



Henry Clay's War Hawks win a victory over British terrorism

by Anton Chaitkin

We continue our series on the American System—dedicated to exposing the lie that the United States is a nation built by Adam Smith's doctrines of "free enterprise"—with Part II of Anton Chaitkin's essay on the War Hawk faction of Henry Clay. This essay proves that, yes, there really was a War of 1812, despite the history books' efforts to downplay this bitter struggle against that British attempt to overturn the American Revolution. Second, it explains the background of presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche's call for a new War Hawk faction to be created today. LaRouche issued that appeal in his Jan. 29 "State of the Union" address in Arlington, Virginia (see EIR, Feb. 14, 1986).

Even after the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, the new United States was under military attack. Indians raided exposed villages, using weapons supplied by their British allies. American merchant ships were seized by British and French warships, plundered, and sold.

The situation grew much worse during Thomas Jefferson's presidency (1801-09). Under cover of its war with France, Britain stopped American ships everywhere and forcibly removed sailors, both British deserters and Americans. These then entered the British navy, joining the unfortunates whom the "press gangs" operating within Britain itself had literally shot or beaten into that service.

As James Fenimore Cooper explained in his *Naval History of the United States*, British "boarding officers act[ed] on the principle, that the seaman who failed to prove he was an American, should be seized as an Englishman. . . . The number of impressed Americans on board British ships of war, was seldom less than the entire number of seamen in the American navy, between the years 1802 and 1812. At the [U.S.]

ish] turned over to the prison ships for refusing to fight against their own country, is said to have exceeded two thousand."

Cooper records "an occurrence . . . proving . . . the reluctance of the English seamen to serve in their own vessels of war. . . . [One of the U.S.S.] Essex's crew was a deserter from a British man-of-war, and he was formally demanded [by the British]. . . . The man protested that he was an Amer-

ican, and that he had not entered voluntarily into the English service," but admitted his desertion therefrom. The American captain felt he had to give up the seaman, and ordered him to depart the ship. "On reaching the gun-deck, his eye fell upon the carpenter's bench . . . he seized an axe, and at one blow cut off his left hand. Taking up the severed limb in the remaining hand, he went upon the quarter-deck, and presented himself to the British officer, bleeding and maimed. The latter left the Essex, shocked and astonished, while the affair made a deep and lasting impression on all who witnessed it."

The official agent, sent to England to intercede for the impressed Americans, estimated in 1812 that there had been 14,000 impressments. But apart from pleading and negotiating, the United States had rendered itself helpless to defend its citizens or its trade. Since the advent of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency and Swiss nobleman Albert Gallatin as treasury secretary, not a single U.S. warship had been built, aside from tiny, useless coastal "gunboats."

President James Madison, inaugurated in 1809, retained Gallatin at Treasury. Gallatin as unofficial "premier" ruled over a disloyal cabinet, including Secretary of War William Eustis, personal physician and political errand-boy for Aaron Burr.

While Jefferson and Madison dreamed of peaceful utopia, to which isolated undeveloped America could be brought by Gallatin's "economy measures," Britain's rulers systematically kidnapped away the future personnel of a navy that could challenge Britain's superiority; and Britain's surrogate warriors scalped, burned, and terrorized, limiting America's westward growth.

On Washington's Birthday, Feb. 22, 1810, 32-year-old Sen. Henry Clay called for war with Britain. For the next two years, the Virginian-turned-Kentuckian would lead a political movement to regenerate an American national spirit. As unequipped as the country then was, war was the essential first step for the preservation of national independence.

Personally, Clay had been ready for war since age four, when he and his frightened mother had watched British Redcoats rifle through the grave of his father looking for treasure.

But revenge would be sweetest if America rose to great national power, and led all mankind to defang the British imperial lion. Learning law, history, and philosophy from Virginia's scholar and patriot leader George Wythe, Henry Clay had acquired the cultural depth necessary for such a sweeping vision of America's future; he had taught himself the mental toughness needed to implement it against treason and imbecilic public opinion.

Clay began his campaign for war in response to Albert Gallatin's latest outrage. Congress was abjectly debating the Treasury Secretary's draft law, "Macon's Bill No. 1," repealing the prohibition of trade with England and France. By the end of the debate, Congress went even lower, accepting "Macon's Bill No. 2," Gallatin's repeal of tariffs or favoritism to American over British shipping. "Free trade"—under terrorist coercion!

F. J. Jackson, just dismissed as British ambassador to the United States, exulted in his diary, "Congress has . . . completed my triumph, by repealing without any concession on our part, the famous non-intercourse law. . . . They have covered themselves with ridicule and disgrace."

Dirigist growth = national survival

In a speech of March 26, 1810, Clay called for the deliberate development of American manufactures by government patronage, beginning to link defense to the forced, rapid industrialization without which defense must collapse. To win a national return to this outlook of the Founding Fathers, Clay would later use the cooperation of fellow War Hawks William Lowndes and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, George Poindexter of Mississippi Territory, and Peter B. Porter from upstate New York. Their fight for tariffs, government-built canals and roads, and national banking to guarantee cheap development credits, was then carried on by Clay's Whig Party and Abraham Lincoln's Republicans.

Clay's war drive was also backed by Felix Grundy of Tennessee and many westerners, and by former Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—all of them disgusted with the policy of surrender.

On July 18, 1810, William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, reported the announcement by British Captain Elliot to Tecumseh's Indian warriors, "My tomahawk is now up—be you ready—but do not strike until I give the signal."

Over the next year, Americans, given some leadership, began to show they had spines. Boston "Brahmin" Congressman Josiah Quincy threatened the secession of northern states if it came to war; he then complained that he was threatened with lynching by "bullies and blackguards . . . using language learnt in the backwoods or among their slaves." Virginia's effeminate, opium and liquor-soaked, pro-British Congressman John Randolph of Roanoke warned that we were being "ruled to our ruin by [westerners] bound to us by no common tie of interest or sentiment."

On May 16, 1811, the U.S. frigate *President*, after chas-

ing the British kidnapping sloop *Little Belt* from our coast, was fired upon by her, returned massive fire and crippled the British warship with 31 killed and wounded.

Jeffersonian publisher William Duane, who had years earlier been imprisoned in the Black Hole of Calcutta for attacking the East India Company in his Indian newspaper, ran a devastating attack on Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin in his Philadelphia *Aurora* Sept. 3, 1811. He portrayed Gallatin quite accurately as a foreign spy and traitor who mocked the President and kept him in the dark.

On Nov. 7, 1811, Tecumseh's Indians attacked Governor Harrison's troops. Harrison prevailed, Tecumseh fled to the British in Canada, and Harrison reported capturing guns and "ample supplies of the best British glazed powder."

Clay drives for war

To increase his effectiveness, young Henry Clay now quit the Senate. He was elected without opposition by his Kentucky district to the U.S. House of Representatives, and was at once elected (Nov. 4, 1811) Speaker of the House by his respectful colleagues.

Clay immediately appointed War Hawks as leaders of all the important House committees: New York's Peter B. Porter to Foreign Relations, South Carolina's Langdon Cheves to Naval Affairs, and likewise to Military Affairs, and Ways and Means.

On Dec. 26, 1811, Porter's committee reported in a bill to raise thousands of new troops. The new British ambassador, Augustus John Foster, closely watched the congressional debates on this and other war measures. He personally attended some sessions, and received reports from disloyal American congressmen. On Dec. 28, 1811, Foster wrote hopefully to the foreign office that since the administration will not allow itself to "be pushed into a War with us . . . there never was a more favourable moment for Great Britain to impose almost what terms she pleases."

On Dec. 31, 1811, Henry Clay took the floor to speak for the increased forces bill as a war measure, setting a militant tone for the rest of the debate.

Foster wrote home to the British Foreign office on Jan. 16, 1812, that a slight concession, "a little management," or a threatened attack on American seaports would "bring them to our terms."

On Jan 22, 1812, Henry Clay again came down from the Speaker's chair to call for passage of a bill to construct warships, as the beginning of a sizeable United States Navy; he echoed Alexander Hamilton's *Federalist* essay number 11, presenting a sizeable United States Navy as essential to unite and protect all American economic and regional interests. Clay named Albert Gallatin as the author of opposition to a navy under former President Jefferson. As Clay's supporters in the newspapers called for aid to the Mexican and other pending Spanish American independence struggles, Clay recommended a navy strong enough to keep the British from dominating the contested Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

Porter's increased force bill was passed on Feb. 6, 1812. But Albert Gallatin's congressional flunkie, John Smilie, worked on the parochialism of Clay's fellow western War Hawks to defeat the Navy bill. Smilie had led Gallatin's Pennsylvania political forces a quarter-century before—trying to stop ratification of the U.S. Constitution. In letters to London from Dec. 11, 1811, through March 12, 1812, British Ambassador Foster described his secret meetings at the British legation in Washington with New England Federalist leaders, who urged him to “concert measures . . . [push Madison] to the Edge of the Precipice, by an unbending attitude . . . [to] neither revoke our Orders in Council nor modify them in any manner.” If Madison backed down, or went into a war which the pro-British faction would (and later in fact did) sabotage from within, the patriots would be discredited, bringing about “a thorough amalgamation of interests between America and Great Britain. . . . They seemed to think that Great Britain could by management bring the United States into any connexion with her that she pleased.”

Henry Clay spoke on Feb. 15, 1812, against rechartering the Bank of the United States on the grounds of its “British” orientation. Yet in 1816, after Gallatin had been removed from financial dominance of the government, Clay led the successful drive to charter a new, identical U.S. Bank.

Secretary of State James Monroe, recruited to militancy by Clay's leadership, now delivered a stunning blow for the War Hawks. On March 9, 1812, the President presented to Congress evidence purchased by Monroe: the British Governor General of Canada had employed spy John Henry, to work with traitorous elements in Boston for the secession of New England from the Union.

British Canada was now widely identified by Americans as a legitimate target of invasion, a headquarters for terrorism and political subversion to be cleaned up—similar to Switzerland today.

The next day Treasury mole Albert Gallatin wrote to former President Jefferson, explaining why he had framed a program of deliberately frightening excise taxes to pay for the increased military forces: he wanted “the smallest possible quantity of debt, perpetual taxation, military establishments, and other corrupting or anti-republican habits or institutions.” British ambassador Foster put it more plainly: Gallatin's tax program would result in “damping the military ardor.” Foster also admired Gallatin's new trade report, which “served to expose the immensity of the sacrifice [i.e., lost exports] required by the advocates for Hostilities with Great Britain.” Meanwhile War Secretary Eustis was simply refusing to recruit the authorized officers. As South Carolina's Lowndes reported later, “He wished to avoid war.”

But the Baltimore War Hawk paper, *Niles' Register*, urged that Gallatin's deliberate attack on their cause be absorbed: People will pay the proposed taxes “to defend their lives from the tomahawk, their persons from the pressgang, their government from *treason*, and their property from theft.” Undaunted, Clay's Congress passed the taxes.

The week after the John Henry disclosures, Clay called on Secretary of State Monroe and demanded an emergency embargo preliminary to a declaration of war. The *Richmond Enquirer* of March 27 typified the support for Clay's position: Without resolute action now, “there is not a petty nation in Europe, but will despise us. The Dey of Algiers or Tripoli will again insult us. And as to France or Great Britain . . . they will spit on us, and treat us as the vilest catiffs breathing.”

The Embargo act was signed April 4 by Madison. But Gallatin and the Federalists, Foster's troops, now worked to turn the embargo into a substitute for war by issuing confusing statements about the government's intentions. Gallatin's lieutenant Smilie argued for a recess of Congress, but Speaker Clay said there would be no recess until the war had been declared!

According to Mr. Foster's diary on April 8, 1812, John Smilie was still “most in the Confidence of the President.” The administration newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*, whined on April 9 that the Embargo was not war, nor would it inevitably lead to war, and the President was said to have agreed to the dispatch of a new peace negotiator to England.

But Henry Clay marched straight through the flak. Madison was simply informed that unless he brought about war with England, he would not be renominated for the presidency. On April 14 the *National Intelligencer* ran an editorial by Henry Clay himself, announcing that war was inevitable.

Republicans now stopped coming to visit the British legation. Former President John Adams wrote on May 14 that the people must unite against England. Gallatin's congressional lieutenants were now superceded in the confidence of the Executive by Clay's War Hawks. On May 18, the Republican (“Jeffersonian”) caucus renominated President James Madison, who was overwhelmingly reelected in November.

On May 29, on a motion of John C. Calhoun, the House of Representatives ruled John Randolph's attempted pro-British filibuster out of order. Randolph was later a crucial early leader of the Southern secession movement. It was reported that Randolph, as U.S. minister to Russia in 1831, delivered his credentials to the Czar on his knees.

On June 1, 1812, President Madison asked Congress for a declaration of war, with many shocking parallels for today's terrorism and surrogate warfare: “Thousands of American citizens . . . have been torn from their country and . . . dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation. . . . A secret agent of [the British] Government was employed in intrigues having for their object a subversion of our Government and a dismemberment of our happy union. . . . Our attention is . . . drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on . . . our . . . frontiers . . . in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons. . . .”

The House voted 79-49 for war, the Senate voted likewise 19-13, and the President on June 18, 1812, signed and issued the declaration, called at the time our Second Declaration of Independence.