

The Bilderberg Group

An Invisible Power House

With its membership selected from the power élite of Europe and North America, many wonder if the Bilderbergers are conspiring to establish a 'new world order'.

by Armen Victorian

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Conspiracy theory writers have repeatedly linked one powerful global élite, the Bilderberg Group, with the ultimate take-over of the world. Members of the Bilderberg, together with their 'sister' organisations—the Trilateral Commission (known also as the "Child of Bilderberg")¹ and the Council on Foreign Relations²—are charged with the postwar take-over of the democratic process. The measures implemented by this group so far prove the control of the world economy through indirect political means.

The constitution of several democratic monarchies of the Western Europe bans members of their royal families from playing an active role in the political process. However, the Bilderberg meetings provide this exact forum and platform for them.

*This unprecedented period of European cooperation is more than a product of simple nation-state diplomacy. One of the key institutions that has fostered unity and cooperation with the Atlantic Community beyond the old concepts has been the Bilderberg Group.*³

*I tell you frankly that I am deeply alarmed today over the possibility that a right-wing reaction may draw some sections of capital so far away from our traditions as to imperil the entire structure of American life as we know it.*⁴

These comments by Pasymowski and Gilbert³ two decades ago may seem out of phase with the current events in former Yugoslavia, but, in terms of the continued stability of the "European State", they have proven to be largely accurate. Warfare has been removed from the intra-European systems as a means of controlling and directing nationalistic goals and ideas. Even in the case of former Yugoslavia, one observes that the current state of war has resulted from Tito's and the Soviet Union's demise. Consequently, the lid has been lifted on rivals and racial memories which had been artificially kept in place for previous decades.

The several proto-states which make up the former Yugoslavia were not part of the economic and social development programs which evolved in Western Europe. As we would see, the way in which the rest of Europe evolved and developed was very different, and for very particular reasons.

Whether co-incidence or not, it is equally ironic that the current Chairman of the Bilderberg, Lord Carrington, was the first UN-appointed representative to bring peace to the war-torn Yugoslavia.

BIRTH OF BILDERBERG

The single most important personality connected with the birth and creation of the Bilderberg Group is Joseph H. Retinger (also known as L'Eminence—His Grey Eminence). Retinger had a colourful, lifelong career that raised him to the top of the world power élites. At his funeral in 1960, Sir Edward Bedington-Behrens said:

I remember Retinger in the United States picking up the telephone and immediately making an appointment with the President, and in Europe he had complete entrée in every political circle as a kind of right acquired through trust, devotion and loyalty he inspired.

Retinger, as a Catholic, was viewed by many as an agent of the Vatican, acting in liaison between the Pope and the Father-General of the Jesuit order.

One of Retinger's renowned achievements in European politics was the founding of the European Movement, leading to the establishment of the Council of Europe on 5th May 1949. With its headquarters in Strasbourg, the Council Executive Committee provided Retinger his first major platform for his expansive ideology.

From his earlier days at the Sorbonne, Retinger believed in greater European unity, both in military and economic terms. It was also at the same time when his interest in the guid-

ance of the Jesuit order manifested itself. He spent a great deal of his time fulfilling these ambitions. He suggested to Premier Georges Clemenceau a plan to unite Eastern Europe—involving the merging of Austria, Hungary and Poland as a tripartite monarchy under the guidance of the Jesuit order. Clemenceau, doubtful of the Vatican-inspired plan, rejected Retinger's proposal outright. This plan labelled Retinger, thereafter, as a Vatican agent.

Retinger's activities were not limited to uniting Europe. Through his several trips to Mexico he played a key role in the creation of a trade union movement in the 1920s. Due to his unprecedented success, and by gaining the Mexican Government's trust, Retinger convinced them to nationalise the US oil interest in Mexico. In the process, Retinger conducted the secret negotiations with Washington for the Mexican Government.

Retinger also had an active war career. He was the political aide to General Sikorski, and served for the London-based Polish Government-in-exile. In addition, at the age of 58, he parachuted into German-occupied territory outside Warsaw for some sabotage missions.

Due to his high-profile career, in the 1950s he was able to create contacts with numerous high-ranking military officials and political leaders. His main aim was to unite the world in peace. His peace dividend was to be under the control of supernatural, powerful organisations. He believed that such organisations would be immune from short-term ideological conflicts erupting between governments. To Retinger, it was insignificant what dominated the economic ideology of a country. He believed these differences could be brought into line by powerful multinational organisations dictating and applying powerful economic and military policies, thereby creating a union and a bond between the nations.

Retinger's personal 'left-wing' views from his heady days convinced him that many leaders of newly born socialist and communist nations would be prepared to talk to him. Additionally, his Church background gave him an arena for dialogue with people from the middle-ground connections in international relations.

Nevertheless, Retinger knew that control of the world affairs cannot be achieved without US participation. In pursuit of this ideology, he began a campaign for the creation of an Atlantic Community. This would make the development of Europe an important political aim for the American politicians, thereby preventing their retreat into political isolation.

Retinger, with this in mind, set out his carefully calculated move by involving one of his close and powerful friends, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Prince Bernhard, at the time, was an important figure in the oil industry and held a major position in Royal Dutch Petroleum (Shell Oil) as well as Société Générale de Belgique—powerful global corporations.

In 1952 Retinger approached Bernhard with a proposal for a secret conference to involve the NATO leaders in an open and frank discussion on international affairs behind closed doors. The meeting would allow each participant to speak his mind freely because no media representative would be permitted inside; nor would there be any news bulletin about the meeting or the topics

discussed. Furthermore, if any leaks occurred, the journalists would be discouraged from writing about it.

Prince Bernhard fully supported Retinger's proposal for an international meeting. Consequently, they formed a committee to organise a plan. In 1952, Bernhard approached the Truman administration and briefed them about the meeting. Despite a positive reception, it was not until the Eisenhower administration when the first American counterpart group was formed. The two key role-players in the US group were General Walter Bedell Smith (Director of the CIA) and C. D. Jackson. Both (European-American) groups working interactively set out to fulfil Retinger's initial plan. From the outset, the American group was heavily influenced by the Rockefeller family, the owners of Standard Oil—competitors of Bernhard's Royal Dutch Petroleum. From then on, the Bilderberg business reflected the concerns of the oil industry in its meetings.

According to Bilderberg's draft document of 1989:

Bilderberg takes its name from the Bilderberg Hotel in Oosterbeek, Holland, where the first meeting took place in May 1954. That pioneering meeting grew out of the concern expressed by many leading citizens on both sides of the Atlantic that Western Europe and North America were not working together as closely as they should on matters of critical importance. It was felt that regular, off-the-record discussions would help create a better understanding of the complex forces and major trends affecting Western nations in the difficult postwar period.⁵

Retinger's main aim in creating Bilderberg had other more important, inherent aspects than an informal gathering of a group of the world's élite. It has been suggested that Bilderberg meetings ultimately would have implemented group dynamics techniques in the shape of a low-key international thinking group with the purpose of sensitising the less enlightened of its membership towards the new transitional diplomacy of the Cold War.

The first meeting witnessed the gathering of ideologies, poles apart. The issue

of McCarthyism was reaching its peak in the United States. European participants, exasperated with the McCarthy propaganda, saw in their American counterparts a clear political shift towards an ultra-right-wing fascist state. Memories of World War II still fresh in their minds, the Europeans found the concept rather repulsive.

C. D. Jackson (a member of the CFR), in an attempt to regain the international delegates' confidence, stated:

Whether McCarthy dies by an assassin's bullet or is eliminated in the normal American way of getting rid of boils on body politics, I prophesy that by the time we hold our next meeting he will be gone from the American scene.⁶

Nevertheless, McCarthyism proved to be a source of embarrassment for the US delegate.

OTHER GROUPS

The concept of Bilderberg was not new. Although similar groups were already in existence at the time, none attracted and

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provoked global myths the way Bilderberg has.

Groups such as Bohemian Grove, established in 1872 by San Franciscans, played an equally significant role in shaping postwar politics in the US.

*It was at the Grove, it is said, that the Manhattan Project was set up and that Eisenhower was selected as the Republicans' candidate for 1952.*⁷

The Ditchley Park Foundation was established in 1953 in Britain with the same aim.⁸

Two years earlier, in 1952, Britain's Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery had suggested the idea of a NATO command-post exercise (a paper drill; no movement of forces) to train army divisional commanders. General Eisenhower, who was then NATO's European Commander, accepted it. As a result, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe Exercise—SHAPEX—was created. Ever since, an annual meeting has been held in SHAPE headquarters near Mons, Belgium, and the subject has been broadened to incorporate a wide array of topics.

The historical review of these groups reflects a sudden flourishing trend, and the realisation by the world's leaders of the need for creation of, at times, such overt concepts. The idea of establishing such elite groups did not die with the birth of Bilderberg.

In 1957, the first of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs took place.⁹ Pandit Nehru offered to host the first meeting. The founder members were personalities such as Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein. Scientists from the United States and Soviet Union were regular participants in this East-West gathering of élites. Britain is known for its active participation and role in this group.

*The best feature of Pugwash is that it brings together people from East, West and non-aligned countries.*⁹

Pugwash proved particularly valuable at the time when the relation between East and West was at a stalemate. Many significant topics were discussed in this forum. Ways of monitoring arms control agreements, nuclear disarmament, and reduction of East-West tensions were always on the top of the agenda. In the 1970s Pugwash embraced a range of issues including biological, chemical and conventional arms control, environment and development problems as well as conflicts around the world.

One of the latest groups is the Williamsburg, better known as the Asian Window. Its first meeting was financed by the late John D. Rockefeller in 1971, and continues to date. It brings together the Asian leaders and the Americans. Williamsburg has been particularly effective for discussing Vietnam, or the Indonesian corruption, or supposedly non-existent Japanese exchange controls. Different experiences of trade with China and Russia, or how Singapore has a lower infant mortality than America, have been some of the topics in the Williamsburg forum.

Nonetheless, none of these groups—including the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilaterals—commands the influence the Bilderberg has obtained in shaping and dictating global policies.

CHAIRMANSHIP

The first [Bilderberg] meeting was convened under the chairmanship of H. R. H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, who served as chairman for twenty-two years. He was succeeded by Lord Home of the Hirsell, former Prime Minister for the United Kingdom, who chaired the meetings for four years. At the 1980 meeting, Lord Home turned over the chairmanship to Walter Scheel, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1985, Mr Scheel resigned, and was succeeded by Lord Roll of Ipsden, President of S. G. Warburg Group plc. At 1989 meeting, Lord Roll turned over the chairmanship to Lord Carrington,¹⁰ who still chairs the meetings.

CHARACTER OF BILDERBERG MEETINGS

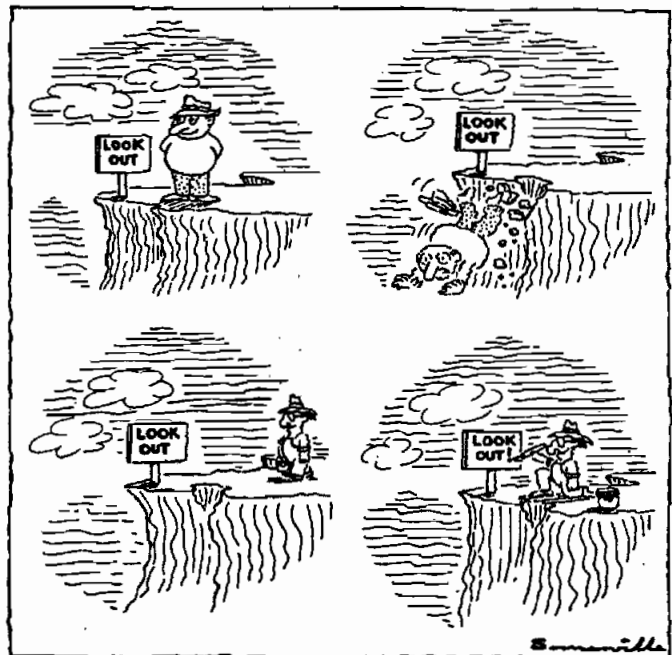
What is unique about Bilderberg as a forum is (1) the broad cross-section of leading citizens, in and out of government, that are assembled for nearly three days of informal discussion about topics of current concern especially in the fields of foreign affairs and the international economy; (2) the strong feeling among participants that, in view of the differing attitudes and experiences of the Western nations, there is a clear need to develop an understanding in which these concerns can be accommodated; and (3) the privacy of these meetings, which has no purpose other than to allow leading citizens to speak their minds openly and freely.

*In short, Bilderberg is a recognised, flexible and informal international leadership forum in which different viewpoints can be expressed and mutual understanding enhanced.*¹¹

In further recognition of this aspect, Paddy Ashdown, the Leader of the Liberal Party and a participant in the 1989 Bilderberg meeting, wrote to me:

*In view of the recent events right across Europe, this has turned out to have been an exceptionally useful opportunity to meet and discuss with many of the most expert people in the world on international relations. I found it a very stimulating and informative gathering.*¹²

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But others, such as Prince Charles, Lord Callaghan and Sir Edward Heath, were rather shy in their responses.¹³

PARTICIPANTS

There are usually 115 participants in each annual meeting. Eighty are from Western Europe and the remainder from North America. From this mixture, one-third are from government and politics, and the remaining two-thirds from industry, finance, education and communications. All the participants claim to attend the meeting in their private capacity and not as officials—though this claim, in the wake of the outcome of subsequent meetings, has proven to be highly questionable.

Participants are invited to the Bilderberg meeting by the Chairman, following his consultations and recommendations by the Steering Committee membership, the Advisory Group and the Honorary Secretaries-General. This approach ensures a full, informed and balanced discussion of the agenda items. The individuals are chosen based on their knowledge, standing and experience. The previous participants maintain that, at the meetings, no resolutions are proposed, no votes are taken and no policy statements are made.

FUNDING

The costs of the annual meetings are usually the responsibility of the Steering Committee members of the host country. But, the expenses of maintaining the Bilderberg meetings are covered entirely by private subscriptions. Although the meeting reports are published, nevertheless they are strictly for the participating members only. No reports are made available to the media.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Members' Steering Committee:

• **Chairman:** Peter, Lord Carrington—Chairman of the Board, Christie's International plc; Former Secretary-General NATO.

• **Secretary-General for Europe and Canada:** Victor Halberstadt—Professor of Public Economics, Leiden University, the Netherlands.

• **Secretary General for USA:** Theodore L. Elliot, Jr—Dean Emeritus, The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy; Former US Ambassador.

• **Treasurer:** Pieter Korteweg—President and Chief Executive Officer, Robeco Group.

• **Austria:** Peter Jankowitsch—Member of Parliament, Former Foreign Minister.

• **Belgium:** Etienne Davignon—Chairman, Société Générale de Belgique; Former Vice Chairman of the Commission of the European Communities.

• **Finland:** Jaakko Itoniemi—Managing Director, Centre for Finnish Business and Policy Studies; Former Ambassador to the USA.

• **France:** Marc Lardreit de Lacharrière—Chairman, Fimalac.

Thierry de Montbrial—Director, French Institute of International Relations; Professor of Economics, Ecole Polytechnique.

• **Germany:** Christoph Bertram—Diplomatic Correspondent, *Die Zeit*.

Hilmar Kopper—Spokesman of the Board of Managing

Directors, Deutsche Bank AG.

• **Greece:** Costa Carras—Director of companies.

• **Ireland:** Peter D. Sutherland—Chairman, Allied Irish Bank plc; Former Member, Commission of the European Communities.

• **Italy:** Mario Monti—Rector and Professor of Economics, Bocconi University, Milan.

Renato Ruggiero—Member of the Board, Fiat SpA; Former Minister of Foreign Trade.

• **Norway:** Westye Hoegh, Ship Owner, Leif Hoegh & Co AS.

• **Portugal:** Francisco Pinto Balsemao—Professor of Mass Communication, New University of Lisbon; Chairman, Sojornal sarl; Former Prime Minister.

• **Spain:** Jamie Carvajal Urquijo—Chairman and General Manager, Iberfomento.

• **Sweden:** Percy Barnevik—President and CEO, ABB Asea Brown Boveri Ltd.

• **Switzerland:** David de Pury—Chairman, BBC Brown Boveri Ltd; Co-Chairman, ABB Asea Brown Boveri Group.

• **Turkey:** Selahattin Beyazit—Director of companies.

• **United Kingdom:** Andrew Knight—Executive Chairman, News International plc.

• **United States of America:** Kenneth W. Dam—Max Pam Professor of American and Foreign Law, University of Chicago Law School; Former Deputy Secretary of State.

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr—Partner, Akin, Gump, Hauer & Field, Attorneys-at-Law; Former President, National Urban League.

Henry A. Kissinger—Former Secretary of State; Chairman, Kissinger Associates, Inc.

Charles McC. Mathias—Partner, Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue; Former

US Senator (Republican, Maryland).

Rozanne C. Whitehead—Former Deputy Secretary of State.

Lynn R. Williams—International President, United Steel Workers of America.

Cassimir A. Yost—Executive Director, The Asia Foundation's Center for Asian-Pacific Affairs.

• **United States of America/International:** James D. Wolfensohn—President, World Bank; President, James D. Wolfensohn, Inc.

Members of Advisory Group:

• **Canada:** Anthony G. S. Griffin—Director of companies.

• **Germany:** Otto Wolff von Amerongen—Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Otto Wolff Industrieberatung und Beteiligungen GmbH.

• **International:** Max Kohnstamm—Former Secretary-General, Action Committee for Europe; Former President, European University Institute.

• **Italy:** Giovanni Agnelli—Chairman, Fiat SpA.

• **Netherlands:** Ernst H. van der Beugel—Emeritus Professor of International Relations, Leiden University; Former Honorary Secretary-General of Bilderberg Meetings for Europe and Canada.

• **United Kingdom:** Lord Roll of Ipsden—President, S. G. Warburg Group plc.

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• **United States of America:** George W. Ball—Former Under-Secretary of State.

William P. Bundy—Former Editor, *Foreign Affairs*.

David Rockefeller—Chairman, Chase Manhattan Bank International Advisory Committee.

CONFERENCES, 1954-1992

- 29-31 May 1954: Oosterbeek, Netherlands.
- 18-20 March 1955: Barbizon, France.
- 23-25 September 1955: Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany.
- 11-13 May 1956: Fredensborg, Denmark.
- 15-17 February 1957: St Simons Island, Georgia, USA.
- 4-6 October 1957: Fiuggi, Italy.
- 13-15 September 1958: Buxton, England.
- 18-20 September 1959: Yesilköy, Turkey.
- 28-29 May 1960: Bürgenstock, Switzerland.
- 21-23 April 1961: St Castin, Canada.
- 18-20 May 1962: Saltsjöbaden, Sweden.
- 29-31 May 1963: Cannes, France.
- 20-22 March 1964: Williamsburg,

Virginia, USA.

- 2-4 April 1965: Villa d'Este, Italy.
- 25-27 March 1966: Wiesbaden, West Germany.
- 31 March - 2 April 1967: Cambridge, England.
- 26-28 April 1968: Mont Tremblant, Canada.
- 9-11 May 1969: Marienlyst, Denmark.
- 17-19 April 1970: Bad Ragaz, Switzerland.
- 23-25 April 1971: Woodstock, Vermont, USA.
- 21-23 April 1972: Knokke, Belgium.
- 11-13 May 1973: Saltsjöbaden, Sweden.
- 19-21 April 1974: Megève, France.
- 25-27 April 1975: Çesme, Turkey.
- 1976: No conference was held.
- 22-24 April 1977: Torquay, England.
- 21-23 April 1978: Princeton, New Jersey, USA.
- 27-29 April 1979: Baden, Austria.
- 18-20 April 1980: Aachen, West Germany.
- 15-17 May 1981: Bürgenstock, Switzerland.
- 14-16 May 1982: Sandefjord, Norway.
- 13-15 May 1983: Montebello, Canada.
- 11-13 May 1984: Saltsjöbaden, Sweden.

- 10-12 May 1985: Rye Brook, New York, USA.
- 25-27 April 1986: Gleneagles, Scotland.
- 24-26 April 1987: Villa d'Este, Italy.
- 3-5 June 1988: Telfs-Buchen, Austria.
- 12-14 May 1989: La Toja, Spain.
- 11-13 May 1990: Glen Cove, New York, USA.
- 6-9 June 1991: Baden-Baden, Germany.
- 21-24 May 1992: Evian-les-Bains, France.

Though the entire topics of the Bilderberg meetings since its establishment are known to me, listing these topics would occupy several pages, which is not within the scope of this writing. However, I should perhaps include herewith the topics of the first meeting (1954) and the 1992 meeting which, in themselves, provide an insight into the evolution of this group.

• 29-31 May 1954: Oosterbeek, the Netherlands

A. The attitude towards communism and the Soviet Union.

B. The attitude towards dependent areas

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and people overseas.

C. The attitude towards economic policies and problems.

D. The attitude towards European integration and the European Defence Community.

• 21-24 May 1992: Evian-les-Bains, France

A. Prospects for the former Soviet republics.

B. What should be done for Eastern Europe?

C. Whither the United States?

D. The world economy.

E. Whither Europe?

F. Soviet Union: the view from Moscow.

G. The migration issue.

H. The evolving west/west relationship.

Footnotes:

1. The issue concerning the history and the activities of the Trilateral Commission is a separate one to be dealt with in another paper.

2. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) requires separate attention which I would discuss in another paper. However, I should add that the CFR does not

accept non-US members.

3. Pasymowski, Eugene and Carl Gilbert, *Bilderberg: The Cold War Internationale*, 1971.

4. Charles E. Wilson, addressing the National Association of Manufacturers in 1946.

5. Extract from a Bilderberg document, given to the author, prior to its official publication, by one of the members of the Bilderberg Group. Later on, an official format was also provided to the author by another member, which proved the authenticity of the record in point.

6. Hatch, Alden, *H. R. H. Bernhard, Prince of the Netherlands*, 1962.

7. "Our Good Conference Guide", *The Economist*, December 1987.

8. The issue concerning the Ditchley Foundation requires a separate paper. For many years I have been studying this Foundation and have had the opportunity of discussing its achievements, goals and missions with several of its members and invited participants.

9. Op. cit., 7.

10. *Bilderberg Meetings, 1989*, p. 1 (Bilderberg record).

11. Op. cit. 5, p. 1.

12. Letter from Paddy Ashdown, Leader of the Liberal Party, dated 3 January 1990, to the author.

13. Former Prime Minister Lord Callaghan's letter of 19 October 1989, to the author. Former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath's letter of 1 November 1989, to the author. Letter of 30 October 1989 from St James's Palace, to the author. Prince Charles participated in the 1986 Bilderberg annual meeting held in Scotland.

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