

The Rise and Fall of the Entente

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Foreword

THE breakdown of the London Conference of Premiers and the agreement of Messrs. Lloyd George and Poincare to disagree makes it evident that the alliance between Britain and France is, to all intents and purposes, at an end.

The partnership of these two Powers began in 1904 as an *entente* and, secretly and imperceptibly, developed into a military and naval alliance against a third party, viz., Germany. With the overthrow and ruination of that party, comes an inevitable dissolution.

A crisis in British foreign relations has been reached, fraught with such grave and far-reaching consequences and calculated so completely to change the face of world politics, that it is extremely desirable and, indeed, vitally necessary to understand the full significance of what is happening. For that reason, in this and ensuing articles, my intention is to examine the Entente between Britain and France, to enquire into its origins, to take note of its operations and to explain the causes of its collapse.

In this country, we have had all too little Marxian literature analysing scientifically the material forces whose interplay has given rise to this and similarly important international political phenomena. We have had to be content with the writings of social patriots (the hacks of the Grand Orient, or the social democratic apostles of petit bourgeois republican "liberty"), or of social pacifists, whose brilliant and exhaustive studies were rendered well nigh useless because of the Liberal viewpoint from which these latterday disciples of "Manchesterism" approached their subject.

Our own people have had, of necessity, to go to the works of such writers as Morel and Brailsford and Buxton, and, in consequence, lack the material upon which to base a sound communist judgment.

Now that the banded bandits of French and British imperialism are parting company and, instead of co-operating to despoil and devour what was predatory Germany, are eyeing each other with nervous fingers toying with the daggers of a new duel, it is imperative that we should understand the basis of their former pact and the causes of their present quarrel.

I.

The Maze of French Politics

The Economics of Reaction

Throughout the period since Waterloo there has throbbled through the brain of France the memory of the fact that, in the wars of the 18th century, she lost to Britain the promising foundations of a world-wide colonial empire. The bourgeoisie of Paris, Marseilles and Bordeaux does not forget that the North American continent was once in the grip of France, and that India might have been theirs as well.

Had it not been for the success of England in repeated wars and armed diplomatic encounters, France would also have, as the ally of Spain, had, as her special preserve, the fabulously valuable commerce of the South American countries.

Prior to the Revolution, France was much richer and had a greater overseas trade than Britain. Political circumstances, at home and abroad, coinciding with great changes in the methods of production, combined to make bourgeois France appear the victim of

a conspiracy organised by Britain and carried through (according to the Monarchists) by the aid of German-Jew financiers.

The Buonapartists, whose original leader, Napoleon I., had sought with an armed nation at his call to break the economic power of England and her allies, and had fostered the old financial interests incorporated in and grouped around the Bank of France (which he created), stood for and left behind them a tradition of a military dictator, serving the cause of an adventurous and prosperous financial oligarchy.

One might say that the Monarchists, represented to-day by the parties of the Extreme Right, have aimed at reviving the ancient glories of France under the Grand Monarch, "le roi soleil," Louis XIV.

Their dream is always of France—victorious on the Rhine, master of Germany, arbiter of Europe. It is this ideal which, diffused throughout the parties of the Reaction, consumes with passionate devotion to "La Patrie," that pious Catholic, Marshal Foch.

The Reactionaries, the party of the Clericals, are, also, as Catholics, animated by a fanatical hatred—after the manner of "Plain English"—of the Jewish banking oligarchy and, as Frenchmen and patriot landlords, incensed against them as revolutionaries escaped from the Frankfurt ghetto.

This political entity lumps together all foreigners, whether Germans, Italians, Dutch or English, as organised conspiracies of German Israelites bent on the ruin of Christendom in general and France in particular.

For the last forty years there have been, really, no Buonapartists and the Monarchists have become less conspicuous as such and more evident as Clericals and Nationalists—which latter category, under one or other party name incomprehensible to the ordinary Britisher, covers the heirs of the Napoleonic tradition of military dictatorship.

The Big Banks

In the centre of French politics are other parties, with weird names, all bent on advancing the cause of the financial oligarchy who, from 1830 and, again, from 1851, from 1872 and from 1883, have, in successive waves of private and public banking and investment houses and companies, established themselves as the *grande bourgeoisie* of France.

These are the people who constitute, for the most part, the owners and administrators of the Bank of France and those six great banks, i.e.: the Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris, the Crédit Mobilier Français, the Crédit Foncier, the Crédit Lyonnais, the Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas, the Banque de l'Union Parisienne.

These are the people who dominate the French Colonies; who hold 70 per cent of the Ottoman Debt; who are big creditors of Central Europe and Italy; who had gigantic interests in Russia.

They are an economic amalgam, made up of groups which, in the past, have fiercely fought each other; and, quite naturally, they are the core of the "Bloc National" and the most ardent supporters of Poincare, Barthou and Tardieu.

They are the French equivalents of the British Coalition and, like the latter, their bias is increasingly Conservative.

The Bourgeois Opposition

Prior to the war, there were other interests such as the *Société Générale de Paris* which,

at that time, was roundly accused of being a German institution. It was, certainly, cosmopolitan and it had been, in its origin, financed largely by English Catholic bankers, Manchester textile manufacturers and Jewish cotton brokers.

This "Society" was the main economic prop of the pre-war leader of the French Radicals, M. Caillaux. He, like his contemporary, Lloyd George, mixed up with some queer people—"queer" in the financial sense. He was the political champion of the lower middle class. He wanted to cheapen credit and to emancipate trade and industry from the clutches of the monopolist banks. Needless to say, Poincare and he were pitiless enemies.

He was an intimate of Sir Ernest Cassel (the late lamented friend of Sidney Webb, patron of the London School of Economics and financier of the W.E.A.).

He was, also, it would seem, from his financial connections, the creature of those Greeks who, to-day, having had the *Société Générale* wrenched from their grasp, are running Sir Basil Zaharoff, his *Banque de la Seine* and its associate enterprises. Caillaux is, of course, in eclipse.

Unlike Lloyd George, he took the wrong turning. Now he has to be content with the admiration of the "Labour Leader" which sees in him another edition of Philip Snowden.

Coalition

Between Caillaux and Poincare politically, there stand Clemenceau, of the Republican Left, and Millerand and Briand, the renegade "Socialists." To-day, of course, there is not much space dividing any of these beauties. They all belong to the class of lawyer politicians who, having seen in the votes and briefs of the proletariat and the lower middle class stepping stones to higher things, have eventually "arrived." Like Lloyd George and, in a lesser degree, the kept Labour M.P.s who joined the Coalition, they are now the subservient tools of the industrial magnates and high financiers.

Millerand, as President, and Poincare, as Premier, dance to the pipes of M. Sargent and M. Schneider, the respective heads of the *Banque de l'Union Parisienne* and *Schneider-Creusot*.

Between the big monopolist banks I have named and the *Société Générale* there stood, before the war, but having affiliations with them, the *Banque Française pour le Commerce et l'Industrie*, another concern with cosmopolitan connections and strong links with British and Belgian Judaism. To-day, this bank is lined up with, whilst the *Société Générale* has been absorbed by, the big monopolist banks.

There is, at present, only one big bank which whilst in French finance, is not really of it, viz., Sir Basil Zaharoff's concern, the *Banque de la Seine*. This institution works in conjunction with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and sundry enterprises operating in Egypt and generally throughout the Near East. What politicians respond to its inspiration it is not easy to say.

Such then is, historically reviewed, the background of economics and of politics on which have been chiselled the frescoes of the Entente.

In further articles it will be our task and our delight to examine and to criticise the artistry of this partnership of pirates whose monument is a Continent in convulsions and a civilisation in the last stages of corruption and collapse.