There is nothing reprehensible or immoral about SDI. It is perfectly respectable to put a conventional weapon into space to shoot down a nuclear missile launched in aggression. What usefulness can be ascribed to it must depend on how far we may agree with the scientists—that it *has* a potential which will eventually form a defensive screen. I am not able to judge that, and very few amateurs are. But certainly the research ought to go on. Incidentally the Russians think so too; are trying to get this weapon as hard as they can.

**EIR:** Reagan's conception of SDI has been from the start that it is the instrument of a shift from MAD [Mutually Assured Destruction—ed.] to Mutually Assured Survival. What is your view of this?

**Lord Home:** The concept is fine. But one has to face the fact that until that concept is seen to be practical, and deployed on the ground, people are going to feel safer with the present situation—and of course Mr. Gorbachov feels safer himself with the present condition; he wants to keep his land-based missiles, and not change that, unless he can be convinced, some years from now, that SDI is a better alternative. And the NATO Alliance feels the same: We should be very unhappy without our deterrent; the weapons should not be scrapped until we are certain that SDI is a reality and not a

fiction. I don't think it is a fiction myself, but quite a lot of people will think it is until it is deployed on the ground.

**EIR:** What of a European Tactical Initiative?

**Lord Home:** I have been through two world wars, which we would have lost if the Americans had not been in them. I always have a horror of being separated from the United States. In this matter, I don't particularly want to see Europe going on its own; I would much rather see Europe joining in the research in which America is indulging. And this is the view of Mrs. Thatcher—she has said that we will join in the research program. I would like to see that, given the priorities of this country. Obviously, I cannot speak for Germany or for France; the French obviously don't think in the same way. But we have, after all, nuclear weapons; we are acquiring the Trident, and we should stick with the American plan. SDI could be the answer to a European defense. We shall see when it is nearer deployment.

**EIR:** Should the emerging SDI technology be "mutilated" in the framework of a new ABM Treaty limiting deployment *a priori*, as the arms-control advocates want, and become solely a point-defense system?

**Lord Home:** I don't know that the West would want that, would it?

**EIR:** At any rate, it would not be the first time in world history that the Soviets would violate a treaty, especially an arms-control treaty.

**Lord Home:** Certainly. Any treaty made with the Soviets, especially in the context of disarmament, has to have a system of verification, otherwise, it's not worth having the treaty.

**EIR:** But they never accepted the Western theory called deterrence—or only for as long as their own nuclear arsenal was inferior to or simply equal to the West's. When the balance tipped to their superiority, their nuclear forces became a first-strike arsenal.

**Lord Home:** I agree—the Russians mistrust everybody from the start. They rely on their present nuclear deployment to make them as secure as they can, but that is not to say that a first strike is their objective. It would be suicidal.

**EIR:** Are the Russians after security or expansion?

**Lord Home:** Both. They'll expand if we're foolish enough. Already they have a *cordon sanitaire* from Afghanistan through Poland, and in Afghanistan they have opened up their options, if they want to go for Pakistan or Iran. They will expand if we're foolish enough to let them.

**EIR:** Aren't they dreaming of extending the *cordon sanitaire* all the way to the Atlantic Ocean?

**Lord Home:** If we're idiotic enough, they would. But we're not going to be so idiotic.

**EIR:** What is Soviet strategy today?

**Lord Home:** It is what it has been for a long time: to weaken almost any country they can if they get an excuse. They try it in Africa, get their fingers burnt a bit; they try in South Africa; they try in the Middle East, although they are as likely to get their fingers burnt there as everybody else has. They try it in South America. They have been supporting North Vietnam, but there they will come up against China. They haven't changed. If they got out of Afghanistan . . . that would be another matter.

### The Gorbachov era

**EIR:** What is your assessment of Mr. Gorbachov, compared to earlier leaders you have known very well?

**Lord Home:** To start with, he's 25 years younger than any Russian I've ever dealt with; therefore, he's a fellow who's prepared to argue a case, which is a change. All the years I was negotiating with Gromyko, when he did not want to argue about something, he simply said, "It is not appropriate to talk about that subject," and that was it. Gorbachov will talk about anything and argue. I guess President Reagan found that out and got that impression. But the policies are broadly the same.

**EIR:** Some say Gorbachov is liable to make major concessions—but in fact he is in the process of pushing through major, Stalin-like purges. How do you assess him?

**Lord Home:** He's pretty tough inside; he won't, for example, talk about human rights inside Russia. He'll let a few people out to give the impression that they are more liberal. Whether he is a "neo-Stalinist" one cannot answer yet. I don't think that modern conditions will allow it.

**EIR:** Whatever arms talks go on, the Soviet military-industrial build-up is reaching a pace and intensity never seen before, and being accelerated.

**Lord Home:** It would be absolutely naive to think that it

could be otherwise. Gorbachov is likely to wait for President Reagan to be out; what does it mean, just waiting another two years? He's a very acute politician who will not make a sacrifice unless he thinks it is necessary, in Russia's interest. The arms momentum is indeed piling up and will not be slackened by the Russians until they get concessions. The next summit meeting with the President will give clearer indications, but I would not be in the least surprised if he did nothing until the third meeting, when the President will be on his way out.

They will keep piling up their arms, and we should keep ours at a level sufficient to deter. We should reinforce our conventional strength, although I am more skeptical about that, because they could have walked over us, in the last 12 years, in Europe; what stopped them was the nuclear deterrent, and they're not going to risk that. If we mean what we say, they have to calculate that if they attack in Europe in a big way, it will be total war. It cannot be limited. We'll use nuclear weapons in response. The Russians know it is inevitable.

**EIR:** Gorbachov is using the so-called Spirit of Geneva to tell the Europeans that he is someone with whom Europe can arrive at specific arrangements. Do you think Europe has to be warned about this?

**Lord Home:** The European democracies will work through NATO and with the United States—this is the key to peace. Of course, it is precarious, and the Russians will try to detach Europe from the United States, as they did with the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles. They failed then—they will again.

**EIR:** How do you judge Soviet strategy concerning South Africa?

**Lord Home:** They will try to stir up existing trouble, especially through the Cubans in Angola. They won't find it that easy. Mozambique has changed lately, very much more friendly to the West. They will meddle in South Africa. We must not be foolish enough to impose economic sanctions on South Africa—and here I am sorry to say that the U.S. is not being very clever. If we imposed sanctions, if they worked, they would destroy the economies of Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana. . . . The one way to let the Communists in is to destroy South Africa's economy through sanctions. We must not do that.

### Drugs and the debt crisis

**EIR:** The debt problem of Latin America has become irrepressible; President García of Peru has imposed his "10% solution." What view do you take of the debt question?

**Lord Home:** The debt problem has to be faced up; the modification of the debt has to be tackled. What machinery should be used, I do not know. It will have to be a vast rescue operation—we're all in the same boat, even Brazil is in

trouble now. I don't know that the U.S. Treasury would think about that. Africa is in a similar situation, country after country goes bust. Latin America would then become another Africa, placing the Russians in an even better position to interfere.

**EIR:** Latin American nations have been told by their official and commercial creditors to increase their "cash-crop" exports of drugs. What do you think of this policy?

**Lord Home:** The drug problem is terrible. But let us deal with it the way we have with Pakistan: We spoke to the government, and they're now cooperating against the drug agents there. That will ease the problem, but will not solve it.

**EIR:** The problem is that the drug money is channeled to banks in London, Zurich, New York, Boston. Would you recommend that governments legislate to stop this?

**Lord Home:** That's what they ought to do, but I'm afraid it may take time to convince them to do so.

**EIR:** What should be done concerning Africa's food problem?

**Lord Home:** Fundamentally, the native people have to learn to practice good husbandry. India showed the way by teaching people the basic rules of agriculture. It is laborious, but it pays. I once asked Nehru, how long could this education take? "Give me 25 years and you will find that India is self-subsisting," he said. And almost to a day, they achieved it. Africa will be much more difficult, as there is no tradition of fixed land tenure. It will need capital; it will need supervision.

**EIR:** Could South Africa play a role in developing black Africa?

**Lord Home:** If the African countries allow them to do so, yes.

### How to deal with the Russians

**EIR:** To return to Soviet affairs, how would you summarize your experience in dealing with the Russian leadership?

**Lord Home:** The first thing you've got to do with the Russians, is to tell them that you know exactly what they're up to. Never let them go away with anything, which would lead them to believe that you are deceived—that's the first rule. If they understand that you understand, then you have a chance of them listening and taking notice. The first time I met Mr. Gromyko, he began to bluster about Russian nuclear strength. I declined to talk on the basis of threats or armed strength. With that established, we had a sensible conversation. Once he had understood that attack would invite retaliation, there was no more talk of confrontation. The Russians are a fairly practical people, but you have to be prepared, if you do sign a treaty with them, especially on disarmament, to be able to verify it. We made a great mistake with Vietnam

[in 1954—ed.];

and the ink wasn't even dry, that they cheated, and we did not do a thing, and they went on. You cannot take a risk in the disarmament field, you cannot play with the lives of countries.

**EIR:** What of the talk of a "slow American disengagement from Europe," of "reducing American power projection to 25% of what it was in 1945" [as proposed by Henry Kissinger—ed.]?

relation to Western Europe?

**Lord Home:** We're essential to each other. I always return to the fact that we would have lost two wars, if America had not been with us. The Atlantic Ocean is still the most important area of communication. We must defend it together. The greatest element, apart from the nuclear deterrent to deter the Soviets, is that American troops should be seen in West Germany; otherwise, West Germany will lose confidence.

**EIR:** Do you regret General de Gaulle and his vision?

**Lord Home:** He's about the greatest man I ever met. Of course, he got very naughty at the end of his life—you remember the Canadian episode. . . . They weren't particularly pleased with him, but he was a great figure, and he raised the national morale of France, which had fallen low after Algeria. Nobody could have done it except him. There could never have been a unity of Europe without him and Adenauer. They combined over the heads of their people, because they had sufficient authority; they knew the two countries could not fight each other. They started the European Community. I don't know that we have figures comparable to him in Europe today. He was hard on us at times, but he was a fine fellow, a fine man.

**EIR:** What should be Britain's role in international affairs in the future?

**Lord Home:** Our relations with the United States are paramount. I hope we can retain what I still think exists, a prejudice in favor of each other. In Europe, let us remain economically strong, bring confidence. With the Soviets, as a power, they would not necessarily take much notice of us, since the U.S. is so much greater, but we are a nuclear power, and our diplomatic experience is long; it is sometimes quite useful. They respect it.

**EIR:** Churchill, during World War II inspired the British nation. Can such an inspiration be recreated?

**Lord Home:** It's much more difficult to produce the inspiration which will produce a Churchill, who will therefore inspire the nation, without an Empire we haven't got. He was a successful wartime prime minister—not so successful in peacetime. You only get one of these prodigies once in a couple hundred years; you can't count on them. You have to be content, I'm afraid, with rather lesser characters. . . .