

Why Britain created NATO...

From its inception, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was intended to block real reconstruction of Western Europe through East-West cooperation, such as that favored by then-General Eisenhower and Soviet Marshal Zhukov. Instead the U.S. was convinced to commit its armed forces, under Britain's guidance, to defending Western Europe against the "Russian imperialists."

Sir Winston Churchill was warning the world of the "Russian menace" as early as the spring of 1945. In March 1946 he delivered his famous Fulton, Missouri speech, in which he called for a "fraternal association of English-speaking peoples" to share "joint use of all naval and air forces" against the Soviet Union. However, the American population rightfully looked on the Soviets as heroes and comrades in World War II, requiring a substantial British effort to undermine American-Russian relations before Churchill's announced plan could be realized. Britain's strategists also chose the Canadians to play "North American brothers" to the U.S., to convince America of the need for "collective self-defense." But Britain had to be cautious, for fear that the U.S. might retreat into "isolationism."

Canada leads off

The earliest open call for "collective self-defense" came on Aug. 13, 1947 by Canadian External Affairs representative Escott Reid, speaking before the Annual Conference of the Canadian International Conference of Public Affairs. Reid defended such a war-like pact as "consistent" with the aims and goals of the United Nations, according to Article 51 of the UN. One month later, Canadian Foreign Minister Louis St. Laurent established that Reid's remarks were official Canadian policy. That same month, in the Sept. 14 *New York Times* magazine section, then-President of the New York Council on Foreign Relations Hamilton Fish Armstrong became the first American to advocate the collective self-defense idea. Four days later, St. Laurent introduced into the United Nations a supplement to the UN Charter permitting self-defense arrangements.

Simultaneously, the British manipulated the "Greece crisis" in order to move the U.S. executive into an "anti-Communist" posture. Harry Truman's decision to intervene into the "crisis" and the March 12, 1947 "Truman

Doctrine" told the Soviets that the British had succeeded in capturing the American presidency.

J.D. Hickerson, director of European Affairs in the U.S. State Department "predicted" in October 1947 that the Council of Foreign Ministers in Europe (representing the U.S., the Soviets, France, and Britain) would fail to get a German settlement, and that this would catalyze inter-governmental discussions of a security pact. His prophecy was borne out on Dec. 15, when British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin insulted the Soviets to the point that the Soviet Union was compelled to pull out of the Council talks.

Using this "break in relations" between East and West, Bevin suggested a formula for a limited Western Union known as the Bevin Plan. This proposal, which led to the formation of the European-wide Brussels Treaty, specifically excluded the U.S. because, in Bevin's own words, demanding an American commitment at that point "might at this stage have disturbed the Senate of the U.S."

How America was manipulated

While Bevin publicly campaigned for the Brussels Treaty, however, in private he proposed that Britain, Canada, and the U.S. meet secretly in Washington, D.C. to discuss the idea of a pact under UN Charter Article 51. Bevin's proposal followed by four days British intelligence's successful "Czech project," wherein British-controlled anti-Soviet networks inside Czechoslovakia were activated to provoke the Soviets into what was called the "Czech coup." The "coup" was the opening salvo of British-directed psychological warfare against the American population. During the March 1948 period preceding the secret meetings, three "prominent" U.S. journalists went on record in favor of an alliance against the Soviets — Marquis Childs, James Reston, and Walter Lippmann.

For his part, Bevin, in proposing the tripartite secret talks, manipulated the U.S. State Department with reports of "a threatened armed attack by the Soviet Union" against Norway to cause Norway to accede to Soviet demands. A defection by Norway to the Soviet camp, wrote Bevin, "would involve the appearance of Russia on the Atlantic and the collapse of the whole Scandinavian system. This would in turn prejudice the chance

...and how the U.S. got roped in

of calling any halt to the relentless advance of Russia into Western Europe."

A highlight of the secret talks, which lasted one week from March 26 to April 1st, was a draft for a "collective self-defense agreement for the North Atlantic area." written by T.C. Achilles, chief of the division of Western European Affairs in the State Department. Achilles saw such an arrangement as the beginning of a union "to which countries of western Europe and the North Atlantic would have to surrender some degree of their national sovereignty."

The secret and controversial Achilles paper (known as the Pentagon Paper since the top secret talks were held in the basement of the Pentagon) will never come to light in detail — no country was permitted a copy to keep, the paper was classified as a State Department "memo" for concealment purposes, and the only copy disappeared!

A top negotiator for the British at these secret meetings was Donald Maclean, who subsequently defected to the Soviet Union, there operating as a British deep-penetration agent in the Soviet intelligence community. It is fair to assume that Maclean was feeding the Soviets deliberately provocative information on the secret meetings in order to heighten tensions between the U.S. and the Soviets.

The Senate bamboozled

During the three-month period immediately following the tripartite talks in Washington, Senator Vandenberg worked with the "Canadians" in the State Department to formulate a resolution praising the notion of collective self-defense. This was arm-twisted through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and adopted by the Senate on June 11, 1948. The Vandenberg Resolution, while tame in its specifics, served two purposes. First, it defined "collective self-defense" within the parameters defined by the United Nations, closing off arguments over compatibility with the UN. Second, and most important, it opened the way to bypass the U.S. Constitution, which does not permit U.S. commitment to military pacts during peacetime.

Most senators had little idea of the significance of the resolution when they passed it. Many thought it was simply a statement of support for the Brussels Treaty. But later the Vandenberg Resolution, ghost-written by Achilles and Hickerson, was used by Truman and others to convince the wary Senate to ratify the North Atlantic Treaty — since the idea for NATO grew out of a Senate initiative!

What really gave the leverage for Senate ratification of NATO was the Berlin blockade of June 18. Britain's Clement Atlee, in his *As It Happened*, was fairly direct in stating Britain's interest in provoking the incident: "And although Greece and the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia

opened the eyes of Congress quite a lot, it wasn't . . . until the Berlin Airlift that American public opinion really awakened to the facts of life. Their own troops were involved in that, you see."

As the NATO talks expanded to include France, the Netherlands, and Belgium and became public knowledge, Britain accelerated its military drive. The military body of the Brussels Treaty created the Western Union Defense Organization to begin joint military planning. British Field Marshal Montgomery was made chairman of the Commanders in Chief Committee, and Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb was made head of the Air Force. In October, the Consultative Council of the Brussels Treaty announced "a complete identity of views," and Canada formally announced its desire to join the Brussels Treaty — all placing tremendous pressure on the U.S.

As the NATO talks started up again in December, now with Luxembourg added, Dean Acheson took over as Undersecretary of State and hence as chief negotiator for the U.S. Acheson functioned virtually under the orders of British Ambassador to the U.S., Oliver Franks, consulting with Franks daily. The Canadian crew of negotiators, all working under the direction of then Prime Minister Mackenzie King, served as another conduit of British influence on the U.S. J.D. Hickerson, supposedly negotiating for the U.S., actually had been chief State Department expert on Canada for 20 years, and had a long and intimate working relationship with Lester Pearson, Hume Wrong, and other Canadian negotiators.

Nevertheless, Senate opposition to a "defense-pact" treaty loomed. In February 1949, an intense floor fight broke out over the very issue that the British had hoped could be muffled by the Vandenberg ploy—that the ratification of such a treaty was an automatic declaration of war without congressional approval, and therefore a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

The leading Senate opponent to the treaty, Senator Connally, was ordered into Truman's office and threatened by Truman and Acheson of dire consequences if Connally and his allies did not accede to ratification. Fearing that the Senate would reject the treaty outright, Truman and Acheson offered a compromise. The treaty pledge was reworded to read "such action *as it deems necessary*, including the use of armed force" to define a member country's commitment in the event of an armed attack on another member country. Connally knuckled under, and NATO was born.

Today the significance of that gesture toward the Constitution is slight, compared to the inroads NATO has made in forcing, as Achilles predicted, "surrender of national sovereignty," and the damage done to U.S.-Soviet-European relations over three decades.

— Robert Kay