

Ensuring a Pro-British Successor to Roosevelt

The success of the British post-war plans, including the dropping of the atom bomb, had everything to do with ensuring that President Roosevelt was succeeded by a British pawn. It was well known that FDR was very ill going into the 1944 Presidential race, and the person he chose as a running mate would be crucial.

The man to beat, in the British view, was Henry A. Wallace, FDR's Vice President in his third term. Wallace had a strong anti-imperialist program which he envisioned implementing after the war. When British spies within the United States found out just what Wallace was planning, they made it a top priority to ensure that FDR did not put him on the ticket.

The malleable, pro-British Truman owed his place on the ticket to their efforts.

One aspect of the story, involving direct British espionage against Wallace, is described in Anthony Cave Brown's book '*C*': *The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill*.

The British agent involved was Roald Dahl, a young, wounded fighter pilot, who had been assigned to the British Embassy in Washington as assistant air attaché, but became a member of the section of MI6 run by superspy Sir William Stephenson, while remaining on the staff of the Embassy.

Dahl's main assignment during the Summer of '43 was to keep tabs on Wallace and to report to Stephenson. At that time, he became aware that Wallace, with the help of John Carter Vincent and Owen Lattimore of the State Department, had written a pamphlet called "Our Job in the Pacific."

Dahl got his hands on the Wallace manuscript while at the home of a mutual friend, Charles Marsh, and started reading it, later saying it "made my hair stand on end." It proposed American post-war

economic assistance for the industrial development of Asia, a trade policy for the Asian countries, and the "emancipation of colonial subjects" in the British colonies of India, Burma, and Malaya, in the French colony of Indonesia, and the Dutch colonies in the East Indies.

Dahl later described how he called an MI6 contact, and arranged to meet. Dahl gave him the Wallace manuscript; the contact took it to his office and copied it, and returned it in 15 minutes. A copy went to Stephenson, then to Menzies and then to Churchill, who "could hardly believe what he was reading."

Wallace recorded in his diary how he was approached by Dahl, who told him that "the entire British secret service was shaking with indignation as well as the British Foreign Office." Dahl told Marsh, a power in the Democratic Party, that "This is very serious. You know Churchill is likely to ask the President to get a new Vice President."

At Churchill's request, British Ambassador Halifax told Secretary of State Hull about the "regrettable" statements made by Wallace. Other channels were also used. Sir Stephenson stated: "I came to regard Wallace as a menace and *I took action to ensure that the White House was aware the British government would view with concern Wallace's appearance on the ticket in the 1944 Presidential elections*" (emphasis added).



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Vice President Henry Wallace, with President Franklin Roosevelt.