

The Secret of Poincaré's Policy.

It is universally known that Raymond Poincaré, the present Prime Minister of France, has long had a hand in guiding the destinies of his country. He was Prime Minister in 1912 and at the beginning of 1913 he was elected President of the French Republic. It was in this capacity that he led his people into the World War. He must therefore to some extent be regarded as an historical personage whose political methods it is by no means difficult to judge in view of the numerous examples that present themselves. It is clear that there is a certain unity in all his actions, a dominant *leitmotif* which returns again and again and which likewise plays the decisive part in all his actions at the present time.

It will prove interesting to elucidate this *leitmotif* by means of a number of examples.

During the last days of July, 1914, that is, during the very period in which the World War was threatening to break out, we find Poincaré returning to the French capital after his visit to St. Petersburg. He immediately proceeded to do everything that might persuade Russia to begin hostilities. From the very hour in which he once more assumed charge of the administration, one telegram after another was sent from Paris to St. Petersburg, and every one of them assured the government of the Czar of the armed support of France. After General Mobilization had been ordered in Russia as a result of these promises on the part of Poincaré, we find the French government upon the receipt of this news, passing a resolution to wage war, and this as early as July 31st, that is to say on the very day on which Germany had merely ordered preparatory measures, the so-called "state of imminent danger of war!" And it was upon the very evening of this day that the French Minister of War, "in a cordial and enthusiastic tone", declared to the Military Attaché of the Russian Embassy in Paris, that "the government (that is his own) was this as early as July 31st, that is to say on the slightest human or historical doubt that Poincaré desired the World War and did all in his power to bring it about.

At the same time all his efforts were bent towards diverting the responsibility for the outbreak of the terrible catastrophe toward the opposite, that is to say, the German side, and upon himself appearing innocent of all aggression in the eyes of the world. He made use of the following means in achieving these ends. In establishing the so-called "frontier defence" in France, a measure which corresponds to the German "state of imminent danger of war," and which was ordered as early as July 30th, he decreed that the French troops should be stationed ten kilometers from the German frontier, since "for political reasons" it was eminently important that no frontier *contretemps* should occur. At the same time Russia was requested to keep her preparations for war secret and to carry them on in such a way that Germany "could in no way interpret them as an excuse for the general or partial mobilization of her forces." When the Russian Ambassador came to Poincaré upon the evening of the 31st of July, that is to say, on the very day on which the French government had determined upon war, he was informed by Poincaré that it would be better "if the declaration of war were to proceed not from France but from Germany."

Poincaré's procedure becomes clear in the light of these facts. It was his purpose to represent the German people, whom he intended to attack, as the aggressors, that is to say as the guilty nation. He succeeded in achieving this purpose, for Germany, in order to avoid being completely overwhelmed by the excessive and far-advanced war preparations of Russia and France upon both her flanks, was simply forced to declare war. Raymond Poincaré's crafty calculation had therefore achieved its goal, and he has ever since remained faithful to the method which he applied at that time. This method lies at the root of Poincaré's policy.

In concluding the Treaty of Versailles, France in particular laid great stress upon the importance of Germany's acknowledgment and confession of her responsibility for the war, since the exorbitant and impossible demands which were to be imposed

upon the vanquished nation, were to be justified by this confession. Here, too, subterfuge and concealment were the order of the day. For if a frank declaration of this intention had been made it would have amounted in effect to an open confession on the part of the French that, having succeeded in bringing about the defeat of the neighbour nation, it was their intention to keep it powerless forever. Germany, precisely as in 1914, was once more declared to be responsible for the very measures taken by France herself, and by branding Germany as a criminal against all humanity, a pretext was furnished for every possible extortion.

From now on the methods already described, began to operate almost automatically, stage after stage. After the policy of fulfilment had utterly exhausted the powers of the German people, and voices which demanded a pause for recuperation in the mad succession of impossible reparations, began to be heard throughout the world, Poincaré was seized by the fear that Germany might actually recover from her weakness and misery. This, however, would have amounted to a frustration of his own ends which had been clearly formulated long ago and which his friend Delcassé, during the course of his negotiations with Russia in the autumn of 1914, had reduced to the following simple formula: "the destruction of the political and economic forces of Germany." The present Prime Minister of France therefore saw himself compelled to anticipate the voice of reason which began to be heard everywhere, and it was for this reason that he determined upon the military occupation of the Ruhr district, "the main artery of German industrial life." But, true to his accepted system, he did not step forth and declare: I wish to destroy Germany economically and politically, but proceeded to establish arrears in the German coal deliveries and thereby furnished himself with a pretext for his measures of brute force. Once more he succeeded in converting the victim whom he wished to outrage, into an apparent delinquent, precisely as in 1914 at the outbreak of the war and again in 1918 at the conclusion of the peace treaty.

These tactics are so similar in the individual instances that it would not prove difficult, basing one's judgment upon facts such as have been cited in the foregoing, to describe the further course of events—as Poincaré sees them. What is the real goal pursued by the leader and instigator of French policy? The action in the Ruhr has been futile,

inasmuch as, thanks of the passive resistance of the German population, France has failed to reap those profits which had been promised her. The deliveries of coal, instead of being augmented, have been reduced practically to nil. The unity of the German defense has proved stronger than the powers in Paris had ever imagined. And now there is nothing left for Poincaré in his intention to destroy and exterminate, save regular war, a course which would enable the French generals by brute force of arms to accomplish in the face of an unarmed people all those things which have hitherto proved impossible. Hence Poincaré, precisely as in 1914, is once more plotting for war. But true to his program, he is cautious enough not to come out into the open, since he is well aware that he would thereby marshal the public opinion of the world against him. For this reason he is once more watching day and night for the usual pretext for the usual onslaught. This explains why the people of the Ruhr are being provoked, day after day and hour after hour, by the most unheard-of cruelties and outrages, so that some rash act on the part of the workmen or the officials may give France the excuse she wishes. The alleged murder of two French officers has already furnished an excuse for the reinforcement of the troops. Should the deliberate brutality of the alien invaders really provoke some rebellion on the part of the tortured and despairing victims, then Raymond Poincaré, Prime Minister of France, would have the pretext for which he is looking: "The Germans have attacked us. We are at war!"

This is the terrible, the colossal danger which, like a Damoclean sword, hangs over Europe at present. The system of Raymond Poincaré, whom one of his own countrymen described not long ago as "the grave-digger of Europe", a system based upon brute force combined with cold-blooded cunning and calculation, a system bent upon representing as criminal a neighbor people which one hopes to crush, in order to have free rein for every act of bestiality and oppression, has for over a decade succeeded in plunging mankind into the deepest misery. Today the unholy father of this system is close to the goal for which he has so long striven. Should he once more succeed in carrying his point, Germany will be delivered up to destruction. It is necessary that the civilized world look these facts calmly in the face. For Raymond Poincaré has himself taught the nations of the earth how to interpret his policy.