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INFORMAL ALLIANCE

THE BILDERBERG GROUP AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR, 1952–1968

Thomas W. Gijswijt

Informal Alliance

Informal Alliance is the first archive-based history of the secretive Bilderberg Group, the high-level transatlantic elite network founded at the height of the Cold War. Making extensive use of the recently opened Bilderberg Group archives as well as a wide range of private and official collections, it shows the significance of informal diplomacy in a fast-changing world of Cold War, decolonization, and globalization. By analyzing the global mindset of the postwar transatlantic elite and by focusing on private, transnational modes of communication and coordination, this study provides important new insights into the history of transatlantic relations, anti-Americanism, Western anti-communism, and European integration during the 1950s and 1960s. *Informal Alliance* also debunks the persistent myth that the Bilderberg Group was created by the CIA and repudiates widespread conspiracy theories alleging that Bilderberg was some sort of secret world government.

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For Andrea, Jakob, and Johanna

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List of abbreviations

ACG	American Council on Germany
ACUE	American Committee on United Europe
ACUS	Atlantic Council of the United States
AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
BDI	*Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie*
BVD	*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
CDU	*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*
CEDI	*Centre Européen de Documentation et d'Information*
CEIP	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
CEPES	*Comité Européen pour le Progrès Économique et Social*
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DAG	Development Assistance Group
DGB	*Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*
ECA	European Cooperation Agency
ECF	European Cultural Foundation
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defense Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
ELEC	European League for Economic Cooperation
EM	European Movement
ERP	European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan)
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
EYC	European Youth Campaign
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTA	Free Trade Area
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HICOG	High Commissioner for Germany
IAC	International Advisory Committee Chase Bank
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ICBM	Intercontinental ballistic missile
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRBM	Intermediate-range ballistic missile
JAEC	Joint Atomic Energy Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KVP	*Katholieke Volkspartij*
MIDEC	Middle East Development Corporation
MLF	Multilateral Force
MRBM	Medium-range ballistic missile
MRP	*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*
MSA	Mutual Security Agency
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEI	*Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*
NPG	Nuclear Planning Group
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PPS	Policy Planning Staff (State Department)
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe (NATO)
SCUA	Suez Canal Users' Association
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SFIO	*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (NATO)
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*
UEF	Union of European Federalists
UEM	United Europe Movement
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WEU	Western European Union

Introduction

At the 1965 Bilderberg conference in Italy, the leading American diplomat George Ball explained the remarkable US decision, first made by the Truman Administration and confirmed by subsequent presidents, to become a 'European power' in peacetime. "Based on a profound inculcation of the lessons of history," Ball said, "and [...] inspired by the desire to avoid the main causes of the two previous European tragedies," the United States had decided to "irrevocably link its own destiny with that of Europe."[1] This linking of transatlantic destinies is arguably the most important reason why Europe, even if divided by an Iron Curtain, developed along peaceful lines in the decades after 1945 – in stark contrast to the 1930s, when a fateful combination of economic distress, racist and anti-Semitic ideology, and aggressive nationalism plunged the world into darkness.

What went wrong during the 1930s was, to a considerable degree, a failure of the industrialized world to cooperate in the face of a global economic crisis, as well as a failure of the civilized world to respond jointly to Italian, Japanese, or German aggression. This, at least, is how many of those involved in rebuilding the world after World War II saw it. These internationalists were determined not to repeat that mistake; accordingly, they developed an interlocking system of multilateral institutions designed for the more effective functioning of international cooperation and coordination.

If the initial thrust of internationalism had been economic and global – with the creation of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – the emerging Cold War quickly forced internationalists in the United States and Europe to become more and more Atlanticist, needing to concentrate their attention on questions of regional security in Europe and the Atlantic area. This explains why the Marshall Plan soon turned into a program for military assistance, and it explains why the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 quickly turned from a paper treaty into an integrated military organization (NATO) with a vast US military presence on European ground. It also explains why, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the United States became so much more deeply involved in European affairs than anyone had thought necessary at war's end.

Not surprisingly, this deepening American involvement in European affairs caused frequent transatlantic tensions and misunderstandings. European interests, after all, did not always coincide with American interests, and Europe's economic and military dependence inevitably generated anti-American resentment as European prestige and pride took a hit. The need to coordinate policies, moreover, frequently displayed the truth of Churchill's dictum: "there is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them." The official institutions and leaders of the Atlantic alliance, for one, turned out not to be very good at dealing with these tensions.[2] In part, this reflected the intricacies of US foreign policy decision-making, which involved such a large number of executive and congressional players that the added complexity of allied consultation frequently proved too much. But it was also the quite natural reaction to the sudden rise of the United States as the superpower chiefly responsible for Western Europe's security.

This is where the Bilderberg Group, founded in 1952, came in. One of the main arguments set forth in this book is that the Bilderberg Group formed an important part of what I call the *informal alliance* – as opposed to the official alliance consisting of NATO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and other multilateral institutions. The informal alliance had its origins in the early Cold War and consisted of a fast-growing group of private or semi-private transnational organizations engaged in fostering and promoting cooperation and understanding within the Western world. The fact that global communication systems and intercontinental air travel were creating what Wendell Willkie, in his 1943 bestseller, had called "One World" made frequent transatlantic contacts and networking physically possible for the first time in human history.[3] As a result, the informal alliance came to play an important role in the difficult process of adjustment to the fundamental shift in power relations between the new world and the old.

Some of the organizations in the informal alliance were continental European undertakings, whereas others were transatlantic or bilateral in nature; some focused on cultural or political issues, while others brought together defense intellectuals or economists. What united them was that they operated transnationally and that their members broadly shared a *global mindset*: the belief that the nations of the 'Free World,' after two devastating world wars and facing a wide range of global challenges, could not confront the modern world in isolation. Needless to say, the exact nature and methods of cooperation – from world government to Atlantic union, from economic functionalism to political federalism – remained the subject of much debate and disagreement.[4]

The Bilderberg Group was one of the first organizations of the informal alliance. Its main purpose was to improve and solidify relations between Western Europe and the United States through secret, non-partisan discussions.[5] The Bilderberg Group's private nature and its high caliber,

multifaceted membership made it an ideal platform for engaging in *informal diplomacy* and for developing *transnational connections*. The Bilderberg Group was unique not just in inviting participants from virtually all NATO members (as well as some of the neutral European states) for its yearly meetings but also in bringing together a surprisingly broad range of participants representing various political groupings, trade unions, the business and financial world, civil society, and government. Despite its secretive nature, Bilderberg in fact contributed to a democratization and broadening of the transatlantic foreign policy elite in the 1950s and 1960s. Its organizers were convinced that international understanding would only take hold if as many societal groups as possible were represented.

Given the immense imbalance in power between the United States and Europe in the immediate postwar period, the history of transatlantic relations is often written through the lens of American agency, hegemony, or empire. The term Americanization, for example, implicitly posits a one-directional flow of influence and power. The history of the Bilderberg Group suggests, however, that the actual dynamics of transatlantic relations were much more complex, and that American primacy was not as straightforward as it seemed. US leadership of the alliance, after all, depended upon a certain level of support from European publics and foreign policy elites. This became clear as soon as Western Europe started to recover economically in the early 1950s and a wave of anti-American sentiment swept the continent in the wake of the Korean War and McCarthyism.

Believing that transatlantic cooperation was in jeopardy, this wave of anti-Americanism prompted Joseph H. Retinger, Bilderberg's Polish-born founding father, to create a new type of forum for informal transatlantic exchanges.[6] He argued that "private initiatives" would be more successful than public diplomacy because Europeans were "tired of official [American] propaganda."[7] The Bilderberg Group, in other words, was not an American invention – the group was based on a decidedly European initiative and, though it soon turned into a transatlantic organization, its leadership and direction would continue to come predominantly from Europe.

The story of how the Bilderberg Group, despite initial American reluctance to cooperate, became one of the most important bodies of the informal alliance reveals much about the dynamics of transatlantic relations during the Cold War and provides new answers to the question why, despite its frequent crises, the Atlantic alliance turned out to be resilient as well as enduring. This book tells that story in different ways, focusing more on the political than on the economic dimensions of the Bilderberg discussions. It relates, first of all, the history of Bilderberg's founding and its institutional development. Who organized the Bilderberg meetings? How were they financed? Who set the agenda and sent out the invitations? Why did the Bilderberg Group continue to meet even after European anti-Americanism seemed to have subsided in the late 1950s? And how did the group change over time?

A second, closely intertwined storyline examines how the manifold connections between members of the transatlantic elite led to new modes of communication and a sense of shared, transnational, or global identity.[8] It traces the ideas, values, interests, and emotions that united as well as divided the members of this elite. This can provide us with important insights into how members of the informal alliance perceived and responded to challenges of the Cold War, decolonization, and globalization.

Finally, *Informal Alliance* interweaves the narrative of the Bilderberg Group and the transatlantic elite with the broader history of transatlantic relations, thus bringing in a new perspective that has largely remained out of view because of the dominant state-based historiographies. To a considerable degree, this history was one of crisis and failure – from the European Defense Community (EDC) to the Suez and Sputnik crises, or to the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command structure in 1966. An important function of the informal alliance was therefore to keep the basic consensus underlying the institutions of Western cooperation alive as well as to search for new avenues of cooperation. From the American point of view, meanwhile, the informal alliance provided opportunities to legitimize US leadership, as long as a more equal Atlantic partnership remained elusive.

Throughout these different storylines, the question of the Bilderberg Group's influence emerges. I argue that this influence was mainly indirect. The historical record shows that the Group was not involved in decision-making, nor were any specific, actionable conclusions reached. However, the Bilderberg organizers did hope and expect that through the agency of the Bilderberg participants, the discussions would have an impact on decision-makers and public opinion. They did not hesitate to bring the results of their discussions to the attention of government officials and political leaders, yet they had little control over what was done with this information.

The actual power of the Bilderberg Group hence mainly consisted of introducing new ideas, sustaining a sense of community among the members of the transatlantic elite, and enhancing understanding for differences in attitudes and political cultures – in short, *indirect influence*. As the Bilderberg organizers themselves realized, such influence was impossible to measure with any precision. Ultimately, it depended both on how the Bilderberg participants influenced each other and on what they did with the information, impressions, and contacts gathered at the Bilderberg meetings. For the Bilderberg participants themselves, meanwhile, the meetings were useful as a source of information, connections, and status. Of course, they could also be interesting and enjoyable; the atmosphere of the meetings was a key ingredient for their success.

Informal Alliance is the first research-based history of the Bilderberg Group. Although much has been written about Bilderberg, most of it is highly speculative and very little is based on actual archival research.[9] One

explanation for the surprising lack of serious research about the group is that Bilderberg's official archives were long closed, governed by a 50-year access rule (meaning that for this book I have been able to access all material up to 1967). In addition, the fact that Bilderberg's membership was so diverse makes the group challenging to study. Even after multilingual archival research in dozens of private and official collections in more than 40 archives in seven different countries, this book inevitably provides only a partial view. The main geographic focus of *Informal Alliance* lies on the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, which means that countries such as Denmark, Greece, Italy, Sweden, or Turkey do not get as much attention as they deserve.

The wealth of material in the Bilderberg archives and in a range of other collections does make it possible to write a detailed history of the Bilderberg Group and its role in transatlantic relations in the period until 1968. Particularly, the first three Bilderberg conferences (one in 1954 and two in 1955) are well documented because verbatim transcripts of these conferences are available. Official reports exist for all other conferences; although these detailed summaries of the discussions do not identify the names of most speakers, it is oftentimes possible to reconstruct who said what by combining the reports with the private notes and correspondence of participants.[10] Many participants, moreover, wrote accounts of the meetings for official or private purposes, adding more evidence for analyzing Bilderberg's indirect influence.[11]

Informal Alliance combines a chronological with a thematic approach. The first three chapters examine the origins of the Bilderberg Group. The first chapter begins with the fascinating story of how the penniless London-based Polish writer Joseph Retinger turned into an influential informal diplomat who stood at the origins not just of the Bilderberg Group but also of the European Movement. It then addresses the question of US involvement in funding the European Movement against the background of the Cold War. The second chapter shows how Retinger assembled a leading group of Europeans to analyze Europe's anti-American turn in the early 1950s and how this led to the first Bilderberg conference. It demonstrates that the Bilderberg Group was a decidedly European creation and that, in fact, the Eisenhower Administration was initially reluctant to support Retinger's initiative.

Chapter 3 concludes the first part of the book and gives a detailed account of the first conference held at Hotel de Bilderberg in May 1954. This conference represented a new phase in postwar transatlantic relations as Europe's most immediate dependence on the United States slowly receded. The success of the first Bilderberg conference had much to do, I argue, with the emerging global mindset of an expanding foreign policy elite in the West. The chapter also shows how emotions turned out to be an important category of analysis for understanding the transatlantic alliance and its anti-communist underpinnings.

Chapter 4 takes a step back from the chronological approach and looks more closely at the Bilderberg Group's organization and membership. It addresses the question of influence and elaborates the concepts of informal diplomacy, the transatlantic elite, and the informal alliance. Taking Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski as two prominent examples, it also shows how the informal alliance allowed relative outsiders to become influential members of the transatlantic elite.

Chapter 5 returns to the Bilderberg story and looks at how the Bilderberg Group responded to the failure of the EDC in August 1954. The Bilderberg discussions on European integration provide an important correction to existing explanations of the creation of the European Communities. They show that anti-communist motivations played a much larger role than is often recognized and they underline the profoundly interconnected nature of the many political and socioeconomic motives and interests on which the 1957 Rome Treaties were based.

Chapter 6 turns to the topic of decolonization and asks why the so-called colonial question continued to bedevil transatlantic relations throughout the 1950s, culminating in the 1956 Suez crisis. A mixture of different cultural attitudes, emotions, Cold War pressures, and divergent national interests are part of the answer. At the same time, the emerging global Cold War forced the transatlantic elite to grapple with questions of economic and political development, as well as with the strong wish of many newly independent nations not to be drawn into the East-West conflict.

Chapter 7 deals with a problem that essentially remained unsolved: the question of nuclear strategy and control within NATO. It shows that the Bilderberg meetings provided an important platform for the dissemination of expertise and strategic thinking on nuclear issues and a key venue for transnational criticism of the Eisenhower Administration's doctrine of massive retaliation. This became all the more important after the Sputnik shock of 1957 exposed the increasing vulnerability of the American mainland to Soviet nuclear attack.

Chapter 8 examines how the Bilderberg Group responded to President de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. The discussions about the relationship between the Inner Six of the European Communities – now united in a common market – and the rest of Europe uncovered disturbing challenges to the internationalist consensus of the informal alliance. The debate about the Kennedy Administration's ideas about a NATO defense strategy of flexible response provided further confirmation that nationalism (primarily in the shape of Gaullism) had returned to the European mainstream. The Bilderberg meetings reveal how the debate about the future of transatlantic relations became a struggle between competing concepts of how nations should cooperate.

Chapter 9 analyzes how this struggle culminated in the transatlantic crisis of 1963 (when President de Gaulle vetoed Great Britain's admission to the European Communities) and how it triggered a process of renewal within

the Bilderberg Group itself. This process received further impetus from the Vietnam War, the rise of Goldwater conservatism in the United States, and the global upsurge of youth and student movements.

The conclusion returns to the question of the wider significance of the Bilderberg Group and the informal alliance in the history of transatlantic relations and attempts to explain why the Bilderberg Group has become a favorite object of so many conspiracy theories.

Notes

1 Villa d'Este Report, Box 23, Bilderberg Archives, NANL.
2 For the case of NATO, see Milloy, *The North Atlantic Treaty*.
3 See Van Vleck, "The 'Logic of the Air,'" and Zipp, "When Wendell Willkie Went Visiting."
4 For a recent study of the global mindset from the perspective of a number of leading public intellectuals in Europe and the United States and focusing on the 1940s, see Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism*.
5 See the appendix for a list of all conferences and their agendas until 1968.
6 I will use the English 'Joseph' throughout this book, instead of the Polish Józef; this is what Retinger himself did during and after World War II, the period most important to this book.
7 See chapter 2.
8 On the concept of global identity, see Mazlish, *Reflections on the Modern*.
9 Exceptions are the (partly unpublished) works by Aubourg, Black, Bloemendal, Philipsen, Richardson, Wendt, and Wilson.
10 For reasons of narrative convenience, I use quotes from these reports and private notes as if they are direct quotes from the participants. In the case of the verbatim reports, this is of course true; in other cases, the actual wording/phrasing will have been slightly different, without changing the meaning of the contributions. Tapes of most meetings do exist but were not yet available during the research for this book. They will likely need to be restored and digitized before becoming accessible. Transcribing the tapes will be a massive – but I would argue worthwhile – undertaking.
11 Bilderberg participants and steering committee members are identified in the index by the years of their participation in the Bilderberg conferences.

1 Joseph Retinger – informal diplomat

Joseph Retinger was one of the most fascinating figures involved in international relations during the 20th century. During his lifetime, opinions about Retinger ran the gamut from hero to traitor. His friends nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize and Denis de Rougemont called him the "spiritual father" and "midwife" of the Council of Europe.[1] Paul-Henri Spaak, himself one of Europe's founding fathers, described him as one of the "pioneers of Europe."[2] In stark contrast, his enemies accused him of being a secret agent for the British, the Soviets, the Mexicans, or the Jesuits.

The fact that Retinger's detractors have frequently tainted him with the brush of conspiracy is understandable, as we shall see, but it has had the unfortunate effect of deflecting attention from his real accomplishments and his innovative approach to international relations. Based on the existing evidence, the judgment on Retinger's more controversial activities – particularly during the two world wars – remains undecided. Yet very little credible evidence has emerged to substantiate accusations of spying and dubious loyalties.

Retinger's preferred methods of operation partly explain the abundance of conspiracy theories about him. Retinger's métier was *informal diplomacy*.[3] He never ran for public office, he held few official positions, and he lacked a traditional power base. His diplomatic tools consisted of high-level connections, a talent for personal persuasion, and the occasional bottle of vodka. He was at his most effective outside of the limelight, and he preferred operating in the dining rooms of Europe's finest restaurants and hotels. His footprint in the diplomatic archives is correspondingly small.[4] Arguably, however, his impact on both transatlantic relations and European integration was greater than that of many leading politicians and diplomats of his time. The reason for this was that Retinger's talent for informal diplomacy was particularly well suited to the fast changing post-1945 world of globalization, technological change, Atlantic alliance, and European integration.

Joseph Retinger was born in 1888, the son of a prominent Polish family in Cracow, Galicia. Galicia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but Retinger was raised as a Polish patriot and educated as a cosmopolitan European. The struggle for Polish independence was the central political

cause of his life. Retinger studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and received a PhD in literature at the remarkable age of 20. With the help of his wealthy mentor and family friend Count Władysław Zamoyski, he became an active participant in Parisian high society, befriending André Gide, Maurice Ravel, Eric Satie, Francis Poulenc, and a number of influential political figures such as Marquis Boni de Castellane.

After further studies in Munich and a brief period back in Cracow as the publisher of a literary review, Retinger moved to London. There he worked for the Polish National Council, a small Galician organization working to advance the cause of Polish independence. Retinger published his first political treatise, an analysis of the relationship between Russia and Poland, and became a close friend of émigré-writer Joseph Conrad.[5] In August 1914, Retinger arranged Conrad's first return to Poland in 20 years. They used their visits to Cracow and Lviv to discuss Polish independence with religious and political leaders. Then the outbreak of the World War I forced them to make a hasty retreat. Although the details of his journey are sketchy, Retinger ended up in a French prison, having to rely on Count Zamoyski's contacts to get released.[6]

During the war, Retinger embarked on his first major mission as an informal diplomat. Using his access to high-placed British and French politicians such as H. H. Asquith, David Lloyd George, and Georges Clemenceau, as well as bombarding the British Foreign Office with plans for solving the Polish question – some of them co-authored by Conrad – Retinger convinced London and Paris to allow him to try to negotiate a separate peace with the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. Supported by Boni de Castellane, Prince Sixte de Bourbon, Lord Northcliffe (the British publisher of *The Times*), and leading Catholic officials, Retinger traveled back and forth between Paris, London, and Switzerland. In his memoirs, Retinger admits to the naïveté of these efforts given the complexities of the Polish situation. Different Polish factions and parties regarded him as too pro-Austrian or suspected him of being an agent for Britain or the Vatican. Conrad, however, expressed his admiration for Retinger's "… brilliant piece of work […] as an unofficial intermediary between the British and French Governments."[7]

The collapse of Retinger's efforts in 1917 left him severely depressed. His marriage dissolved, he started a disastrous affair with the American adventuress Jane Anderson, and he apparently even made a half-hearted suicide attempt.[8] Meanwhile, his opposition to the creation of a Polish exile army in France – which would destroy his hopes of solving the Polish question with the help of Austria – made him persona non grata in Great Britain and France. British diplomat Harold Nicolson noted in September 1918 that Retinger was likely "an international spy."[9]

Despite the failure of Retinger's informal diplomacy during the Great War, his remarkable talent for persuasion and gaining access to decision-making elites stands out, particularly considering his relative youth (he turned 26 in

1914). In terms of strength of personality and relentlessness in pursuit of new ideas and solutions, Retinger resembled another young European first catapulted to prominence during the war: the Frenchman Jean Monnet. Several decades later, their paths would cross in the struggle to unite Europe.

Immediately after World War I, Retinger acted as an advisor to the revolutionary government in Mexico. His role in opposing American oil companies operating in Mexico landed him in a series of American prisons in 1921.[10] A young American intelligence officer named J. Edgar Hoover noted that Retinger might have been a German spy during the war.[11] At some point, Retinger returned to London, married Stella Morel, the daughter of the leftist political philosopher E. D. Morel, and continued his involvement in Polish affairs. One of his political friends in this period was General Władysław Sikorski, who had served briefly as Poland's prime minister in the 1920s. In addition, Retinger was involved in the work of the international trade unions movement.[12]

1940–1945: Wartime diplomacy and the European idea

The outbreak of World War II propelled Retinger back onto the international stage. In June 1940, as German tanks rolled towards Paris, he convinced the British Air Ministry – probably with support from Prime Minister Winston Churchill – to provide him with a plane to rescue General Sikorski from the South of France.[13] Retinger succeeded in bringing Sikorski to London, where the general immediately met with Churchill. As soon as Sikorski became head of the Polish government-in-exile, he named Retinger his diplomatic counselor. In this function, Retinger maintained contacts with the British government and played a key role in negotiating the controversial Polish-Soviet Agreement of July 1941, acting as a translator during the many meetings between Sikorski and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden. Retinger then briefly served as the first Polish chargé d'affaires in Moscow. Despite the fact that the 1941 agreement obliged Stalin to free all Polish prisoners-in-arms in the Soviet Union, many exiled Poles, united in their hatred of Russia, strongly opposed it.

The upheavals of war set off a global rethinking regarding the nature and future of international relations. New ideas about sovereignty, security, nationalism, and international cooperation found their way into the Atlantic Charter and a number of resistance manifestos in Europe and the colonial world. Wartime London, above all, served as a fertile breeding ground for new ideas, and Retinger was one of the central drivers of change.[14] In order to safeguard Poland's future independence and security, he proposed to establish regional blocs with the ultimate aim of a federated Europe. As he put it in his memoirs:

> In my frequent conversations with General Sikorski before the War, I pointed out the advantages for Poland of a federated Europe, and the

> impossibility for a small country like Poland to live surrounded by jealous neighbours, since she would be unable to withstand any pressure that might be brought to bear on her by the two big Powers nearest her, Russia and Germany.[15]

In early 1941, Sikorski and Retinger initiated regular meetings with representatives of several other small European powers to discuss future cooperation. The Belgians – represented by Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, Marcel-Henri Jaspar, and Paul van Zeeland – were the first to show a strong interest in regional federations. The Czechoslovakian leadership, represented by Jan Masaryk, soon joined. By the fall of 1942, Sikorski and Retinger had set up an Inter-Allied Committee on postwar issues for the Polish, Belgian, Dutch, Greek, Norwegian, and Czechoslovakian governments-in-exile. Retinger was the linchpin of these efforts. As Spaak remembered in his memoirs:

> An intelligent, active and slightly mysterious individual, he would have luncheon every day with one British politician or another, or with a member of one of the governments in exile. He knew everybody and no door was closed to him.[16]

Retinger's initiative gave an important boost to the idea of Europe during the war. One indirect result was the postwar Benelux Union, which Spaak had first discussed with Eelco van Kleffens, the Dutch foreign minister, and Pieter Kerstens, the Dutch minister of trade, at Retinger's table.[17] Another result was that, as Retinger put it in his memoirs,

> [t]he Foreign Ministers' meetings, although not publicized, created great interest in Great Britain and America. One of the Americans particularly interested was Mr. John Foster Dulles [….]. I remember spending several hours with him and discussing not only Polish affairs, but also the general idea of the unity of Europe.[18]

The British, however, were afraid of anything that risked complicating their difficult relationship with the Soviet Union. Because the Polish plans were clearly directed not only against future German aggression, but also against possible Soviet meddling in Central European affairs, Soviet diplomats communicated Moscow's concerns to London. As a result, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden repeatedly warned General Sikorski about the implications of his proposals in terms of relations with the Soviet Union and refused to give strong British support.[19]

As part of their efforts to win support for the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish resistance, Retinger and Sikorski traveled to Washington, D.C. in March 1942. Despite his earlier dealings with American law enforcement, Retinger managed to meet with a number of influential members of

the Roosevelt Administration, including W. Averell Harriman and Adolf Berle Jr. In Retinger's telling, his discussions with Berle resulted in a phone call to President Roosevelt and the promise of $12 million in annual assistance to the Polish resistance. Two weeks after their return to London, the American Ambassador to Poland, Anthony Drexel Biddle Jr., showed up with a suitcase containing the first 2 million in cash.[20]

Following General Sikorski's death in a plane crash in July 1943, Retinger lost much of his influence in the Polish government-in-exile. His conservative enemies resurrected old spying stories and suggested that he was a Soviet agent. Despite these attempts to discredit him, in late 1943 Retinger managed to persuade the new Polish Prime Minister, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, to send him on a secret mission to Poland for discussions with the Polish underground. Retinger felt that he could be useful in establishing closer contacts between the government-in-exile in London and local Polish resistance leaders in order to plan for Poland's future. He also felt that these leaders needed to be convinced of the need for cooperation with Soviet forces once the Red Army had crossed the Polish border. This was a highly fraught issue given the revelation, earlier in 1943, of the Katyn massacre and the subsequent breaking-off of relations between Moscow and the Polish government-in-exile. Retinger felt, however, that the Polish should be pragmatic, particularly in view of the fact that the British were unlikely to support any anti-Soviet action taken by the Polish underground or government-in-exile.

Prime Minister Mikołajczyk told Marek Celt, the young Polish officer chosen to accompany Retinger, that Retinger was the right man for the mission because "he has a lot of important English friends; they trust him, they'll believe without reservation whatever he tells them about the state of the Underground in Poland."[21] Of course, Retinger's closeness to British decision-makers also meant that anything he heard from the Polish underground would likely be shared with the British government. Mikołajczyk did not believe that Retinger was a British agent, but he did order Celt to warn the Polish resistance leadership not to tell Retinger anything they did not want the British to hear.[22]

British historians Stephen Dorril and Norman Davies have interpreted Retinger's airdrop over Poland in April 1944 as proof that he was indeed a British agent, employed by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), yet they provide no evidence for their claims.[23] It is far more likely that Retinger, supported by Mikołajczyk, used his excellent connections with SOE – whose director, Major-General Colin Gubbins, had been deeply involved in Polish affairs and considered Retinger a friend – to organize the jump over Polish territory. Moreover, because of the crucial role the British government would play in any postwar settlement, Retinger closely coordinated his plans with the Foreign Office.[24]

A recent study of Retinger's mission based on British Foreign Office records confirms that it was Retinger who approached Frank Roberts, the acting head of the Foreign Office's Central Bureau, and Anthony Eden to

win their support. Eden was hesitant at first because he did not "entirely trust M. Retinger." However, Roberts managed to convince his superiors that Retinger's mission served a useful purpose and Eden agreed to meet with Retinger as a result.[25] After the war, Roberts told Harold Macmillan that Retinger had played "a helpful and certainly an important role in Anglo-Polish relations before and even after General Sikorski's death. He certainly showed great personal courage in being dropped by parachute into Poland to make a personal report on conditions there."[26]

Retinger's parachute jump over enemy territory was indeed risky. He was probably the oldest, and certainly the least fit, parachutist of the entire war. Yet he somehow managed to land in Poland without serious injury, met with most of the Polish resistance leadership, and avoided arrest by the Gestapo. He even survived an assassination attempt by opponents within the Polish Home Army, who tried to poison him.[27] Retinger ended up being partly paralyzed, but made it out of Poland alive and immediately briefed Mikołajczyk and the British government.[28]

Retinger and the European Movement

During their weeks of waiting in Italy, before weather conditions allowed for their long-distance flight to Poland to proceed, Retinger had told his companion Marek Celt that he collected two things: "people and world records." Even if he joked about his collection of world records – being the youngest Sorbonne PhD graduate was one – he was certainly serious about collecting people. A keen observer of human psychology, Retinger kept a little notebook with "people's characteristics" and spent much of his time and energy managing his network of friends.[29]

One of his admirers, the Italian diplomat Pietro Quaroni, described Retinger's method as follows:

> One succumbed to his personality without noticing it, irresistibly. He was steadfast in his friendships, as he was in his dislikes. He inspired confidence. Firstly by his discretion. He was no doubt one of the best-informed people in the world, and his views on all problems, big and small, were very reliable and realistic, based on concrete data.[30]

Or as *The Observer* put it:

> He was one of those international figures who have ideas and a genius for finding the means to carry them out. A great joker, he had a cigarette perpetually drooping from his lip, never ate a sausage but seemed to live on whiskey and soda.[31]

Access to the right people had been the basis of Retinger's influence during the war. After the war, he continued to expand his network of contacts and

friends, traveling widely across Europe and the United States. His method of informal diplomacy turned out to be particularly well suited to the rapid expansion of *transnational* organizations working towards a more united Europe in the immediate postwar era.[32] This transnationalization of efforts to integrate Europe opened up new channels of influence for people like Retinger, and he jumped at the opportunity.

Retinger publicly outlined his views of a more stable postwar order in Europe during a speech at Chatham House on May 7, 1946. His lifelong goal of Polish independence remained a key concern to him. Having traveled to Poland immediately after the end of the war, Retinger had witnessed the communist takeover of power and had been forced to leave the country. At Chatham House, he warned of the emerging Cold War, arguing that

> the complacency of some of the Big Powers and the rivalries between them have led to the division, in fact if not in theory, of the Continent into two zones of influence and thus sewn the seed, perhaps, of a much greater conflict.

Unless Europe wished to become an "appendage to the Russian empire" or "a free market for Anglo-Saxon expansion," it had to "create a free Continent, economically cohesive and politically unified."[33] It is clear that Retinger regarded such a united Europe as a possible 'third force' between the Soviet Union and the United States – not in the sense of a neutralist Europe but in the sense of a Europe strong and independent enough to overcome the division of the continent in Soviet and American 'zones of influence.'

Not long after his Chatham House speech, Retinger met with Paul van Zeeland in Brussels and made plans to create a European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC).[34] The League aimed to overcome the economic policies of autarky and protectionism, which had dominated Europe in the 1930s. By increasing economic interdependence within Europe – with the ultimate aim of one large European market – the organizers hoped to pave the way for future political initiatives. Retinger traveled throughout Europe to help set up local sections of ELEC. Sir Harold Butler agreed to chair the British section, which also included Retinger's old SOE friend Major-General Colin Gubbins, as well as leading industrialists and politicians such as Edward Beddington-Behrens, Harold Macmillan, Walter Layton, and Peter Thorneycroft. Daniel Serruys organized the French section and brought in Michel Debré, Edmond Giscard d'Estaing, André Voisin, and others. Pieter Kerstens took charge of the Dutch section.

Retinger did not want to limit the League's efforts to Western Europe. He worked hard to involve Eastern European countries as well, but was thwarted by Moscow's refusal to cooperate. Retinger and Van Zeeland did manage to find considerable backing for ELEC in the United States.

Retinger found Harriman, who served briefly as US ambassador in London, willing to support him. "As a stateless Pole," Retinger remembered,

> I naturally had difficulties in getting an American visa, but Averell Harriman was my sponsor and arranged my visit. He strongly believed in European unification and as Secretary of Commerce and later head of the European Co-operation Administration was responsible for the tremendous support the United States gave to this idea.[35]

Retinger organized an American section under the chairmanship of Adolf Berle Jr., and a number of prominent bankers and businessmen, including Nelson and David Rockefeller, agreed to join.

Retinger was convinced that American support for a united Europe was essential. Accordingly, ELEC's first public initiative consisted of a pamphlet and resolution in support of the European Recovery Program (ERP), which General George Marshall had announced in June 1947. The memorandum stressed the need for the establishment of a European planning board with executive powers and for the reduction of trade barriers.[36] In the following years, ELEC organized several expert conferences and working groups concerning trade liberalization, currency convertibility, and institutional possibilities for European economic cooperation.[37] ELEC's studies on convertibility helped lay the groundwork for the creation of the important European Payments Union in 1950, which did much to stimulate intra-European trade.[38]

In December 1947, Retinger cofounded the Joint International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, an umbrella organization for ELEC, Churchill's United Europe Movement (UEM), the Christian Democratic *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (NEI), and several other European organizations. Together with UEM's Duncan Sandys, Churchill's son-in-law, Retinger set out to organize the Congress of Europe at The Hague in May 1948.[39] By all accounts, the Congress was a real turning point in European history. It brought together an impressive group of leading Europeans, including Churchill, Spaak, Paul Ramadier, Paul Reynaud, and Konrad Adenauer, and it received wide coverage in the European press.[40] Retinger firmly believed in the importance of influencing public opinion by means of political, intellectual, and cultural elites. In his view, the Congress had succeeded admirably in doing so: "[it] received enormous publicity and the participants, once dispersed, added to it further and confirmed its impact. As a result the idea of Europe was strikingly brought to the attention of public opinion."[41]

In his memoirs, Retinger claimed that "[a]t The Hague we laid the foundations for all that was to mark the progress of the European Idea in the next decade."[42] Even if this was perhaps somewhat of an overstatement, the Congress did agree to a number of important resolutions, which later found expression in the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human

Rights, the College of Europe in Bruges, and the European Cultural Center in Geneva. Churchill called the Congress a "milestone," and in the words of the German historian of European integration Wilfried Loth, "[…] the transnational societal consensus on which the later European Communities would rest had become palpable for the first time."[43]

In the wake of the Congress, the Joint International Committee was changed into the European Movement (EM), with Retinger and Sandys acting as secretary-general and president, respectively, of its international committee, and Spaak, Churchill, Léon Blum (leader of the French socialists), and Italian Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi serving as honorary presidents. Retinger and Sandys worked hard to transform the resolutions of The Hague into reality. Retinger personally met with a large number of European prime ministers, presidents, and parliamentary leaders to keep the momentum going.[44] He focused in particular on the governments of the Brussels Treaty powers (France, the United Kingdom and the Benelux countries had signed a defensive pact in 1948), hoping that they would take the lead. In addition, national delegations of the newly formed EM petitioned parliaments across Europe to take action.

In a letter to Harriman, Retinger emphasized the importance of informal diplomacy. "[P]rivate and independent activities for the Unity of Europe," he wrote,

> are extremely important at this stage, as Governments by definition, especially when they are democratic, must be over cautious and rather timid in dealing with great initiatives in the domain of International policy. We obviously want to go further than the Governments can and to pave the way for the effective Unity of Europe.[45]

In August 1948, Ramadier agreed to present a proposal drafted by Sandys and Retinger to the French government.[46] As a result, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman officially proposed the creation of a European parliamentary assembly later that year. The British Labour government, however, in what was to become a recurring feature of European negotiations, was unwilling to agree to any sharing of sovereignty. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin expressed a preference for intergovernmental modes of cooperation and countered with a plan for a European ministerial council.

Throughout the tricky negotiations that followed, Retinger played an important role as an informal troubleshooter and mediator. One typical episode appears in his memoirs. In October 1948, the Brussels Treaty powers had agreed to form a study group to devise a compromise between the British and French positions. The study group was chaired by Édouard Herriot and included EM members such as Léon Blum, Paul Reynaud, and Pieter Kerstens; on the British side, Hugh Dalton and Sir Gladwyn Jebb were involved. Before the first official meeting of the study group, Retinger

decided to bring the heads of delegations together for an informal lunch in Paris. As he put it, "[…] I thought it would be helpful if a friendly atmosphere prevailed among the delegates right from the start of these difficult negotiations. In this we succeeded […]."[47]

Other contemporary observers (and, it should be noted, friends of Retinger) confirmed Retinger's impact. In the words of Pietro Quaroni,

> It is difficult to imagine all that Retinger did to clear away the stumbling-blocks – arranging meetings between the English and the French, coaxing one side, pleading with the other! In one week, I remember, he travelled four times between London and Paris with proposals from one country to the other. And he succeeded. If the great "stars" of Europe will forgive me […] I cannot help feeling that if the Council of Europe got on to its feet, a great deal of credit must go to the modest, silent endeavours of Dr. Retinger.[48]

Denis de Rougemont likewise emphasized the importance of Retinger's informal diplomacy, calling him the "midwife of the Council of Europe."[49]

By May 1949, the Brussels Treaty powers, joined by Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Norway, and Sweden, agreed to the creation of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, with a Consultative Assembly responsible to a Committee of Ministers. Greece and Turkey joined three months later, to be followed by Iceland and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1950.

Transnational Europe

Even if the Council of Europe never fulfilled the initial hopes of Retinger and others, these early steps towards a more united Europe did pave the way for future developments in European integration, including the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) founded in 1950, and the 1957 Rome Treaties establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC). The Congress of Europe, the Consultative Assembly meetings in Strasbourg, and several subsequent large EM conferences all nurtured a new sense of commitment to the idea of uniting Europe, particularly among a number of European leaders who would later play pivotal roles in creating the European Communities.[50]

As Paul-Henri Spaak recalled in his memoirs,

> Between 1949 and 1954 I devoted myself unreservedly to the cause of European unity and wrote a large number of articles in its support. I made speeches in all the member countries of the Council of Europe. This was a time of lively activity and genuine enthusiasm. My friends and I were convinced that we were fighting for a cause that merited our absolute devotion.[51]

Harold Macmillan wrote about his experience in the Consultative Assembly in similar terms: "[…] we met in a real atmosphere of spiritual excitement. We really felt convinced that we could found a new order in the Old World – democratic, free, progressive, destined to restore prosperity and peace."[52]

The result was a vast increase in transnational contacts and the establishment of a transnational European public sphere – or, to use Macmillan's phrase, a "sounding board" for Europe.[53] Within this European public sphere, debates about questions such as supranational versus intergovernmental or political versus economic integration served to crystallize trends and to provide greater clarity on what was achievable and what not.

Harry Price, author of an early official history of the Marshall Plan, was one of the first to recognize this: "[The Council] furnished […] a useful channel for continuing intergovernmental deliberations on further measures in the direction of political integration. Its chambers served as a forum for the discussion and clarification of the Schuman Plan."[54] Another case in point was the deeply entrenched British (and Scandinavian) reluctance to commit to the sharing of sovereignty, which became apparent during the long discussions at Strasbourg and which convinced many continental European leaders by late 1951 to concentrate on the Europe of the Six in the hope of bringing the United Kingdom in later. When the British Conservatives returned to power in October 1951 and turned out not to be any more willing to engage in supranational adventures than their Labour predecessors – despite Churchill's important contributions to the EM – people like Spaak resolved to focus their efforts on 'little Europe.'

A further critical feature of the EM and the Council of Europe was that they transcended not just borders but also political parties and ideological divides. To Retinger, nonpartisanship came naturally; he routinely dealt with political leaders from all sections of the political spectrum. But it remains an interesting peculiarity of European integration that both the ECSC and the Rome Treaties were created by politicians who would not normally have sat comfortably at the same table. Two of the main architects of the Rome Treaties, Konrad Adenauer and Guy Mollet, for example, were a conservative German Christian Democrat and a left-wing French socialist.[55] The early phase of European integration had given politicians such as these opportunities to get to know each other, or, at least, to know where others stood on the question of supranational European cooperation. Thus, they developed a greater sensibility for each other's standpoints and backgrounds.

The relative seclusion of Strasbourg – which did not have a large international airport – meant that the long Assembly sessions forced participants to spend much time together. As Macmillan remembered:

> In Strasbourg there were few distractions. We lived together in the Assembly or its committees during many working hours. In our leisure, we shared an agreeable atmosphere of social recreation and informal discussion. During the three years that I sat on this body I got to know almost every distinguished personality in Europe.[56]

As it happened, many of the connections and friendships forged in the Assembly and in the EM would later play an important part in the Bilderberg meetings.

In a similar way, the EM brought together a large number of private organizations and figures from different societal backgrounds, including religious organizations, trade unions, youth groups, and other non-state actors. Retinger called this the "Europe of the people," and, in the words of John Pomian,

> attached great importance to it, for it was in keeping with his understanding of the process of history. Religious, cultural, economic and social forces are more stable than the often ephemeral political ones and in the long run equally, if not more, effective in shaping the course of events.[57]

Retinger remained secretary-general of the EM until April 1952.[58] In this period, he helped set up the European Youth Campaign (EYC) and was deeply involved in the work of the European Cultural Center in Geneva. He also remained active in the Eastern and Central European Commission within the EM, which he had set up with Macmillan with the aim of keeping the European nations beyond the Iron Curtain involved in European affairs.[59] In the first half of 1950, moreover, Retinger was deeply involved in the crisis of leadership concerning Duncan Sandys. Sandys' leadership at the EM was criticized as 'dictatorial' and his reluctance to keep pace with federalist plans led to resentment on the part of continental organizations such as the Union of European Federalists (UEF). In late summer, Sandys agreed to step aside, and Spaak, assisted by Retinger, took over the helm at the EM.[60]

American connections

In the summer of 1948, Retinger and Sandys had traveled to New York City to gain US backing for the new movement. They succeeded in convincing Allen Dulles, the wartime Swiss director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), to support the EM. At the time, Dulles had been involved in setting up a committee to support Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's European federalist organization, but the success of the Congress of Europe induced him to shift his support to the EM. Dulles and George Franklin Jr., the director of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), were instrumental in creating the American Committee on United Europe (ACUE) in early 1949.[61] General William Donovan, former head of the OSS, was willing to become its chairman. Franklin served as secretary of ACUE, and General Donovan convinced Thomas Braden, another former OSS operative with close ties to the European resistance movements, to become ACUE's executive director.

ACUE's list of board members reads like a 'who's who' of the US state-private network engaged in responding to the escalating Cold War.[62] Among

the people involved were General Lucius D. Clay, David Dubinsky, Arthur Goldberg, George Nebolsine, General Walter Bedell Smith, Charles M. Spofford, and Arnold J. Zurcher. A number of ACUE members ended up serving in important positions at the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after Smith became its director in October 1950. Smith recruited Dulles to become Deputy Director for Plans, and in 1951 Dulles asked Braden to join the agency as well.

The ACUE served two functions. First, it engaged in a range of public and lobbying activities to win support for European unity in the United States. Second, the ACUE responded to an urgent request for financial support by Sandys with a fund-raising campaign set off by a speech and dinner with Churchill in March 1949.[63] Initially, the ACUE relied on private contributions from wealthy supporters, such as Max Ascoli, the publisher of *The Reporter*; Nelson and David Rockefeller; and Walter Washington. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund also contributed $10,000 in August 1950.[64] In the period from February 1949 to October 1951, the ACUE raised a little over $200,000 in private contributions, about half of which had been passed on directly to a number of European organizations, including the EM.[65] The French-based European Council of Vigilance was another major recipient. At some point, the US government stepped in to provide more substantial funding for the EM's EYC.[66]

Although the details of the Truman Administration's financial support for the EM remain murky, many historians have jumped to the conclusion that ACUE was in fact a CIA front organization. The first account of CIA funding for the EM emerged in a sensationalist article published by the British magazine *Time Out* in 1975 in the midst of a British referendum campaign on EEC membership.[67] The only source for the article was a decade-old dissertation on the early years of the EM written by F. X. Rebattet, the son of EM official Georges Rebattet. In the 1990s, the British historian Richard Aldrich picked up the trail and published several influential articles on ACUE.[68] Although Aldrich uncovered valuable new information based on his extensive research in US archives, the Rebattet dissertation again turned out to be the main source for his far-reaching claims about ACUE's CIA connections. As Aldrich put it, "[…] it is the remarkable work of Rebattet, with unparalleled access to European Movement documentation, that confirms that most ACUE funds originated with the CIA."[69]

Rebattet's dissertation, in fact, does no such thing. Based solely on European archives, Rebattet's history of the EM argues convincingly that the Truman Administration stepped in to provide major funding for mainly the EM's EYC (£440,080 – around $1,2 million – in the period from May 1951 to May 1953). However, according to Rebattet, "[t]he resources of the European Youth Campaign came from the American Committee on United Europe which acted in this case as a covering organisation for the American *State Department*."[70] Aldrich's claim, moreover, that "[t]he CIA had its greatest impact on the European Movement in 1949 and 1950" is not supported by any documentary evidence.[71]