

STEED ANALYZES FRENCH DISTRUST OF GREAT BRITAIN

By Wickham Steed
Editor of the London Times.
(Written for the United News)

Paris, Feb. 2.—The deeper one looks beneath the surface of France, the more ultimately one discloses both the possibility of an agreement with Great Britain and the obstacles to agreement, the nearer it becomes that the main, if not the only obstacle, is distrust.

To catalogue the reasons for this distrust would be to write the history of Anglo-French relations since Versailles. There is no need to again demonstrate the British view of the French shortcomings, nor would it be profitable merely to list the matters in which France feels British statesmen have not been fair with her.

It is more important to explain the present position insofar as it may be acceptable to public explanation and to face it squarely. For this it is necessary to go back further than the Cannes conference. The French public, even French public men, are only now beginning to realize that the Cannes meeting was an offspring of Washington, and that the chief justification for the attempt to conclude an Anglo-French agreement before the termination of the Washington conference was the expectation that such an agreement might promote the complete success of the Washington conference itself, and incidentally facilitate American cooperation in the task of the European powers of restoring the world to more normal economic conditions.

THINKS FRENCH RIGID

French public opinion, though subject to rapid changes, is not generally elastic. Since the war it has tended to become more rigid and more patient than during the decade before the war.

I have an impression, which may be wrong, that since the war French opinion is not so well informed, particularly regarding the way France is viewed by the outside world, as it used to be.

A sense of superiority, born of victory, and a justifiable pride in the nation's services, may have caused her to temporarily saddle a secondary place to what there may have held to be her international duties—except in the cases where those duties were clearly coincident to her immediate interests.

POINTS OUT MISTAKES

When the Cannes conference convened, the French had no knowledge of the position in which they had been placed by the mistakes of their Washington delegates. It may be doubted whether M. Briand himself fully realized this position until after his return to Europe. The failure of the impracticable Franco-British suggestion that an economic conference at Washington should be replaced by an agreement and determination on the part of the French and British governments to work for Europe's economic restoration concurrently with a reasonable handling of the reparations.

AMITY FOR ENEMY

Thus Briand went to London. French opinion, it should be remembered, was not prepared for the sudden change from apparent amity to apparent enmity. In London arrangements were certainly made for important changes in the treatment of reparations and apparently for an international conference along lines similar to those proposed at Cannes for Genoa. Reports of these arrangements, especially concerning Belgian priority, caused some anxiety in Paris.

Questioned by prominent parliamentary inquirers, Briand created the definite impression that no arrangements had been entered into and thus went to Cannes, leaving important sections of French legislative opinion under a distinct misapprehension. The spectacular apprehension at Cannes to summon the

Genoa conference on conditions which seemed to the French to encroach upon the provinces of the League of Nations and involve France's recognition of the Bolsheviks, without sufficient safeguards, shocked French feeling. The shock was accentuated by the publication of the rambling British memorandum without simultaneous publication of the draft of the text of the Anglo-French pact of guarantee for which the memorandum was meant to serve as a sort of preamble. Moreover, the memorandum alluded distinctly to arrangements made by Briand in London and thus aroused suspicion that he was not frank in his dealings with the parliamentary commission. When, on the following day, the text of the pact was issued, it seemed to French opinion an engagement similar to that which the United States was a party to in Paris was being offered France in return for her assent to a hazy policy of European reconstruction which she did not understand.

FRENCH OPINION REVOLTS

Taken unaware French opinion revolted. It was assumed that the British government had sprung another surprise upon the French government, which had been caught napping. All the accumulated French dislike for what Lord Grey called "jerkiness" found vent in the movement leading to Briand's withdrawal. In these circumstances little or no attention was paid to an important memorandum exchanged between the British and Italians at Cannes. If the British preamble to the proposed pact guarantee had not been published, or if it had been preceded by the excellent British case for the pact which was in the British reply to the Italian memorandum, the effect might have been different. As it was French opinion was impressed rather by the Italian contention than the British preamble indicated that "the consent of France to the British plan of economic restoration of Europe has been made the condition against the British guarantee of safety of France's eastern frontier."

CALL IT A BAD MULLIE

Therefore, French assent to the Genoa conference seemed to be bought at the price of a guarantee which France had already paid during the Versailles negotiations. There was a bad mullie. The prospect of escaping from it was not improved by France's apparent recognition of the British guarantee of her security—to the absence of which Briand alluded with feeling in his Washington speech. Nor were Poincaré's views, expounded in his previous writings and regarded in England and elsewhere as conducive to rapid establishment of British and French viewpoints.

In conversation with Lloyd George, before definite formation of his cabinet, Poincaré's views seem also to have been enumerated somewhat more positively than they have since appeared in French official communications to the British foreign office.

FRENCH OPINION CLARIFIES

Since then, however, the clarification of French opinion has proceeded rapidly. As I have often said, the conclusion of a thorough agreement with Britain, both as to possible recurrence of Ger-

man aggression and outstanding questions in the Near East and North Africa, is strongly desired by France. Even regarding reparations and European reconstruction there is an almost equally strong desire to cooperate with Great Britain and there is no repugnance toward direct Anglo-French understanding with Germany. But there is a feeling of remarkable firmness and unanimity against any further jerkiness or improvised bargaining of any kind.

FURTHER MEETINGS LIKELY

This feeling certainly does not preclude further supreme council meetings or even eventually an international conference once the ground is well pre-

pared to obviate surprises and offer a fair chance of attaining positive results. In yet another respect I have now a most definite impression. While it is impossible to answer for the vagaries of some French journals or writers, there is good ground for believing that the leading French politicians and journalists are in a patient, thoughtful mood, and quite ready to enter what may be called a conspiracy of patience with the public men and newspapers on the other side of the channel.

In the circumstances, it is important to conduct the negotiations on the Near Eastern question, as those concerning a pact of guarantee itself should be carried on, in the utmost friendliness of spirit, and readiness to give and take

rather than either in aloofness or eagerness to score points.

ISSUES ARE GRAVE

The issues at stake are so grave and so far reaching in possibilities for good or evil to the old world and the new that nothing should be said or done by statesmen save with the fullest sense of responsibility and certain that if and when the course of negotiations are made public, there can be no question as to the essential rightness of any step taken.

With a new device operated by a keyboard like that of a piano, a person can play several violins at the same time.

ITALIAN CABINET MEMBERS QUIT

Rome, Feb. 2.—(I. N. S.)—Premier Bonomi and the entire Italian cabinet resigned today.

The resignation of the cabinet was expected, due to the growing hostility in parliamentary circles during the last week.

The resignation of the cabinet may have some effect upon the forthcoming

international economic conference at Genoa, as Premier Bonomi was in charge of the preparations.

The resignations were tendered to King Victor Emmanuel by Signor Bonomi.

It is believed former Premier Orlando will be in the new ministry.

TWO REASONS ASSIGNED FOR RESIGNATION OF CABINET

Washington, Feb. 2.—(I. N. S.)—There were two chief causes for the downfall of the Bonomi ministry at Rome today, according to Italian officials now in Washington. These are:

First—The apparent failure of the Genoa economic conference.

Second—Strong Catholic dissatisfaction

with the policy of the Bonomi ministry toward the Vatican.

Home Canned Beans Prove Fatal to Couple

Healdsburg, Cal., Feb. 2.—(I. N. S.)—Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pastori are dead and Joseph Pastori Jr., 22, is dying as a result of poisoning from home canned beans. Special anti-toxin was administered but came too late. Mr. and Mrs. Pastori were ill less than 24 hours.

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REASON FOR RESIGNATION WAS

1. FAILURE OF GENOA CONFERENCE

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