

New Times 10-1-76

The Ruling Class

Bernhard, big business and the CIA/By Robert Scheer

There was absolutely no publicity. The hotel was ringed by security guards, so not a single journalist got within a mile of the place. The participants were pledged not to repeat publicly what was said in the discussions. Every person present, prime ministers, foreign ministers, leaders of political parties, heads of great banks and industrial companies and representatives of such international organizations as the European Coal and Steel Community, as well as academicians, was magically stripped of his office as he entered the door. . . . —From *BERNHARD Prince of the Netherlands*, by Alden Hatch. Doubleday, 1962

Recent revelations of illicit ties between Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands and the Lockheed Corporation touch only a corner of this man's murky career—a career made possible only by the support of various American presidents, top corporate leaders and the large tax-exempt foundations. The CIA, hard evidence indicates, was the catalyst in organizing this coalition behind the prince.

The CIA connection was hinted at in one recent *New York Times* story which stated that the prince had maintained an account in a CIA-funded Dutch bank that was set up by one of his closest aides, General John von Houghton, who "reportedly had ties to the CIA." The *Times* noted that "Prince Bernhard was also a close friend of Allen W. Dulles, founder of the CIA." The *Times* also cited "one reliable source close to the government" as saying that when the Dutch prime minister confronted Bernhard about wrongdoing in connection with Lockheed, the prince denied it, but added, "If you would ask me about my relations with the CIA, that would be a different matter"—which is where the *Times* let the matter drop. So far as I can determine, no one has asked the prince or the CIA about their relationship, which revolves around the prince's leadership of the very influential Bilderberg conferences (*The Ruling Class*, September 17, 1976).

The Bilderberg meetings, which have occurred every year since 1954, have been the most secretive, exclusive and influential non-official gathering of the Western European and American corporate and political elite—including President Ford, Vice-President Rockefeller and

Secretary of State Kissinger. Far removed from the public view, they have initiated such significant developments as the European Common Market, basic changes in trade, tariff and currency regulations and Western positions on "hot spots" such as Cuba and Vietnam. But I have come across evidence that none of this would have occurred had it not been for the timely intervention of the CIA in assisting Prince Bernhard in the formation of his Bilderberg group.

A shadowy character by the name of Joseph H. Retinger thought up Bilderberg and peddled the idea to Bernhard. Retinger, a Polish exile, was involved in numerous clandestine cold war operations and had extensive



International fixer Bernhard, right, with Lockheed sales exec Fred Meuser.

contact with virtually all Western intelligence agencies. One early Bilderberger, the late C. D. Jackson, who was vice-president of Time Inc., once described Retinger as a "sort of eminence grise of Europe, a Tallyrand without portfolio." Alden Hatch's laudatory biography of Bernhard, based on extensive taped conversations with the prince and researched with the full support of the royal household, says of Retinger, "Certainly he had almost as many adventures as Ian Fleming's famous secret service operative, James Bond. . . . Though his name is virtually unknown except to the initiates, he made more history in his

secret way than many a man who moved to the sound of trumpets and the howl of motorcycle sirens."

Both Retinger and Bernhard had influential contacts in the United States, and after agreeing on the scheme, the duo went off to America to enlist support. A portrait of Bernhard in the December 1970 issue of *Fortune* magazine described that trip: ". . . Retinger joined him [Bernhard] in Washington, and they proceeded, with the help of Bernhard's wartime comrade, Walter Bedell Smith, then director of the CIA, C. D. Jackson, a vice-president of Time Inc., and the late John Coleman of Burroughs, to recruit an American group."

Bernhard's connection with



C.D. Jackson of Time Inc.: the CIA's head turned Bilderberg over to him.

Bedell Smith and the CIA is described in greater detail in the prince's biography, which states that the Bilderberg idea at first received a cool response from such as Averell Harriman, who thought it was too controversial. Said Harriman: "I won't touch it. It's dynamite." Bernhard, according to his biographer, ". . . saw a number of American politicians. After several more rebuffs he went to his friend Bedell Smith, who was then head of the CIA. Smith said, 'Why the hell didn't you come to me in the first place?'" General Smith then "turned the matter over to C. D. Jackson, and things really got going." It is interesting that the head of the CIA simply "turned

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the matter over" to a vice-president of Time Inc.; the naive would have presumed that these were unrelated institutions. But, in any event, Jackson was quickly able to enlist the support of Joseph E. Johnson, the head of the Carnegie Foundation, Dean Rusk, who was then head of the Rockefeller Foundation, and banker David Rockefeller. Bernhard was made chairman of Bilderberg, and Bedell Smith and Dean Rusk became co-chairmen. Retinger was made permanent secretary.

Retinger died in 1960, but Bernhard and Bilderberg went on. Although born with the blessings of President Eisenhower, who said, "I always had one of my people go to the Bilderberg conferences," Bilderberg was even more important to subsequent administrations. The prince's biographer, writing in 1962, said that President Kennedy did more: "The present American government is even closer to Bilderberg, because President Kennedy virtually staffed the State Department with what C. D. Jackson calls 'Bilderberg alumni'—Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Undersecretary of State George W. Ball, George McGhee, Walt W. Rostow; McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Dean and Paul H. Nitze over at Defense."

This same George W. Ball is currently one of Jimmy Carter's top advisers (as is Paul Nitze) and is quoted in Bernhard's biography as saying of Bilderberg, "This is unique and without parallel. The character of the meetings has been shaped by the very devoted and astute leadership of Prince Bernhard, himself. Without his special position, intelligence and goodwill, nothing like this could come about." It does not seem unreasonable to ask Ball and the other Bilderbergers, who were so mistaken about Bernhard, to now break their vows of silence and let the rest of us in on exactly what was decided in our names at these meetings.

Just what did, in Ball's words, "come about" at the hands of Bernhard?—now exposed as an international fixer who served the needs of large American corporations and asked for million-dollar bribes in return. It is at least a fair surmise that Bilderberg, too, was a device to serve their corporate needs. And just what was the role of the CIA in assisting this unofficial coalition of the elite in planning our future? We know that the CIA has overthrown governments that displeased the multinationals, but, in the case of Bilderberg, they seem to have gone even further and been instrumental in getting high American and European officials to collude in secret sessions with the heads of large multinationals and banks to hammer out a common international ideology. ●

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