

Economic Causes of War

Article No. 5

FRANCE entered the war for no other purpose than to recover Alsace-Lorraine, because of its valuable natural resources in coal, iron and other minerals. She was convinced that Britain would come to her aid, not only on account of the obligation arrived at in 1912 quoted in the British "White Papers," but also because of the conference between Sir Edward Grey and the French ministers, held in Paris in April, 1914.

Why had the antagonism between Britain and France then subsided when they had been commercial rivals for centuries? Even as late as the Boer war of 1899-1903, the British press wanted to roll France in the blood and mud in which her press wallowed, and take her colonies and give them to Germany and Italy. Tardieu in his book "France and her Alliances," tells us as late as 1903, quoting the "Temps" of December 24th, 1903, that "England has never been, and can never be, an ally for France." Why this change? Tardieu answers, page 67: "The fear of Germany was responsible for the Entente Cordiale . . . the King Edward visit to Paris, the English fleet's visit to Brest, the French fleet at Portsmouth, the Paris Municipal Council's stay in London, last of all, Mons. Falliere's visit to London . . . the strengthening of the Entente is not due to those; all such fetes have been effects, not causes. **The cause must be sought in Germany.**" Page 46: "Neither in England nor in France is the principle of understanding to be sought. **Rather was it the fear of Germany.**" Page 57: "In London, therefore, the Franco-English rapprochement appeared to be the best means of coping for the joint good of trade and the empire. On the French side economic interests counselled this rapprochement and political interests were not opposed to it." On page 59, Tardieu tells us that on the 14th Sept. 1901, the Associated Chambers of British Commerce passed a resolution advocating a Franco-British treaty basing their vote on the immense advantages to the commercial relations between the two countries. In 1903, during a visit of French M.P.'s to London, Sir Edward Sasson said: "Our aim should be to arrive at an Entente which is really stable, that based on material interests."

The whole history of the past century is a continual conflict of French and British commercial interests. The Syrian question in 1839-40 brought French and British policy in direct conflict. In Africa they were at loggerheads on many occasions, compromising by neutralizing the Congo Free State (of rubber fame) to promote their own imperialistic policies of exploitation; Britain endeavoring to obtain territory for her Cape to Cairo railroad. France utilized the Congo Free State railway and steamers to transport Marchand and his troops, munitions and stores, in his attempt to contest British supremacy on the Upper Nile. The result of these conflicting interests in that region was the Fashoda incident of 1898, where France backed down because her ally, Russia, failed her. In negotiating the Anglo-French African Convention, of June, 1898, Lord Salisbury stipulated that no differential treatment of British trade should be enforced in the French dependencies of the Ivory Coast and Dahomey for a period of thirty years. France and England's commercial interests conflicted in India, Canada and Africa, on numerous occasions. The monopolistic economic policy of France in Tunis, Madagascar, French Congo, and the French Somali coast has been a fruitful theme of recrimination between the French and British governments. Egypt is in itself sufficient to recall half a dozen acute crises between these two nations. In fact, it led to the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1891. The French loans to Russia strengthened the alliance, the first loan of 500,000,000 francs being made in December, 1888, and others as under: 700,000,000 francs and 1,200,000,000 francs in 1889.

300,000,000 francs and 41,000,000 francs in 1890. 320,000,000 francs and 500,000,000 francs in 1891. 178,000,000 francs in 1893. 454,000,000 francs and 166,000,000 and 400,000,000 francs in 1894. 400,000,000 francs in 1896. 424,000,000 francs in 1901. 800,000,000 francs in 1904. 1,200,000,000 francs in 1906.

I think this explains why France has been the greatest antagonist of the Bolsheviks.

All friction in Africa was over the great natural resources of raw material for the requirements of modern industrialism, such as timber, infinite in variety, oil palms for manufacturing oleomargarine, rubber vines, precious gums, resins, and oil-bearing plants and fibres. The method pursued was issuing charters to merchants forming companies who made treaties with the native chiefs, assisted by explorers and missionaries. Sometimes the local competition of zealous officials pulled up the flagstaves which rivals of some other countries had erected in the towns and villages, and these differences were often aggravated with disastrous consequences for the natives, by the sectarian animosities of the competing religious sects. Uganda ran red with native blood owing to the quarrels between the French party, composed of French Catholic Fathers and the British party composed of Protestant missionaries. Those were the days when Lord Salisbury sarcastically referred to the Gallic cock scratching the sands of the Sahara, when Chamberlain raspily advised France to mend her manners, and when the "Daily Mail" wanted to roll her in blood and mud. The treatment of the natives, although anything but ideal in the German colonies, has never yet reached the stage of the atrocities practiced in the French or Belgian Congos.

Friction between France and Britain was occasioned by the fiscal policy of France over any territory she acquired, because she created a special economic preserve by means of tariffs for the exclusive benefit of French trade. This differentiation cannot be charged against Germany in her colonies, as every British merchant knows who has traded with them. The great estrangement between France and England arose over their conflicting interests in Morocco, which I hope to deal with in more detail later. Britain began to court France and they entered into an agreement over Morocco in 1904. Tardieu says in the book I have mentioned, page 194: "England, who if France had been willing, would have made war in 1905." Morel, in his "Diplomacy in Morocco," says that Lloyd George issued an ultimatum to Germany when addressing the Bankers' Association in 1911, but Germany backed down because her bankers refused. France was in a quandary during the Russo-Japanese war when the Russian fleet fired on the British fishermen in the North Sea; she was afraid it might draw her into a war with Britain, as Japan was Britain's ally. Tardieu says: "Britain and Russia remained at peace. For one thing, there was to be considered the importance of the Anglo-Russian trade. . . The English sales in the empire of the Czar were from eight to fourteen millions sterling, and their purchases from fifteen to twenty-five millions. Their consuls pointed out that Russia was an admirable field opened to their commercial progress, which everywhere else was hampered with Germany. Moreover, although Japan's ally, England had no intention of handing the Far East over to her ally. Russia might be a useful counterweight against a friend that was too strong, while also offering an outlet for English industry."

The policy in colonizing is to alienate the people from the land making the natives depend on selling their labor power. France in Tunis abolished the Tunisian constitution and passed the lands, which had been previously owned collectively according to

Mohammedan custom, into the hands of the government. Then she sold the land at ridiculous prices to French colonists, thrusting the Tunisians into the ranks of the proletariat. The great abundance of manual labor has reduced wages to a very low level, with the truck system prevailing and an organized system of fines still further reducing wages. The Tunisian laborer is in absolute serfdom.

Thus we find Africa a great continent for the exploitation of native labor and natural resources, with France and Britain dominating 9,000,000 square miles out of a total of 11,000,000 square miles; France 4¾ millions and Britain 4¼ millions. It is quite clear that the flag follows trade, exploiters and missionaries. Read this, an advertisement in the "Record of the Home and Foreign Mission-work of the United Free Church of Scotland," December, 1919, page 267: "The purpose of the missions is not to develop trade, but trade is inevitably developed by missions. They steadily increase material needs; soap, oils, cloths, sewing machines, books, tools, follow hard on mission enterprise. Missions teach thrift, industry and honesty in commercial dealings. **It is worth while for business men to support missions if from no other motive than that they create new, larger and better markets for their goods.**"

PETER T. LECKIE.

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PLATFORM

Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, affirm our allegiance to, and support of, the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class.

Labor, applied to natural resources, produces all wealth. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently, all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is, therefore, master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the State will be used to protect and defend its property rights in the means of wealth production and its control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits, and to the worker, an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which this exploitation, at the point of production, is cloaked. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into socially controlled economic forces.

The irrespressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a struggle for political supremacy. This is the Class Struggle.

Therefore, we call all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada, with the object of conquering the political powers, for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic programme of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads, etc.) into collective means of production.
2. The organization and management of industry by the working class.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.