

Newsletter 30: The Not So Known Origins of Bilderberg

Dear Readers,

For this installment of my geopolitical newsletter I want to share a chapter from a yet-to-be published book of mine titled *The Think Tanks* in which I go into the background of the influential private network of USA and European think tanks which shape the real political agenda of Washington or London or Brussels today. I present here a section from the book in which I go into the little-known origins and circles creating the infamous Bilderberg group during the Cold War in the 1950's. The key actors will no doubt surprise many.

I also want to encourage you to consider making a support contribution at my website, www.williamengdahl.com, that I am able to continue offering my content such as presented here without cost. I want to thank those of you as well who have already chosen to offer your financial support.

Thank you again for your interest,
F. William Engdahl
Frankfurt, Germany

Chapter Three:

Bilderberg Group keeps Europe and USA Under the Thumb

At a Grand Hotel in Holland

In May, 1954 in Oosterbeek in Holland, near to the German border, a highly secret meeting was held at the Hotel de Bilderberg. The meeting was hosted by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, husband of Queen Juliana. It was called simply, "De Bilderberg Conference," from the name of the hotel where the first talks were held. Out of three days of private discussion, a new Trans-Atlantic think-tank was created. It was to become the most effective organization for influencing world events after 1954 up to the present, and one of the most secretive.¹

German-born Prince Bernhard was a controversial figure, a notorious playboy philanderer, who had been a member of the German NSDAP and Reiter SS, and later in 1976, was accused of accepting more than a \$1 million bribe from the US fighter aircraft maker, Lockheed, to influence purchase of US fighter planes by the Dutch Air Force. When Bernhard was forced to resign because of the scandals, he was succeeded as Bilderberg Chairman by then German *Bundespräsident*, Walter Scheel, and then afterwards by Britain's Lord Carrington, a confidante and later business partner of Henry Kissinger.²

In 2014 the Bilderberg Group's official website, with sparse information, stated its purpose as simply to, "foster dialogue between Europe and North America." It meets once a year with around 120 select attendees from finance, politics, industry, media and academia. Its rules mandate that two-thirds come from Europe and the remainder from the USA and Canada, with one third of the total always from the world of politics. Bilderberg participants from the US are always members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).³

In their own words, "The conference is a forum for informal discussions about megatrends and major issues facing the world." It's no ordinary open, public think-tank such as the Council on Foreign Relations, where meetings are publicized and reports published to the larger public to shape mass opinion. In their own words, "The meetings are held under the Chatham House Rule, which states that participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) nor of any other participant may be revealed. Thanks to the private nature of the conference,

the participants are not bound by the conventions of their office... There is no detailed agenda, no resolutions are proposed, no votes are taken, and no policy statements are issued.”⁴

Shadowy origins

The Bilderberg Group, in the words of the first Bilderberg Secretary General, the shadowy and enormously influential Polish exile, Joseph Retinger, came from an initiative Retinger made in 1952 to counter, “growing distrust of America which was making itself manifest in Western Europe and which was paralleled by a similar distrust of Western Europe in America.”⁵ In brief, its aim was to make certain that the strategic policy orientation of Western Europe and of the United States was in harmony. The decisive point was harmony in pursuit of which geopolitical goals.

Joseph Retinger was one of the most influential political figures shaping the pro-Atlanticist architecture of post-World War II Western Europe. He founded the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe, to lobby for the Washington-backed plan for creation of a United States of Europe. He created the CIA-funded European Movement, as well as the CIA-funded European Youth Campaign. By far his most influential project was bringing the Bilderberg Group into being and serving as its key European director and Secretary General, all far away from the public eye, as he preferred.⁶

That was the time the Korean War was ending and US Marshall Plan aid to Europe as well. Józef Hieronim Retinger had spent the war years in London as adviser to the exile government of Prime Minister General Wladyslaw Sikorski. While Retinger’s name was virtually unknown to the world at large, he was one of the most influential string-pullers of the postwar period in Europe and the United States, who was able to get private audiences with the Pope as well as the American President at will. It was he who selected Prince Bernhard to act as figurehead host and who selected which Americans and which Europeans would be invited.

The first Bilderberg meeting in 1954 was organized by a Steering Committee of influential persons that included on the European side, Paul Rykens chairman of the giant Unilever food group, Italian Prime Minister de Gasperi, British Labour politician Denis Healey, and two prominent Germans--Professor Carlo Schmid, and Otto Wolff von Amerongen.⁷

The American Steering Committee for the first Bilderberg Meeting in 1954 consisted of USA chairman Joseph E. Johnson, president of the Rockefeller-tied Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Others included George Ball, who during the Second World War was in London serving as director of the Strategic Bombing Survey, to analyze the impact of British and American bombing of German cities and civilian populations. After the war in 1945 Ball began close collaboration with Jean Monnet and the French government. Later Ball played a key role regarding the Marshall Plan. In 1950 he helped draft the Schuman Plan and the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty.

The American Bilderberg Steering Committee also included H. J. Heinz II, of the food group; George Nebolsine, a State Department consultant on the Marshall Plan; and Dean Rusk, then President of the Rockefeller Foundation and later Secretary of State.⁸

The real guiding hand behind the American side of the Bilderberg Group, however, was the first head of the newly-established Central Intelligence Agency, General Walter Bedell Smith. In 1950 Smith became Director of the CIA. The CIA helped organize, and sponsored the formation, and operation of the Bilderberg Conferences.

In late 1952, Retinger went to America to test his Bilderberg idea on his American contacts. Retinger met Averell Harriman, David Rockefeller, and Bedell Smith, then the first director of the CIA. After Retinger explained his proposal, Smith reportedly said, "Why the hell didn't you come to me in the first place?" The CIA chief then told Retinger to go to C. D. Jackson, who was about to become President Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Psychological Warfare, and liaison between the Pentagon and CIA.⁹

The attendees at the 1954 initial Bilderberg Meeting at the Hotel de Bilderberg in addition to the above-named Steering Committee, included David Rockefeller, who today is the only Bilderberg "Advisory Group" Member. It included State Department official, Paul Nitze. As well, Gardner Cowles, a US media baron and founder of Look magazine (similar to the German Stern), who had been the US Government deputy director of the Office of War Information, the US propaganda ministry that created the Voice of America (VOA). It included J.P. Morgan Bank director Nelson D. Jay, who was a close Rockefeller associate.

The first Bilderberg attendees list also included C.D. Jackson, then Eisenhower's architect of the Cold War; Alcide de Gasperi, Italian Prime Minister; Sir Gardner

Franks, chairman of Lloyds Bank in UK; Sir Harry Pilkington head of the Federation of British Industries; Alberto Pirelli of the Italian industrial group; Vittorio Valletta, president of FIAT; Guy Mollet head of the French Socialist Party; Max Brauer, Minister President of Hamburg; Gerhard P.Th. Geyer of German Esso (part of the Rockefeller oil group); Heinrich Troeger, *Staatsminister der Finanzen* in Hessen; H. F. van Walsen director of the Dutch electrical giant Philips, and Antoine Pinay, a former French Prime Minister. Pinay was to become, along with his close friend and collaborator, Joseph Retinger, the decisive personality shaping the long-term agenda of Bilderberg.

In Retinger's words he founded Bilderberg Group simply to, "foster dialogue between Europe and North America." That was for public consumption. In reality he built a very dark agenda that drew in the most reactionary circles in postwar Europe and tied them to the most powerful of postwar American oligarch families, that of Rockefeller and their emerging "American Century." The Bilderberg Group was to insure that that Century would be heavily influenced by postwar Vatican geopolitics. Its first meeting in 1954 was funded by Walter Bedell Smith's CIA, with subsequent meetings financed by the CIA's close ally during the Cold War, the Ford Foundation.¹⁰

Le Cercle—the Vatican-Rockefeller Alliance

The key to the extraordinary power and influence of the annual Bilderberg Meetings from 1954 laid in the unpublished role of the secretive pan-Europeanist organization then known as *Le Cercle*, sometimes referred to as *Cercle Pinay*, a reference to the pivotal role in shaping Bilderberg played by the network of French Prime Minister Antoine Pinay, an intimate friend of Bilderberg organizer, Retinger.

Pinay's *Le Cercle* (The Group) was the link that covertly tied most European intelligence services including the German BND and BfV, MI6 in Britain, France's SDECE, Holland's BVD, Belgium's Surete de l'Etat and Swiss and later even Saudi intelligence and apartheid South Africa's secret service, BOSS. Prominent politicians associated with Pinay and *Le Cercle* included Franz Josef Strauss, Otto von Habsburg, Konrad Adenauer, Julio Andreotti of Italy, General Antonio de Spínola of Portugal, a conservative who went on later to become President; Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.¹¹

Antoine Pinay's group, *Le Cercle*, was tied as well to the powerful and very right-wing Roman Catholic lay organization, Opus Dei, which had just been given final Catholic Church official approval in 1950, two years before plans for

Bilderberg began, by Pope Pius XII. The organization was made well known, to its discomfort, as a subject of the 2003 Dan Brown historical novel, *Da Vinci Code*.¹²

Among the later achievements of Le Cercle was the manipulation of the 1979 British elections that successfully brought in anti-labor right-wing Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It was done with Le Cercle leading members, Sir Brian Crozier, MI6 head Sir Arthur Franks, and MI6 division head, Nicholas Elliott.¹³

The late Bavarian political czar, Franz Josef Strauss, "The Lion of Bavaria," noted in his memoirs that he had held a friendship with Le Cercle's Antoine Pinay since the two first met in 1953. Le Cercle networks in Germany promoted Strauss's candidacy, unsuccessfully, to become German Chancellor. In 1955 Strauss also became a regular member of the Bilderberg Meetings.¹⁴

Bilderberg founder, Josef Retinger, a Polish-born Roman Catholic, organized his European network of the Bilderberg through the mediation of an Italian CIA asset, Prof. Luigi Gedda, head of *Azione Cattolica*. Gedda was also medical adviser to Pope Pius XII, a very strong right-wing anti-communist pontiff, who before the Second World War, as Cardinal Eugenio Giovanni Pacelli, had been architect of the 1933 *Reichskonkordat* with Hitler's Nazi Party. Already in 1932 Pacelli as Vatican Secretary of State had played a key role in convincing Roman Catholic German Chancellor Franz von Papen to steer his Catholic Center Party into an anti-left alliance with the NSDAP of Hitler.¹⁵

Clerical fascism and Pius XII

As Pope, Pius XII had a clear political bias and it was towards support of clerical or nominally Roman Catholic fascist or extremely repressive right-wing regimes, a form of what some termed clerical fascism, the fusion of the Church with fascist or dictatorial political regimes, such as in Franco Spain.

During the Second World War Pius XII refused to condemn the clerical fascist pro-Hitler regime of Roman Catholic Ante Pavelić, the leader of the newly proclaimed Croatian state. The Pope went so far as refusing to publicly condemn the expulsions and forced conversions to Catholicism perpetrated on Croatian ethnic Serbs by Pavelić's fascist Ustaše. Informed by Catholic clergy of the genocidal murders of Orthodox Serbs who had refused to embrace the Catholic faith, Pius XII, even though he possessed a list of Croatian clergy members who had "joined in the slaughter," did not condemn the Pavelić

regime or take action against the clergy involved. Instead he elevated Aloysius Stepinac—a Croatian archbishop convicted of collaborating with the Ustaše—to Cardinal.¹⁶

In effect, Retinger's European Bilderberg networks linked the extreme right-wing European anti-communist networks—including the Vatican of Pius XII, of Opus Dei, of the Franco government, of Portugal's General Spínola and numerous other right-wing European anti-communist networks—to the triumphant American elites around the powerful Rockefeller group, through the networks and person of David Rockefeller. It was a power marriage that was to have a profound effect on the development of postwar European society and politics.

The Vatican's Cold War

A very-hidden chapter in post-1945 American history was the unpublicized but central role that the Vatican played in demonizing the Soviet Union for the American population in the 1950's, with the consequence that what was a rather democratic political process in the United States after the war was increasingly turned into a national Security State, a state in which every crime and abuse of public trust by the CIA or State Department could be hidden from the American public under the guise of "national security," necessary for defense against the "threat of godless Communism."

It was secondary whether the crimes of Stalin were as claimed, though they usually were. Stalin's brutality to his people served as the perfect justification for the oligarchic circles around especially the Rockefellers and their inner circle, including the then-very-junior Bush family of Senator Prescott Bush, to corrode American democratic processes in the name of Cold War.

Key Roman Catholic figures in the United States during the 1950's included New York's Cardinal Francis Spellman. Spellman was so powerful until his death that he was referred to as the "American Pope." He had a direct line to Pius XII on all things American and shared the Pope's virulent anti-communism.

From 1881 through to the First World War, though the United States was overwhelmingly Protestant in its population, floods of immigrants from Catholic Ireland, Catholic Italy and elsewhere had increased the USA Catholic base by fully five million, a significant and growing political factor. By 1950, at the dawn of the Cold War against "Godless Bolshevism," America's recent World War ally, there were twenty eight million American Roman Catholics,

many of them now middle class, university educated, well-off financially and a very significant political power base. Pope Pius XII who earlier had shown little compunctions about organizing Papal Concordats with Hitler's vice Chancellor von Papen in 1933 and Italian fascist Mussolini, mobilized his significant population base through the Church in the United States to fan the flames of Cold War.¹⁷

For the Rockefeller group and their Bilderberg allies, who controlled the CIA, State Department and owned the key companies of the military-industrial complex, a Vatican anti-communist crusade was a gift from Heaven so to say.

In August 1950, Francis Matthews, American Secretary of the Navy, held a speech in Boston. Matthews, a devout Roman Catholic, was former Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, described by some as the Catholic counterpart to freemasonry. He was intimate with the highest levels of the Church.

Just before he delivered the Boston remarks, Matthews checked the content with Cardinal Spellman, who approved. The Vatican in Rome was informed and also approved, as was the Roman Catholic American right-wing General Douglas MacArthur and Father Edmond Walsh, S.J., the very influential head of the private Roman Catholic Georgetown University School of Foreign Relations in Washington D.C. Under Edmond Walsh, Georgetown's School of Foreign Relations held a unique role in shaping Cold War US foreign policy. It was where most US diplomats were trained as well as future President Bill Clinton. Walsh, in response to seeing the preview of Matthews' speech, declared that the United States should even use the atomic bomb against Russia.¹⁸

In that Boston speech, Navy Secretary Matthews called on the United States to launch a preemptive war against the Soviet Union, saying it would make the American people the "first aggressors for peace." Matthews declared a rather bizarre logic that George Orwell would have enjoyed: "To have peace we should be willing to pay any price—even the price of instituting a war...That would brand our program as imperial aggression...we could accept that...a character new to a true democracy—the initiator of a war of aggression."¹⁹ Fortunately President Truman, who had not been informed before, publicly denounced the provocative speech and the US did not nuke the Soviet Union.

Pope Pius XII was silent about the Matthews call for preemptive war against the Soviet Union. Matthews at the time was a Privy Chamberlain of Pius XII.²⁰

That background clarifies much about the true nature of the secretive Bilderberg Group that Joseph Retinger, with quiet backing of Pius XII, founded, together with the leading figures of the anti-communist CIA and David Rockefeller, in 1954 at the Hotel de Bilderberg.

The Bilderberg concept was to create a fusion of right-wing predominately Roman Catholic anti-communist business and political networks in Western Europe that would coordinate global strategy with the mainly Rockefeller business empire in the USA. That fusion profoundly altered the course of postwar global politics and economics for the worse.

In their 1956 Bilderberg Meeting, the group discussed creation of a European Common Market. The result emerged one year later, in 1957, with signing of the Treaty of Rome. The CIA had financed Retinger and his European Movement via a front organization called the American Committee on United Europe (ACUE). For US corporate multinationals, a single European Economic Community would make it far easier and more profitable for large American corporations to gain a market in Europe. For Washington, a transnational entity in Brussels that eroded national sovereignty and national action was easier to manipulate during the Cold War. For Opus Dei and the Bilderberg European leaders, it enabled their corporate and political networks to slowly erode national sovereign borders.²¹

¹ Dr J. H. Retinger, The Bilderberg Group, August 1956, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/17514348/The-Bilderberg-Group-Dr-JH-Retinger>

² Anthony Browne, From beyond the grave, Prince finally admits taking \$1m bribe, 4 December, 2004, Timesonline.co.uk.

³ Bilderberg official website, About Bilderberg, <http://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/index.php>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dr. J.H. Retinger, op. Cit.

⁶ David Teacher, Rogue Agents: The Cercle-Pinay Complex—1951-1991, revised 2008 online edition, <https://archive.org/stream/RogueAgents#page/n0/mode/2up>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kai Bird, The Chairman--John J. McCoy, The Making of the American Establishment David Teacher, Rogue...Op.Cit.

¹⁰ Source Watch, Bilderberg, <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Bilderberg>

¹¹ David Teacher, op. cit.

¹² Le Cercle, Le Cercle-Incomplete membership list continually updated, Geusau, Frans Alting Von, https://wikispooks.com/ISGP/organisations/Le_Cercle_membership_list.htm.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Wikipedia, Pope Pius XII, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII

¹⁶ Wikipedia, Ante Pavelic, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ante_Paveli%C4%87. Wikipedia, Pope Pius XII, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII

¹⁷ Avro Manhattan, The Dollar and the Vatican, Ozark Press, 1956, pp. 68-77.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.79-82.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.79-82.

²⁰ Ibid.,p. 83.

²¹ Richard J. Aldrich, OSS, CIA and European Unity: The American Committee on United Europe, 1948-1960, Diplomacy and Statecraft Vol. 8, no. 1 (Mar. 1997): 184-227