

THE OLD BOYS



The American Elite and the Origins of the CIA

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Chapter 1 with Footnotes in Adobe® PDF format

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THE ROOTS OF VERSAILLES

For over a week by then the tall man had been pressing toward the border while Panzer regiments mobilized. He'd suffered through *nightmares* with better organized timetables, Allen Dulles chuckled later, rehashing the frustrations over drinks with his wartime supremo, Major General William (Wild Bill) Donovan. To conceive of the fact that months after he'd cleared his reassignment as chief of espionage in Switzerland at Bern with the OSS's Washington Planning Group, and weeks and weeks after his application reached Foggy Bottom — as late as *October* of 1942 those knuckleheaded bureaucrats still bogged him down and kept him *praying* for his Spanish transit visa! That outraged Allen, it boiled him over each time he thought about it.

And with an invasion in the offing? Allen's was a forgiving temperament, but reminiscing to intimates years later and recalling the senselessness of it all, those crafty, importunate eyes would tend to narrow angrily behind Allen's rimless spectacles, he'd pluck the pipe from his mouth, his heavy jaw trembled.

The hop he snagged had barely left New York by November 2, 1942; that late substantial British Covering Elements were starting to jockey into formation inside the Mediterranean itself. By November 5, when Dulles finally touched down on European soil at Lisbon, Nazi spotters above Algeciras were peppering Berlin with sightings of vessels from both Eastern Task Forces, already squeezing by Gibraltar to fall on French North Africa as specified by Operation Torch.

Allied intentions were obvious; exchanging pleasantries with strangers, Dulles felt his prospects tightening as kilometer by kilometer a succession of coal-burning *rapidos* crawled west across the Iberian Peninsula and started north into the

Spanish mountains and up the coast toward Vichy France.

Without *any* invasion portending, Dulles would have congratulated himself for making it across the semi-occupied Vichy underbelly of the defunct Third Republic with which the Roosevelt government still nursed its tenuous diplomatic connection. What could he expect once Operation Torch struck? The Nazis were guaranteed to roll up Vichy.

Allen and his pickup traveling companions had already crossed into France, laying over between trains, when without warning a Swiss commercial traveler in his party burst through the restaurant door and delivered the inevitable shocker: “ ‘Have you heard the news? The Americans have landed in North Africa.’ ”¹

And after that? German armor had already reached Lyons, Dulles told his wartime chief, and “it was a question whether I could get through” — Dulles took in pipesmoke: more reflective now, Mr. Chips in repose — “but I decided that having come this far I would proceed.”

A display of negligent aplomb in the face of disaster recollected was long since Dulles’s trademark. “We took the train to Cerbere,” Allen continued to Donovan. “There was a terrific excitement among the French, who had the feeling that liberation was only minutes away since our troops had landed successfully in North Africa. I had a bottle of cognac with me and so we celebrated the occasion.”

At every stopover throughout the long haul up the Rhone, Dulles slipped out of his wagon-lit until the locomotive fired up again. Nazi officials were likely to climb aboard and ransack the cars. His luck held beautifully until the customs station just short of Switzerland at Annemasse. “My Swiss friend went through the customs and told me there would be a Gestapo man there,” Allen told Wild Bill. “The Gestapo man made only a cursory inspection of other passports but he fine-tooth combed my passport, noting down the numbers and other details and

then handed it back. At that time a gendarme approached me and said that they had strict orders that no Americans were to pass the frontier. I took him in a corner and argued, pulling out all the stops — Lafayette and Washington, etc.”

Except for a minimum of administrative documentation for the American legation in Bern, Dulles was saddled with “no papers,” he assured Donovan, “no incriminating documents; also, no ‘cover’.” He *had* to shoulder through these last maddening barriers. “I had several thousand dollars worth of Swiss and French currency in my pocket; at such a time, passing the border would have been worth whatever I had to pay — but the gendarme shook his head. He did not want any money.

“The gendarme said he would ‘phone Marshal Petain at Vichy”; Dulles came back snappishly that he “had better not bother the Marshal.” A face-off was pending, that much was evident; without warning the gendarme plucked away Dulles’s passport, stated that he intended nevertheless to contact the doddering head of state, and vanished from the customs house. The hour approached noon. Perspiring into his tweeds, Allen sank into an ever-deeper apprehension.

“With only fifteen minutes left until train time” Dulles hauled to his feet, abandoned the station himself, hobbled around the enclave until he had hunted the gendarme down, and demanded to be taken at once to any available Prefect of police. The gendarme marched the increasingly desperate lawyer along the cobblestones to the nearby constabulary. The Prefect was waiting. “ ‘Go ahead,’ ” the police chief greeted him. “ ‘You see our resistance is only symbolic.’ ”

“They had been stalling,” Allen divulged to Donovan, “waiting until 12:30 when they knew the Gestapo went to lunch, so it would be safe to put me on the train!”

Allen delighted in entertaining people, and so the minutiae of his hairsbreadth insertion into Switzerland just as the frontier snapped closed was precisely the

sort of anecdote on which he happily dined out. Every element was perfect: tremendous international stakes, himself as the shrewd, unflappable protagonist, a heartwarming and redemptive ending. Dulles selected his audiences. In another, somewhat expanded version of the border-crossing incident, he confided to less discriminating listeners his worries at the time that his valise might be searched, since it allegedly contained, along with two badly rumpled suits, a sheaf of extremely compromising documents, a certified U.S. check for a million dollars, and “certain of the more esoteric devices of espionage.”² This may be accurate as well, but in his conversation with Wild Bill, Dulles never alluded to having lugged this security disaster across a well-patrolled Nazi satellite.

Like the cagey Donovan, Dulles was well aware of how a strategically applied exaggeration or two could bring the luster up on anybody’s personal legend. One postwar rendition of Dulles’s activities in Switzerland — which he himself edited — would tag him unabashedly as “the genius of the American spy group... “grandson of one U.S. Secretary of State, General John W. Foster, and the nephew of another, Robert Lansing,” whose “meteoric rise” within the Department of State had included “albeit extracurricularly and clandestinely”...“espionage networks into Austria” out of the American legation in Bern during World War I. “Thus it was that the OSS agreed with Dulles that Switzerland was the place from which he should operate.”³

For somebody with Allen Dulles’s lifelong aptitude for dissembling, the truth remained no better than another treatment of events to market as need arose. The fact was, the big, exhausted American who prowled the siding at Annemasse did not go back — *could* not go back — because his ego was battered enough by then so that the risks of pushing on seemed more acceptable than crawling home. Better internment and exile than another round of domestic captivity.

Bern! Gorgeous, the emotions it could arouse by 1942 in the depleted attorney.

For all its crumbling patrician elegance, the Swiss capital retained its reputation as the bear pit of European espionage: the place his appetites woke up, Dulles had to admit to himself, where first he uncovered in 1918 his damned near *glandular* predisposition toward espionage tradecraft and quasidiplomatic subterfuge.

As life played out, he'd slogged through eight more years in the Foreign Service in hopes of again approaching such a rush. In 1926, after grinding out a night law degree at George Washington University, the middle-aged diplomat was able to prevail on his fast-rising elder brother Foster to take him in at Sullivan and Cromwell. He'd paid for respectability.

Self-respect came hard by 1940. Allen dabbled in politics, flirted with the internationalists around the New York Republican Party and the World Affairs Council, crept through the courts by day to salvage endangered properties for the firm's big, Nazified overseas clients.

So Allen had jumped in 1941 at William Donovan's spur-of-the-moment bid to help him pull together the Manhattan offices of the Coordinator of Information, precursor to the Office of Strategic Services. To skeptical New Dealers, Dulles looked like one more uneasy concession to crisis bipartisanship: at forty-nine a stagy, balding society lawyer whose haunted sideways glances called up the aging roué with ties to the armaments cartel.

Accordingly, Wild Bill proved more than understanding when Dulles himself proposed to finish out the war as OSS station chief in Bern.

He'd picked Manhattan clean, that Dulles himself realized, gimping along the tracks of Annemasse. Tension made his gout flare up. Discontent was eroding him; close as he was, the fountains and arcades of Bern had started his blood pounding.

His was a generation — Allen hoisted his grip into place — not lost so much as *preoccupied* much of the time. They'd enjoyed a false start, a premature

breakthrough. How had they contracted it, this parasite of overexpectation? Why wasn't traditional success — respectable law practices, big money from investment banking — why wasn't anything satisfactory? What were they after in the end, these prodigies of a century that opened with the English hegemony, then confusingly turned American?

If one could identify the place the future broke through, undoubtedly it was Paris that first season after the guns went quiet. National attitudes tipped everything off, that Peace Conference spring of 1919. To astute Europeans, high civilization was over. For most of the United States contingent — a rabble numbering up to 1,300 when delegations overlapped, an infestation which took over wholesale the Hotel Crillon and popped in and out between commission meetings and twilight cocktails at the *bôîtes* and receptions for the Maharajah of Bikaner, all relieved when time allowed by rest periods in delightfully specialized bordellos — that spring constituted America's geopolitical coming-out party. We had been bystanders since Columbus. Now we were participants.

So much began there. It was a fireworks of aspirant reputations colliding, as month after month they battered at The Treaty. Think of the names that emerged — the outrageous and irresistible Bill Bullitt, Christian Herter, Walter Lippmann, Jean Monnet, John Maynard Keynes, Dulles's implacable brother Foster. Who could imagine better?

Allen's train approached Geneva.



In later years muckrakers tended to disparage the Dulles brothers by maintaining that neither of them would ever have made it to Versailles had not their mother's brother, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, prodded their careers along. Contemporaries brush that off — the brothers were already on their way inside the conflicted wartime bureaucracies of the Wilson administration,

Foster on the economic side and the inventive Allen manipulating away in Bern. The quickest way to the top was information from tested sources, interpreted quickly, then simplified, then conferred on grateful, overworked superiors. America was emerging unbelievably, an overnight world power, intelligence represented currency, and in fact there wasn't much mileage by 1919 to "Uncle Bertie's coattails," no matter how it looked.

More appropriately, credit Wilson. The U.S. President had set out originally for France in December 1918 to open the conference he insisted would end war forever. To millions on both sides, this juiceless Presbyterian academic epitomized what he himself had labeled a "peace without victory." Millions — too often the best — died, and with them order. Wilson understood their anguish. Here was a leader after all who traveled with a bible and a stomach pump, "like a Nonconformist minister," as Keynes noted, whose "thought and temperament were essentially theological not intellectual, with all the strength and weakness of that manner of thought, feeling and expression."⁴

Yet close up, this savior of Western Civilization revealed an unanticipated pettiness of character. "He takes every opportunity of sowing ill feeling between [his closest adviser Colonel Edward] House and Lansing," Stephen Bonsal noticed. "Why the President brought Mr. Lansing to Paris is an enigma, unless it was with the malicious purpose of heaping indignities upon him and seeing him squirm. He overlooks the slights, he ignores them, or, more probably he pretends to."⁵

Around Paris very often Lansing had been reduced to doodling wicked caricatures, to complaining sotto voce about the President's corrosive humorlessness. Insider sops and misinformation provided by British Admiralty agents helped Lansing move up from Department counselor to Secretary of State just after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Subordinates pronounced Lansing sweet-tempered but lack-luster, vain about his unconvincing British accent, and unreliable with

details.⁶ Before long the leverage in policy-making had shifted to Colonel Edward House.

House could fool you. A small, soft, ingratiating man with the forlorn proportions of a giant rodent, even House's rank — an honorific from the Texas legislature — deserved a corroboratory look. What the self-effacing Colonel was really masterful at was playing people off against one another, and early in the Wilson administration House understood that dominance depended on cornering the information flow.⁷

Lansing understood that too; a fitful fellow, the Secretary tried to raise up State as a clearinghouse for intelligence throughout the government. Then he lost interest, so that the day-to-day coordinator of intelligence around the Department became a pair of Groton-trained veterans, Department counselor Frank L. Polk and Gordon Auchincloss.⁸ Reports and appraisals poured in: from the regional desks; from the reinvigorated Military Intelligence Division of Colonel Ralph H. Van Deman (who, coached by the bruising British intelligence consultant Lieutenant Colonel Claude Dansey, had perfected the attaché system and brought in Herbert Yardley to found the “Black Chamber” code-breaking section); from the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Secret Service, the Bureau of Investigation, the Treasury gumshoes, and increasingly from John Lord O'Brian's War Emergency Division, which struggled to reimpose civilian control on the vigilantes and counterintelligence fanatics the military authorities churned up.⁹

Gordon Auchincloss was Colonel House's son-in-law, but that didn't incline the Colonel to trust those timeservers around State. Furthermore, House quickly discovered, most nourishing to policymakers was what boiled into analysis. Accordingly, at Wilson's instigation, early in the autumn of 1917 House authorized the formation in New York of a clandestine, high-power study group comprised largely of academics and known as The Inquiry to research the combatants, define

American war aims, and project a reconstituted Europe along Wilsonian principles. The Bolshevik takeover in November quickly gave The Inquiry scorching urgency. By October of the following year, 126 executives and research collaborators were pouring it on behind guarded doors at the American Geographical Society on Broadway. Under director Sidney Mezes — president of City College as well as Colonel House’s brother-in-law — and Executive Officer Isaiah Bowman of the Geographical Society, the up-and-coming journalist Walter Lippmann took hold as Secretary of The Inquiry.¹⁰

Along with every other Wilsonian power center, The Inquiry was quick to attract the ubiquitous British Secret Service attaché, the all-seeing Sir William Wiseman. Colonel House went along and authorized for Wiseman a reciprocal connection between his Inquiry braintrust and the political intelligence specialists of the British Foreign Office.

The armistice had scarcely been agreed to when Wilson started staffing the upcoming Paris negotiations. Many of the aspirants who joined him on the U.S.S. *George Washington* served time on these overlapping intelligence instrumentalities. Lansing oversaw the State Department delegation, equally overbalanced with careerists hastily primed in counterespionage techniques: Joseph Grew, Leland Harrison, and Philip Pachin went along as Wilson’s executive staff.¹¹ State included its Russian man, Frederick Dolbeare. Among The Inquiry veterans no less than twenty-three analysts snagged berths on Wilson’s overloaded “peace ship,” broken down into regional desks almost like a portable State Department. Under General Marlborough Churchill’s command, the hound-faced Ralph Van Deman and *his* military experts were especially conspicuous roaming the brocaded Louis XVI *fauteuils* in Sam Browne belts and tailored riding britches.

Like the disgruntled Keynes, most of the Inquiry academics winced as provisional drafts of position papers were picked up cold by French and British

revenge seekers and locked in solid as terms to be imposed, a “final treaty,” as Charles Mee has written, to be “thrust upon the Germans, and they would be forced to take it.”¹² On March 13 Wilson returned to Paris to confront a document which flouted virtually every principle on which he staked his international reputation.

By then the State Department experts and Inquiry alumni had merged, pretty largely to Colonel House’s advantage. Wilson made it plain, according to the colonel’s diary, that it was not merely Lansing’s heart problems or his incontrovertible stupidity but even more his *associations* — “mostly society folk and reactionaries”¹³ — which made it advisable for House to deal with everything. House endorsed, as usual, his President’s trenchant insights.

A number of the Colonel’s slickest political moves he got from William Christian Bullitt, a compact, opinionated Philadelphia scion, still in his twenties, whose distinguished (if receding) hairline, lingering bedroom eyes, and gift for outrageous repartee in several important European languages made most other Peace Commission participants appear hayseeds by comparison. The cocksure, internationally connected Philadelphia patrician had survived a childhood of foreign governesses followed by four years at Yale. He listed as forebears an assortment of distinguished Americans from Pocahontas to the Jewish-Episcopalian dignitaries on his mother’s side, the cultivated Horwitz faction. Bullitt endured a sniff of Harvard law school before the death of his father released him from *that* to ramble through the capitals of Europe as a war correspondent with his striking Society bride, Ernesta Drinker.

“Rising from the rich,”¹⁴ as one co-worker commented, Bullitt began the war emergency as chief of the Washington Bureau of *The Philadelphia Ledger*. There he cultivated House, who enticed this self-styled peace radical into the State Department and installed him as kingpin of its Bureau of Central European Information. As soon as Germany collapsed, Bullitt scavenged for backup personnel

among contacts like his history instructor at Yale, Charles Seymour (already moiling away full time with *The Inquiry* at that point); thus, by the time the delegation set sail for Europe, Seymour was in charge of the critical Austro-Hungarian section.

It was to understudy Charles Seymour in Paris that the State Department came up with the twenty-six-year-old foreign service officer Allen Welch Dulles. Apart from his mother's relations, Allen's clergyman father was the nephew of John Welch, Hayes's envoy to England. Dulles had become conversant with Central European affairs through postings in Vienna, Seymour discovered from Department records, and the ebullient youngster had made himself felt in Bern soon after the United States joined the Allies. Seymour's own exalted position, as he wrote his wife at the time, "was due to a *coup de force* on the part of Wilson [read House]. Lansing was determined that we should all be pushed off to the side and had made all arrangements to have control put in the hands of his own men; Austria, for example, was to have been in the hands of Dulles, who is now to be my assistant." Dulles was "Lansing's nephew and of a diplomatic family," Seymour noted. "But he is, nevertheless, absolutely first-class — just as nice as he can be — young — very willing to work in any capacity, and very well acquainted with politics and persons in Austria."¹⁵

A group photograph survives of the U.S. Government's Current Diplomatic and Political Correspondence Staff — one of Allen Dulles's committees in Paris — and he is posed advantageously in the back row. The fledgling diplomat's long prognathous lower face is mitigated by a moustache so deep and curling as to approach the villainous; his hair is close-trimmed, crinkly; his gaze casts demurely downward, as befits a very junior officer. There is the suggestion, even then, that Dulles had more in view than reissuing passports.¹⁶

In Paris the winter of 1919 House quickly appointed Bullitt his Chief of

the Division of Current Intelligence Summaries, and charged the journalist each morning to brief the top-level Americans, Woodrow Wilson included. Seymour, Christian Herter, and Dulles served on the division's thirteen-man analytic staff, and pulled together filler for Bullitt's daily presentations. "Dulles is working out very well," Seymour wrote soon afterwards. "I leave him to himself as he knows all about political intelligence and I know little. I like his point of view and the advice he gives out."¹⁷

Seymour too had started out regarding Robert Lansing as "stupid," and largely ignorant of conditions "over here." As for Lansing's nephew? Allen — along with his State Department colleague, Christian Herter — remained cordial and tolerant of the academicians, and there were dinners at La Rue's on Allen's tab as well as lunches at the Ritz during which Allen discreetly brought Vance McCormick and his Uncle Robert together with the ever-better-disposed Seymour. Seymour would soon confess himself lost when Dulles was absent briefly and there was no one with whom to discuss the crisis in Hungary or break down the cable traffic and compose a digest. When Dulles wasn't dictating to the two secretaries he imported from Bern he tended to diplomatic niceties like rushing to the Gare de l'Est to hand the Paderewskis onto their Warsaw train.

As Seymour had divined, for all House's patronage, he remained the neophyte when it came to complexities out there. Dulles was the intelligence mandarin in their group. While stationed in Vienna, he had won over his superiors to back-channel approaches to dissident elements in Austria. From Paris Dulles monitored developments across the East, and installed a de-facto cable desk to keep himself up-to-the-minute. His military informant in Vienna, U.S. Army Captain Walter Davis, typically filled him in with detailed political appreciations salted lightly with gossip and gripes, from Polish maneuvering to grab Teschen from Austria to rumors that the British and French were draining off refugees for labor in their colonies.¹⁸

Dulles kept himself detached and agreeable when others exploded, solicitous of every backer, and adroit at evading unnecessary fuss or confrontation.

This aptitude for currying favor artfully was characteristic of the resourceful Allen. There is an album photo of four of the Dulles children rafting on Henderson Harbor. The surface is choppy; behind his sisters in their fanning Sunday dresses and black stockings, little Allen peers out unsteadily, round-faced and impressionable, a tot in knickers whose mouth looks pinched, overwhelmed. Poling the slippery timbers along — preternaturally grim, blank, almost scornful — the eight-year-old John Foster Dulles stands above them all, in precise balance and totally in charge, the complete older brother.

In later years his sisters would remember the lanky Allen as moody and difficult to depend on much of the time, a self-serving adolescent who showed no compunction about exaggerating the touch of gout in his surgically corrected left club foot if that was what it took to raise a laugh or placate a discomfited elder.¹⁹ The boy grew up in remote Watertown, New York, squirming under the eye of a watchful Presbyterian cleric of a father who was himself the offspring of a missionary and struggled against the impulse to interpret baby Allie's malformed foot as ominous and shameful.²⁰ The worried pastor brooded over the opportunistic streak in Allen, the hints of fleshiness behind his nonchalance, and although Allen traipsed into Princeton after the august Foster and showed up in classrooms enough to graduate and even garner a quick M.A., the conviction was mounting around the family that where it really counted Allen was slack if not desultory, he rushed his school preparations, he postured before girls. Allen lacked grip.

Nor was the pastor encouraged when Allen availed himself of a Princeton stipend and drifted around the Orient for a couple of years, indulging the White Man's Burden while distributing bibles and dabbling at briefly at school-teaching at outposts of the British in India and China before he bobbed up in Watertown

again in 1915, loose-jointed and detached as ever, running out of options. By then Robert (“Uncle Bertie”) Lansing, the mobile, natty lawyer who married old John Watson Foster’s other daughter, had reached the top at State. Lansing broached a diplomatic career. Very little else beckoned: Allen underwent what testing there was and took his modest place inside the venerable Department.

The training months passed; he served in Vienna; for Allen the revelation came just as that flat black Kiplingesque moustache of his came in as personal as a sneer across his long upper lip. By then America’s involvement on the Allied side found Allen positioned happily along the buzzing margin of the war as Third Secretary of the U.S. diplomatic mission to Switzerland, in Bern.

Bern resonated with opportunity. Clandestine possibilities invaded Allen’s imagination; accordingly, his pulses reportedly hammered the day the stiff First Secretary of the Legation in Bern, Hugh Wilson, summoned Allen and sloughed off on him the diffuse intelligence mission. “Keep your eyes open,” Wilson instructed the stripling diplomat. “The place is swarming with spies.”²¹

Several incidents became standbys. There is the tale of the pretty, good-natured Czech girl who helped out in the Legation’s code room until British counterintelligence satisfied itself that she was blackmailed by the Austrians. Allen had been taking her out; by prearrangement one evening he bought her dinner. The two then ambled together in the direction of the Old Town, where Allen fed her to a couple of operatives from the Secret Intelligence Service lying low just outside the historic Nydegg Church.

Another anecdote Dulles loved to embroider involved his brush with Lenin. The Bolshevik was stranded in Bern for an afternoon and telephoned the Legation urgently in hopes of a few words with the resident Americans. Lenin’s accent was glottal, uninflected, hard to make out; Dulles fluffed him off. Tomorrow perhaps. He had a tennis date. But the following morning Lenin undertook his

one-way train ride courtesy of the German General Staff, headed toward the Finland station.

“Intelligence” bore, Dulles saw, on more than recirculated émigré gossip, on back-alley payoffs in return for a peek at documents or notes after pillow talk. Before the troops marched (and as often as otherwise before diplomatic appreciations made their interminable way from desk to desk) a kind of low-grade sounding-out process seemed to be going on incessantly. Accurate readings in advance could condition a nation’s responses, even predispose major outcomes.

Dulles found himself alone at times before the possibilities espionage presented. Largely on his own he pasted together and ran nets of dissident Yugoslavs and Czechs in and out of Austria. Between his frock-coated political appointee of a U.S. ambassador, Alexander Stovall, and the indifferent Hugh Wilson, the enterprising young third secretary spotted openings nobody around really cared about. In January of 1918 Dulles cabled his overseers at State complaining about the shortage of specialists in Bern to study “at first hand the problem of nationalities and to determine where justice lies in the various claims of the European races and nations, especially the Slavs.”²² Browsing Bern’s reception circuit, Allen cultivated the hangers-on gravitating to the breakaway Czech intellectuals Thomas Masaryk and Eduard Benes, picked up the rush of devotion behind Ignace Paderewski, in perpetual transit for a resurgent Poland.

Statesmen vacillated; factions competed; anything — a touch of snideness in a misrouted telegram, a wink over dinner — could sink the wrong scale, permanently. Around The Inquiry itself, House’s scholars were already resolved to throw their influence behind an independent Czechoslovakia and an independent Hungary. Lansing discerned little advantage in basting together the moth-eaten Dual Monarchy; Admiralty case officer Guy Gault was running the naturalized American Emmanuel Voska, who proceeded under State Department auspices to

clap into place a Slav press bureau with 1,200 branches and 70,000 contributors in hopes of fomenting an uprising against the Hapsburgs.²³ Voska's contacts with Masaryk dragged United States policymakers in behind the Czech Legion, stranded in the Ukraine, a pretext for desultory Western intervention in the spreading Russian civil war.

One promoted one's opportunities. Allen Dulles had an uncanny way already of edging into important deliberations, an awareness nobody quite expected of this nonchalant Watertown High graduate, his bumpy plowboy's face enameled with restraint and cunning as he identified valuable contacts among the mélange of favor-seekers and would-be negotiating partners swarming through the Legation just then. According to the middleman Dr. Heinrich Lammasch, it was the low-key but unremitting Third Secretary Dulles who tempted Holland's recent Minister of Justice, Dr. De Long van Beek en Donk, into sponsoring a series of undisclosed meetings at the villa of a Krupp director in a Bern suburb to look into the possibility of transforming the Dual Monarchy into some manner of United States of Austria.²⁴

The Hapsburgs would desert Germany in return for an American commitment. Subsidized by the United States — which brought over to Europe the President's close advisor Professor George D. Herron to impart Wilson's vital imprimatur — this updated Hapsburg sovereignty must commit in advance to eradicating the Bolsheviks. A revitalized Austro-Hungarian buffer zone to fend off Soviet penetration of the Balkans turned into a lifelong chimera for Dulles, and spurred his devotion over the many years to some manner of "Danubian Federation." Better to reupholster authoritarians than risk something unmanageable.

Yet once the breakup became inevitable, Allen — characteristically — could not be bothered to look back. At Paris he fit right in as an influential member of the Czechoslovak boundary commission, and included the Sudetan highlands in the

nation he tended to brush off afterwards as having looked “something like a banana lying across the map there in Central Europe.”²⁵ Voska was still agitating; Dulles opposed Allied sponsorship of the Germanophobe’s insertion into Prague. Voska was inherently disruptive. Allen was quite active just then tossing off memoranda with titles like “Lithuania and Poland, the Last Barrier between Germany and the Bolsheviki,”²⁶ which agitated for military intervention against the Reds.



Allen’s older, weightier brother had long since taken to heaving high his own picket against the presumptuous Bolsheviki. By 1919 the thirty-one-year-old John Foster Dulles bore very little similarity to the dreamy-lidded pubescent who wandered into Princeton at fifteen only to find himself a pariah around the eating clubs, a tongue-tied scholarship grind whose shaky Watertown education and flat, defensive mannerisms invited a career of weekends in the library.²⁷ Foster’s grade-average held up nicely, a performance to catch the eye of Princeton’s exacting president Woodrow Wilson, who granted the prodigy his leave of absence in 1907 to serve on his grandfather’s delegation to the Hague Conference in the guise of a translator of French.

During Foster’s postgraduate year in Paris he first affected the umbrella and the bowler hat which convinced decades of bystanders that he was associated in some capacity with the English clergy. In 1911, just out of George Washington Law School, something about this clumsy youngster’s presentation — big, tense, righteous, a world-class word-swallower and more than a little bit backwoods in his way of bearing down on problems — put off the interviewing partner at Sullivan and Cromwell. The interviewer rejected Foster. The aspirant lawyer thrashed inwardly before the insult, and called in his grandfather to plead with William Nelson Cromwell until the thankful if humiliated clerk went onto the rolls at fifty dollars a month.

Foster dug in immediately and shouldered the heavy traveling responsibilities it took to service the firm's important Latin American clientele — Sullivan and Cromwell conjured up the power play which created the Panama canal — married his pretty, docile Watertown neighbor Janet Avery, and crunched toward reputation. There remained that country-relative aspect to Dulles, little came of itself, and so when Uncle Bert Lansing recruited him to poke around the Central American capitals early in 1917 to determine whether the Latinos were ready to cooperate in the event of war against Germany, Foster grabbed this opportunity to make the most of family connections and demonstrate how effectively he too could contribute when national interests summoned.

A prewar business trip to British Guiana brought on a case of malaria so acute that the extraordinary dosage of quinine it took to save his life afflicted an optic nerve, and left the forceful young litigator with severely weakened vision, a distracting tic, and a tendency to water from the left eye — “Foster's crocodile tears,” as subsequent negotiating partners would refer to them.²⁸ The impairment ruled out front-line duty, but Dulles quickly wangled for himself a direct commission as a major and put in a year in Washington at the War Trade Board under Vance McCormick, the abrasive Harvester heir who supervised the Democratic National Committee.

Dulles looked after commercial relations with neutrals and directed a three-man committee McCormick founded to scrutinize the obstreperous oligarchy under Lenin, barely chivied into power. Dulles's committee rushed licenses through to expedite the shipment of weapons and supplies to the Czech brigades fighting alongside the anti-Soviet Russians; he served as secretary and treasurer of the U.S. Government-backed Russian Bureau, Incorporated, which dispensed \$5 million worth of equipment after midsummer of 1918 in hopes of suffocating the revolutionaries.²⁹

Fearful of nepotism charges, the increasingly out-of favor Uncle Bertie turned down Foster's request to join the State Department contingent on the Commission to Negotiate the Peace in Paris. Foster quickly persuaded Bernie Baruch, the wartime head of the War Industries Board, to take him on as delegation counsel to the American side of the controversial Allied Reparations Commission. With this Dulles's real international career began. He brought Janet along to Paris to watch him weigh in. Foster travelled surprisingly; Arthur Krock would document the emergence of unexpected civilities in his big, owlsh Princeton classmate once he was relieved of career stresses: unusually relaxed, on cordial personal terms with all the participants up to and including Wilson, overall "witty and merry and very, very companionable," and inclined to unpredictable surges of heavy-duty jocularly over the afternoon whisky he preferred to stir with a ponderous forefinger.³⁰

Contradictory reports needed reconciliation. The head of the newly formed Central Bureau of Planning and Statistics, Edwin Gay, deputized Foster to square the Inquiry crowd with material from State and the military. Squabbles quickly broke out when Foster, as Wilson remarked with some pique, succeeded in entrenching himself as the "exclusive channel of statistical communication from Washington to the Peace Conference" as well as the principal intermediary between the American economic advisors and the intelligence faction.³¹

Foster Dulles had showed up initially in Washington little better than a glorified Manhattan errand boy with well-placed relatives. His months in Paris legitimized Foster to the emerging postwar power structure, kept him in daily working contact with leaders who appreciated that milling-machine intellect, his gift for breaking down and reconciling positions, his chilly, assured touch. He proceeded between meetings with an uncommon *mien* for somebody so young, his eyes set low and complacent behind his steel-rimmed spectacles, lips chiseled,

aura censorious. Underlings who presumed on Foster could find him stolid as a carp.

As the negotiations proceeded Foster's dinner companions came to include the restive Keynes and Jean Monnet, the petit, inventive French armament negotiator. The three agreed quickly that what was emerging as Allied reparations policy toward Germany was tantamount, in Foster's words, to expecting "the policeman to receive his hire from the wrongdoer"³² — an absurdity, a distortion, an invitation to chaos.

Europe was already fragile. That winter of 1919 there erupted like bedsores an outbreak of localized Communist takeovers in Central Europe, most sensationally the Spartakus revolt in Berlin and the Hungarian dictatorship of Bela Kun. Foster helped the Finance Commission frustrate Kun's attempts to liquidate Hungarian securities. He again seconded Vance McCormick, who directed the Western effort to blockade Russia, pressure neutrals to cut off trade with the Leninists, and attach Russian assets in the United States so they could be redirected to the anti-Bolshevik Whites in Siberia under Admiral Kolchak.³³

You could trust Foster. He understood deportment; newly married, he remained emphatically uxorious, suffered for important clients, lived sternly by bromides it never really occurred to him to review as times changed. He preferred his vacations in the wilds, saltwater sailing and jigging for pike. Other U.S. comers around the conference, from Adolf Berle to Walter Lippmann, and Robert Taft and Arthur Krock and Edward Bernays and Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Morgenthau, Sr. and Herbert Hoover, left impressed by Foster's somber force. Foster breathed precepts, yet even at that stage he discerned no inherent conflict between buying in and selling out.

People respected Foster, but people liked Allen — Allie — who luxuriated in the parties which permeated this season of victory, the elaborate teas and evenings

in white tie and gala performances at the opera. Puccini was in town, along with Sarah Bernhardt and Ho Chi Minh.

Diplomatically, Paris crackled. As mandates passed around, opportunistic supplicants like Chaim Weizmann moved discreetly to cash in the Balfour Declaration on a Zionist state in Palestine both as a homeland for the Jews and a reliable fueling station, as Balfour himself foresaw, beside “the wasp waist of our empire, Suez.”³⁴ A Ukranian delegation lobbied for a new state independent of the Russians alongside the Dnieper. New nations seemed to be emerging hourly that giddy spring in Paris, an entire century loose for the taking.

For the apprehensive Germans the long-dreaded moment of capitulation arrived on June 23, 1919, in the barrel-vaulted Hall of Mirrors at Versailles where Bismarck had humbled the French in 1871. The youthful Allen Dulles, standing close enough in the jammed hall to observe the frightened, haggard leader of the Weimar delegation, saw how his knees were trembling, how unstrung he appeared. To ratify this, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had insisted, meant signing “the death sentence of millions of German men, women, and children.”³⁵ The weight of everything that had been heaped upon his country was more than the count could support just then, Allen told people afterward, and kept him crushed into his chair.

That spring in Paris Allen Dulles missed very little. Years later General Walter Bedell Smith would reportedly maintain that Allen had lost his head over a gifted demimondaine who spread her wares at the infamous brothel the Sphynx. He set her up for himself in an apartment in Montparnasse.³⁶ Even then, Beedle Smith snorted, Allen was a great fellow for short-term infatuations. Smith was Allen’s boss for a time at the CIA, and grew quite choleric over Allen’s ineradicable offhandedness.

Foster wasn’t pleased either, of course, but Allen was a mixer, and sociability

opened doors. Before the year was out Foster arranged a business trip to visit his worldly younger brother at his next State Department post, Berlin, where Foster inaugurated his durable relationship with Hitler's financial wizard Hjalmar Schacht. Foster hung around, fascinated, to watch the right-extremist Kapp putsch break across the capital.

While the conferees debated in 1919, Lenin's seizure of power in Russia hardened into a second year. Especially to the Anglo-Saxons, the threat from Bolshevism was already eclipsing every postwar horizon.

Wilson himself remained philosophical. "My policy regarding Russia," Wilson informed William Wiseman, prodding for additional arms for the Allied landings, "is very similar to my Mexican policy. I believe in letting them work out their own salvation, even though they wallow in anarchy for a while."³⁷

Nor did the uprisings in Hungary and Berlin shake Wilson. History remained God's trash collector. "The only way I can explain the susceptibility of the people of Europe to the poisons of Bolshevism is that their governments have been run for the wrong purposes," he told Charles Seymour.³⁸

Yet halfway into the conference there arose a panic, as Wilson confidant Stephen Bonsal wrote in his journal, that "The Reds are now in control in Budapest and in much of Russia, and they also seem to be sweeping all resistance before them in the Ukraine..."³⁹

Envoys rushed East. Under Jan Smuts a British fact-finding mission proceeded to Budapest by rail. Harold Nicolson sniffed at Kun's "puffy white face and loose wet lips," along with his shaved head and shifty eyes: "the face of a sulky and uncertain criminal. He has with him a little oily Jew — fur coat rather moth-eaten — stringy green tie — dirty collar. He is their Foreign Secretary."⁴⁰ Kun lasted until August, when Admiral Horthy, who unleashed the White Terror, brought back the trappings of the traditional Hungarian monarchy.

Uprisings roiled Germany unceasingly those desperate postwar months — Kiel, Munich, Berlin, the Rhineland — and alongside the impulse to punish the Germans was the widening recognition that the loss of Germany as its economic flywheel could paralyze Europe. As early as February of 1919 Joseph Grew was lamenting to William Phillips that “there is hostility from all sides to our [State’s] policy of relaxing the blockade and building up German industry.”⁴¹

Some of this pressure could perhaps be eased if one way or another Lenin could be placated. Among Inquiry veterans the “general undercurrent of opinion” inclined toward overtures to the Reds.⁴² It was against this possibility that William Bullitt undertook his pilgrimage to Moscow. Bill Bullitt was twenty-eight, but certainly he looked older — seemed older — what with his hair already going fast, so that the surviving forelock was plastered between his shining temples and conferred rather an ennobling if not a positively cherubic glow to the Philadelphia aristocrat’s briskness, his brashness, the way his mobile features intensified with an almost simian inclination to mischief whenever something attracted his ever-ready appetite for ridicule. Bullitt loved to play the patrician iconoclast.⁴³

Virtually from the outset, the Philadelphia enthusiast had regarded the Bolsheviks in Russia as full of possibilities, and disparaged the assortment of “gentleman investors now working on the President”⁴⁴ who received word of *any* popular outbreak with all the sanctimoniousness of fumigators scooping up rat droppings. As early as February of 1918 Bullitt urged on House his notion that “it is obvious that no words could so effectively stamp the President’s address with uncompromising liberalism as would the act of recognizing the Bolsheviks.”⁴⁵ Once Wilson returned for a time to Washington, Colonel House called Bullitt to his suite and informed him that the President and Lloyd George had resolved to dispatch a secret mission, behind Clemenceau’s back, to seek out Lenin and ask after terms. With a small party which included the aging muckraker

Lincoln Steffens, Bullitt found his way to Moscow. When Steffens challenged the unassuming Lenin as to his dependence on widespread terror and mass killings to cow the populace, the revolutionary took brisk offense: “Do you mean to tell me that those men who have just generated the slaughter of seventeen millions of men in a purposeless war are concerned over the few thousands who have been killed in a revolution with a conscious aim...?”⁴⁶

Astonishingly, the Bolsheviks were indeed prepared to strike a deal. If the Western nations would withdraw their forces, abandon the Whites, and end the blockade, Lenin promised to leave the anti-Soviet factions from Siberia to the Ukraine in charge of territory they already controlled and pay the Tzar’s debts. Bullitt bounded back to Paris and laid out his triumph over breakfast with Lloyd George — Wilson had a headache that morning. By then the Northcliffe newspapers in England were bannering the Old Guard’s determination that Lenin and his crowd must go, Churchill was in full voice, and the ever-flexible Lloyd George stood up after coffee and disavowed the entire initiative, implying that the Bullitt mission was something of a surprise to him. Wilson remained quite miffed that *he* hadn’t seen the peace bid first. Lenin’s historic proposal collapsed, unconsidered.⁴⁷

Having worshiped Wilson, Bullitt took his miscue hard. He pored over the treaty terms as soon as they were available, haughtily informed House that “This isn’t a treaty of peace; I see at least eleven wars in it,” and sailed for New York to elaborate on his disapproval before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His 139 pages of detailed testimony were instrumental in undermining Wilson’s position, and in due course the Senate both refused to ratify the treaty and shunned the League of Nations. Democrats still with Wilson despised Bullitt, who withdrew from public life ranting about his idol who “ratted at Versailles.”⁴⁸

Policymakers in the West decided that negotiations had become extraneous. Rosa Luxemburg and Bela Kun were turning out to be as vulnerable as any other

disturber of the established order to militia slugs and soldiers of fortune. Great Britain now concentrated its Secret Intelligence Service on mechanisms to spy on, discredit, and wherever possible subvert the ominous Soviet regime. France adopted the direct approach, and before the end of 1920 a boundary dispute between Poland and Russia had triggered an invasion by Polish troops — directed by a large French staff commanded by General Weygand — which pushed on most of the way to Moscow, and enlarged Poland substantially. Wilson died. John Foster Dulles reembraced the law; William Bullitt divorced and remarried. The seeds of Versailles began striking their tangled roots.

CHAPTER ONE FOOTNOTES

1. William Donovan personal files, private memoir of 1947 conversation with Allen Dulles, Carlisle Barracks Archive, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Switzerland section, Folder 82, Box 120B. Successive running quotes from same source.
2. Leonard Mosley, Dulles, p. 131.
3. Allen Dulles papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University, self-edited article on exploits in Switzerland, accompanies Medal of Merit Citation, 1946, Box 19.
4. John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 42.
5. Stephen Bonsal, *Unfinished Business*, p. 47.
6. This material largely from Leonard Mosley's family biography, *Dulles*, pp. 35-38 et al. Mosley is not always a reliable source, but this material squares with primary documents.
7. Treatment of House from many sources, perhaps the most useful having been Robert Ferrell's solid *Woodrow Wilson and World War I*.
8. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *American Espionage*, p. 44.
9. William Corson, *The Armies of Ignorance*, p. 57 et al.
10. Lawrence Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, p. 41.
11. Joseph Grew, *Turbulent Era*, vol. I, p. 379.
12. Charles Mee, *The End of Order*, p. 78.
13. Gelfand, op. cit., p. 29.
14. *Current Biography*, 1940. Published annually by H. W. Wilson, N.Y. Citations are alphabetized.
15. Charles Seymour, *Letters from the Paris Peace Conference*, pp. 61, 62, 75.
16. Jeffreys-Jones, op. cit.
17. Drawn from Seymour, op. cit., pp. 106, 129.
18. Exchange February 3, 12, 1919, Allen Dulles to Walter Davis. Walter Davis Archive (Record Group 469), Yale University Library.

19. Interview with Eleanor Dulles, June 9, 1988.
20. Mosley, op. cit., p. 13.
21. Ibid, p. 39.
22. Gelfand, op. cit., p. 107.
23. Jeffreys-Jones, op. cit., pp. 74, 94, 95.
24. M. P. Edwards and Kenneth Dunne, *A Study of a Master Spy*, pp. 9, 10.
25. Jeffreys-Jones, op. cit., p. 82.
26. Edwards and Dunne, op. cit., p. 14.
27. So far the best biography of John Foster Dulles is Ronald Preussen's *John Foster Dulles—The Road to Power*, from which much detail has been extracted. An acerbic—and useful—version is Townsend Hoopes's *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*.
28. Hoopes, op. cit., p. 26. Foster's wily moves soon caught the eye of founding partner William Nelson Cromwell, whose clients included J. P. Morgan and E. H. Harriman and who was himself acknowledged as the attorney who "taught the robber barons how to rob." Cromwell had retained John Foster to help expedite the formation of the New Panama Canal Company (Nancy Lisagor and Frank Lipsius, *A Law Unto Itself*, pp. 31, 34, 35, 61).
29. Preussen, op. cit., p. 27. Lisagor and Lipsius (op. cit., p. 66) note that Foster's original commission, as a captain, was with military intelligence, on assignment to the War Trade Board.
30. Hoopes, op. cit., pp. 29, 40.
31. Gelfand, op. cit., p. 177; Preussen, op. cit., p. 30.
32. John R. Beal, *John Foster Dulles*, p. 67.
33. Preussen, op. cit., p. 53.
34. Mee, op. cit., p. 193.
35. Mee, op. cit., p. 222.
36. Mosley, op. cit., p. 60.

37. W. B. Fowler, *British-American Relations 1917-1918*, p. 196.
38. Gelfand, op. cit., p. 173.
39. Bonsal, op. cit., p. 93.
40. Mee, op. cit., p. 194.
41. Grew, op. cit., pp. 375, 377.
42. Seymour, op. cit., p. 122.
43. Best overall treatment of Bullitt so far is Will Brownell and Richard Billings's *So Close to Greatness*. There is also excellent material in Orville Bullitt's well-edited collection of his brother's letters, *For the President*.
44. Fowler, op. cit., p. 183.
45. Orville Bullitt, op. cit., p. xi.
46. Mee, op. cit., pp. 15-18. Another helpful version appears in Justin Kaplan's fine biography of Lincoln Steffens.
47. Janet Flanner, profile of William Bullitt. *The New Yorker*, December 17, 1938.
48. Perhaps the fullest detail of this episode is available in Beatrice Farnsworth's *William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union*.