

THE STORMS THAT CENTRE AROUND LLOYD GEORGE

LEADING FIGURES IN BRITAIN'S POLITICAL WHIRLPOOL

Recent Victory Far From Final—Many Quarrels Lie Behind Latest Attacks

By Fred B. Pitney

LLOYD GEORGE has just won the biggest fight of his political career, and in winning it has eased the minds of the Allied world at large, for the world knows that with Lloyd George in the saddle Britain will never make a German peace. There will be victory first.

This knowledge, undoubtedly, greatly influenced the vote in Commons and gave such an overwhelming majority—293 to 106, practically three to one. As much as Lloyd George's opponents hated him, they feared Asquith more. Even Sir Edward Carson, bitter enemy as he is of the Premier, pleaded with his followers to support the government, for this was a direct contest between Lloyd George and Asquith. If the government should be overthrown the circumstances would compel the country to turn again to Asquith as the leader, and that was something the Conservatives could not stomach, even for the sake of getting rid of Lloyd George.

When the storm suddenly broke it came as the climax to a long and bitter quarrel between Lloyd George and certain politico-military leaders, supported by the Premier's ancient, unforgetting and untiring enemies in the Conservative party. Instead of a politician, however, it was an army officer of high standing, General F. B. Maurice, formerly closely associated with Lloyd George in the government, a quasi-member of the Cabinet, who was chosen, or who chose himself, to deliver the deathblow by means of the serious charge of untruthfulness and deception against the Premier and his chief counsellor, Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Asquith seized the opportunity and made himself the leader of the attack. He took up the Maurice charges and demanded an investigation by a Parliamentary committee. The affair was settled then. The Conservatives would not consent to be the instruments of putting Asquith in power again. What remained was for Lloyd George to present a suitable defence.

"The Daily Telegraph," of London, in commenting on the affair, said: "It comes to comparing fiascos, this last may be considered the most futile."

But it does not follow that Lloyd George is now to be let alone to attend to the business of making war. There may be an armistice, but there will be no end to the feud while Lloyd George remains in office.

Question of Politics Not War Policy

This controversy goes back to the almost prehistoric period of before the war and has its roots in the deep-seated hatred of the Conservatives for Lloyd George. It is, in fact, less concerned with winning the war than with the political animosity that even the torrent of patriotic impulse has been unable to quench.

At the very beginning of the war there were murmurs heard in London of the misfortune that the great struggle should have come while a Liberal government was in power. It was recalled that the Boer War began under a Conservative government, but that a Liberal ministry had to come into power to bring it to a successful issue, and it was bitterly resented that a Liberal Premier should once more be at the helm in a great imperial crisis.

Only shortly before party feeling had run very high over the Irish question. It was in March, 1914, that Sir Edward Carson was "King" Carson, leader of the Ulster wooden gun revolt. Asquith was coming very near to the end of his tenure of office. A general election was approaching and there was good reason to believe the Conservatives stood an excellent chance of coming in again.

There has hardly been a time when party feeling was more intense in England. And through it all Lloyd George was the right-hand man of Asquith. He was the radical of radicals. He was the originator of old-age pensions and national insurance, the income tax was his dearly beloved step-child and he had housing schemes and land schemes that made the Conservative soft write. As Chancellor of the Exchequer his budgets were the most controversial ever introduced in the House of Commons, for they provided huge sums for all his pet ideas.

Then came the war and "the old gang," as Lord Northcliffe loved to call them in "The Daily Mail," were



GENERAL MAURICE
His charges precipitated the latest conflict.

perpetuated in office. The overflowing venom of a dozen years of envious impotence had to be dammed for the country's sake. Conservatives and Liberals alike had to get behind Asquith to win the war.

Asquith, however, suffered from a temperamental disability as a war leader. He was an exceedingly pleasant old gentleman, kind hearted to a fault, liberal, far-sighted, broad-minded; but he was essentially a master of the art of compromise and committed to that policy by lifelong tradition and practice. Long before the war he had been dubbed "Wait and See," and there was no change after the war came.

Only a very short time elapsed before Asquith was in trouble with his compromises. The newspapers pounded him and demanded a strong man. And out of the ruck came Lloyd George, looming constantly larger and larger. He was the man who did things. He was the man who laid down a policy and fought for it to the bitter end. He was the man who went "all out" for prohibition so that the workmen would work six days a week and seven, if necessary, instead of spending three days drinking up the unaccounted earnings of the other four. He was the man who demanded a Ministry of Munitions and went ahead and established it. He was the one man of resource and action English political life of any faction could point to.

Hence when Asquith fell, as he had to fall—there was no getting away from it—Lord George became Premier. Six months before he took office he had been chosen by the country as the man for the place. There was no second choice. It was Lloyd George and Lloyd George only. "The little Welsh solicitor" carried the hope of England—Conservative, Liberal and Labor. Personal feelings were sunk for the sake of a strong man at the head of the government.

Whole Country Well Pleased

In the beginning Lloyd George organized his government with a majority of Conservatives as his colleagues in office. He succeeded again in persuading labor to depart from tradition and party law and accept a place in the Cabinet, while the holes were filled up with Liberals. The Conservatives were highly pleased. They pointed out that the new Premier had seen and bowed to what they called the undoubted will of the country. Labor felt that it had granted a great concession and took consistent satisfaction in its magnanimity. The Liberals accepted the situation and coped themselves to unembittered discussions as to whether they or the Conservatives held the more important posts in the government.

Mr. Asquith went back into the House of Commons as the leader of the opposition, taking his seat on the front opposition bench, and for a time under him opposition was confined to occasional gentle criticism tempering consistent support of the government. He was praised on all sides for his exceedingly high-minded attitude, and everything worked with the utmost smoothness and harmony, with the one end of winning the war.

It was not long, however, before politics began to seethe again. Lloyd George was accused on the one hand of becoming more conservative than the Conservatives, and on the other of seeking to organize a new party under his own leadership to continue his rule after the war. The opposition in the House of Commons took form and began to grow into something real. The long period of com-



Above—Admiral Jellicoe.
Below—Ex-Premier Asquith, leader of the attack.

parative inaction on the Western front helped to settle this situation. There was plenty of time and opportunity to play politics, and the political pot boiled. The peace feelers of Germany also helped.

A powerful peace party grew up among the radicals, Socialists and laborites led by Arthur Henderson. They wanted a peace by conciliation and arrangement.

Insisted on Settling Matters

Lloyd George insisted on fighting it out, and there were long controversies over the British labor leaders meeting German Socialists at various Stockholm conferences, and the Lloyd George government became involved in a maze of minor discussion and political controversy.

So far it was a question of attacks and obstructionist tactics by the peace party, but to this was added the dissatisfaction of the "bitter-enders," as they were called, who were continually after Lloyd George in the name of the army. They demanded men, men, men and more men. Man power was their slogan, and they demanded unceasingly that Lloyd George should get after the "slackers," comb out the factories and workshops and get on with the war. These were Conservatives.

Thus was created the strange situation of Lloyd George's old friends, the radicals, combining with his and their ancient enemies, the hide-bound Tories, to cause his downfall. Stranger yet, the one party attacked him in the name of peace, while their partners in the business attacked in the name of war. They hated each other intensely, but they both hated Lord George more.

The Premier recognized the need for more men for the army and preached that need continually, but labor objected to all schemes for "combing out" and obstructed the government in nearly all its moves. The government did succeed in keeping up the supply of guns and munitions, and not only keeping up the supply but greatly increasing it, so that a huge reserve was created. At that point, however, labor stopped.

Colonel Repington Led Attack

The war party attack on the Premier was led in the press by Colonel Repington, the military critic of "The Times," who never allowed the controversy to lapse for a moment, but returned again and again to the most bitter attacks. Repington not only wrote constantly about the man power problem, which was generally recognized as being of pressing importance, but he never allowed to die the contest between the "Easterners" and "Westerners"—those who believed in continuing the war in the East and those who held that the conflict should be confined to the Western front—and he was the mouthpiece for the army's opposition to a unified command on the Western front.

Lloyd George had inherited the "Eastern" policy from the Asquith government, but it was an inheritance that he could not escape. The policy was inaugurated by Winston Churchill when he sent the Naval Reserve to Antwerp on an expedition conducted under his own auspices and indepen-



Above—Lord George, the storm centre.
Below—General Foch, whose appointment as generalissimo is a big factor in the opposition to the Premier.

dent of the army chiefs. Having scored one achievement for the civilian statisticians, he led the movement for the Gallipoli campaign and, with the assistance of Lloyd George, succeeded in having it undertaken.

Neither one has ever been forgiven for that, but Churchill was the one who had taken the chief responsibility. Lloyd George's part was less conspicuous, and fast following events would have let it be forgotten had he not adhered to the general "Eastern" policy, once inaugurated.

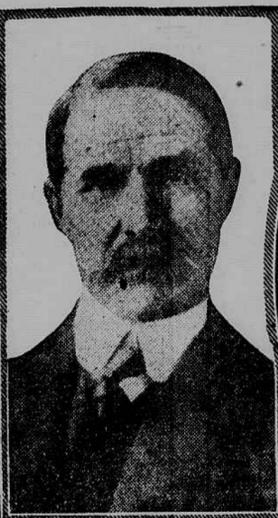
On the other hand, Lloyd George has been on the beginning the leader in England of the demand for a unified command. He has stood for it and fought for it when he has had to stand alone against the united opposition of army chiefs, politicians and people.

Robertson Opposed Foreign Generalissimo

Sir William Robertson, chief of the Imperial General Staff, was unalterably opposed to a unified command. He was opposed also to the "Eastern" policy, and he and Lloyd George were in direct conflict on both these points. Robertson, moreover, represented both the heads and the rank and file of the army. They lived and breathed in army traditions and insisted that the British army should never go under a foreign commander. They recognized what a fine and patriotic thing it was for President Wilson to let American troops be brigaded with the French and English under French and English generals, and commended him highly for it; but as soon as the suggestion was made that a foreign general should command British troops they broke into violent execration.

In its final stages the controversy between the "Easterners" and "Westerners" was lost sight of to a large extent in the furious quarrel over the unified command. Lloyd George finally won the long battle when the direction of Allied strategy was placed in the hands of the Versailles Council. It only remained then for the final steps to be taken for the appointment of a generalissimo. It was a matter of tactics. The principle of a single direction had been conceded.

Sir William Robertson resigned as chief of the general staff and Colonel Repington broke out with an article in "The Morning Post" that caused both him and the editor of "The Post" to be fined £100 in Bow Street police court for publishing the article after it had been forbidden by the censor. But the country as a whole saw the crisis coming on the battlefields of France and apparently accepted the decision, though grudgingly.



Above—Bonar Law.
Below—Lord Northcliffe, un-maker of reputations.

always with a mental reservation relating to Jellicoe's late arrival with the battleships and the failure to cut off and destroy the German fleet. To this was added the growing dissatisfaction over the ease and frequency with which the southeast coast was raided by German vessels.

The German naval policy was to raid the English coast and compel the British Admiralty to break up the fleet concentration in order to protect the coast, thus opening a channel for submarines and raiders and perhaps setting the stage for a sortie by the German fleet in force. Jellicoe's policy was to hold the fleet together in northern waters, draw the blockade lines tight and be ready at all times to meet the German fleet in full force, leaving the coast protection from minor raids as a secondary problem.

Northcliffe's papers led the demand for coast protection. Their slogan was a more aggressive naval policy against submarines and submarine bases, protection of the southeast coast and a policy of action instead of a policy of waiting for the Germans to come out of hiding. Northcliffe owns more than fifty publications of all kinds. They made Sir John Jellicoe their target, and Jellicoe went, while Sir David Beatty was appointed in his place to the command of the grand fleet.

Then came Robertson. Northcliffe attacked him and Robertson went. The people did not like it. They had never liked Northcliffe, looking upon him as the exponent of yellow journalism in England. It soon became noticed that in these attacks of Northcliffe on men in office he never made the mistake of attacking the wrong men, and it came to be believed that when Northcliffe started an outcry against a man that man was slated to go.

Premier With Northcliffe?

From this grew the charge of collusion between Northcliffe and the government. It was said that he was tipped off in advance and it was said that Lloyd George was under the control of Northcliffe. But the most generally accepted explanation, stated baldly, was that Lloyd George used Northcliffe to prepare the public for a change. He first, through Northcliffe, wrecked a reputation and threw the man overboard.

Sir Hugh Trenchard was another example. He was head of the air service. Northcliffe went after him, demanding reforms, demanding aggressive action, demanding a new policy, demanding a new head of the Air Board. Within a very short time Sir Hugh was shorn of his reputation and replaced in the Air Board by Lord Rothermere—of all men, Lord Northcliffe's brother. At the same time Northcliffe, who had been chief of the British Mission to America, became the head of propaganda in enemy countries.

It was a wonderful day for the Harmsworth family, but it was heaping up trouble for Lloyd George. Neither of the brothers held on to his position very long. They got out on the same day, each giving ill health as the reason. The question was immediately asked if Northcliffe intended to turn his batteries on Lloyd George.

At this time Lloyd George was gathering trouble for himself with increased frequency. The pacifists were baying him, while the war dogs barked at his heels. He seemed in open alliance with Northcliffe. "One sought vain for his friends. Yet he remained perched on his eminence because there was no one to take his place. There seemed but two alternatives—Lloyd George and war to victory muddled through somehow, or Asquith. It was the Germans who came to Lloyd George's aid. They started their great offensive, and for the second time Britain had to forget politics for rational defence. Once before during the great retreat from Mons to the Marne politics had been cast aside. With one accord the British Empire now watched in breathless silence while the British army fell back from the Hindenburg line to the fringe of Amiens.



GEN. SIR WM. ROBERTSON
A foe to unified control and 'side shows.'

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Disaster Blamed on Versailles Council

But once a new threshold was established there was a demand for explanations that would not be denied. For four months Germany had advertised her offensive, and for weeks the English papers had been filled with stories that the only fear of the army was that the German threat would not be made good. Yet the British army had not only suffered a great defeat, but had barely escaped irreparable disaster. Why was it? Who was to blame?

Plainly, the line had been too lightly held. "Why? The army said the fault lay with the Versailles Council, which had decided on the extension of the British line and ordered the movements of the troops. The evidence available is that at the time the British line was extended south of St. Quentin the Versailles Council could have decided at the most that the move was desirable. It would have to be carried out by Sir Douglas Haig in his discretion, and the strength with which the line was held would be controlled entirely by Sir Douglas Haig and the British General Staff. This seems to have been the limit of the powers of the Versailles Council at that time.

The official explanation was given by Lloyd George in the House of Commons on April 9. He said: "What was the position at the beginning of the battle? Notwithstanding the heavy casualties in 1917, the army in France was considerably stronger on January 1, 1918, than on January 1, 1917.

Strength of our armies in 1917, when this battle began the combatant strength of the whole of the German army on the western front was only approximately, though not quite equal to, the total combatant strength of the Allies in infantry. They were slightly inferior in artillery.

They were inferior in cavalry, they were considerably inferior, and what is very important they were undoubtedly inferior in aircraft. According to all the facts which have come to hand, the losses of the battle, that roughly represents the relative strength of the combatants on both sides at this moment. I will now tell the House something of the measures adopted to meet the emergency. I have already explained what was done about the French reserves. The Cabinet took every step to hurry up reinforcements, in order to fill up the gap in our armies. No such large numbers of men ever passed across the Channel in so short a time. As the emergency was great, it was impossible to allow those who were summoned to France the usual leave to visit their relatives. It was with the greatest regret that we found it necessary to cancel this permission, and nothing but the gravity of the position would have justified so harsh a proceeding. But the troops accepted the position in a manner which is worthy of the fortitude, courage and patriotism they have shown throughout.

Reserves of Munitions

There was an understanding that boys under nineteen years would be used only in case of emergency. We felt that this emergency had arisen and in so far as those who were over eighteen were concerned, those who had already received six months' training, we felt it necessary that they should be sent to France.

There is another matter to which I should like to refer, and it is the suggestion that our forces have been dissipated on a subsidiary enterprise. Not a single division was sent from France to the East. With regard to Italy, had it not been for the fact that there are battalions of French every step to hurry up reinforcements, in order to fill up the gap in our armies. No such large numbers of men ever passed across the Channel in so short a time. As the emergency was great, it was impossible to allow those who were summoned to France the usual leave to visit their relatives. It was with the greatest regret that we found it necessary to cancel this permission, and nothing but the gravity of the position would have justified so harsh a proceeding. But the troops accepted the position in a manner which is worthy of the fortitude, courage and patriotism they have shown throughout.

Meanwhile, on April 23, Bonar Law, Parliamentary spokesman for the government, said in the House of Commons, in answer to a question, that the extension of the British front to south of St. Quentin had not been decided by the Versailles Council. This put the weakness of the British line, which led to the retreat and almost to disaster, directly on the shoulders of the British General Staff. General Maurice nursed his wounds a few days longer and on May 4 his way clear to squaring accounts with Lloyd George. On that day he wrote the famous letter to the papers.

Pacifists Join With 'Never-Enders' and Old Conservative Foes Against Him

resented than it is on the Western front. With regard to Salonica, the only thing the present government did was to reduce the forces there by two divisions. In Mesopotamia there is only one white division at all, and in Egypt and Palestine together there are only two white divisions, and the rest are either Indians or mixed, with a very small proportion of British troops. In these divisions I am referring to infantry divisions. It is not the fact that we have got three British divisions in Egypt and Palestine and one in Mesopotamia that has enabled us to hold our own, but it is the fact that we have had these splendid troops from India. Many of them volunteered since the war and they have been more than a match for their Turkish adversaries on many a striking field.

This time of crisis afforded Lloyd George his great opportunity, however, and he was quick to take advantage of it. In the same speech in which he gave the explanations quoted he announced the appointment of General Foch as director of Allied strategy, and this, as was to be expected, was quickly followed by the appointment of Foch as generalissimo of all the Allied forces.

There was another outcry from England and there was much grumbling and some talk of betrayal. But even the army had to submit to the force of events. Foch was generalissimo. At last, after nearly four years of war, there was unity of command on the Allied front, and England accepted it.

New Problems Next Premier

Next Lloyd George grasped the man power problem. The draft age was raised to fifty-one, and combing out was promised, with no exceptions. Labor rose to the occasion and offered no objections.

There followed Irish conscription and Home Rule for Ireland. Parliament accepted Irish conscription in fact and seemed ready to accept Home Rule in principle.

Lloyd George had battled his way through another crisis and achieved another triumph. But it was not to be for long. The Irish were immediately in rebellion against conscription and refused to accept Home Rule offered as a bribe for conscription. A series of compromises began. While Ireland prepared for forcible resistance to the draft, Irish conscription was delayed to wait for Home Rule. But so far the government has been unable to agree on the provisions of a Home Rule bill.

These, however, are things turned out, though presenting every appearance of being formidable obstacles in the path of the government, were merely side issues. The great thing, the important thing, was the attitude of General Maurice, director of military operations in the Ministry of War, the connecting link between the General Staff and Cabinet.

It was part of Maurice's duty to receive the newspaper representatives from time to time and explain to them the military situation. On April 17, on the heels of a visit to the front, he gave the newspaper men an interview which contained grave reflections on General Foch. He said:

The British army is playing once more its historic rôle. As at Waterloo, it is being hammered while Blücher is marching to the battle. Our feelings now are probably very much like those in London during Waterloo; but, provided we are standing firm and taking the hammering, and provided Blücher is marching to battle, there is no reason to despair. In fact, it is just the other way round: there is every cause for encouragement.

It is unpleasant business, standing the hammering; but the great question is: "What has become of Blücher?" These figures show that though the French army is considerably larger than the British army, we have practically taken the strain of them.

World Astounded at Maurice's Question

The astonishment that a man in the position of General Maurice could commit such an indiscretion as to ask his question, "What has become of Blücher?" was general. The question was accepted as an implication that General Foch had failed in his duty to the British, and the thing was made worse by the announcement the same day in the official British communiqué that French regiments were fighting by the side of the British in the northern part of the battlefield.

Only a few days elapsed before the official announcement that General Maurice had been relieved of his duties at the Ministry of War and assigned to active service in France. General Delma Radcliffe went to the Ministry of War, but General Maurice did not go to France. He stayed in England and nursed his injured feelings.

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