

Looking Behind The Venetian Curtain

by John Hoefle

In the world of international finance, there are those who steer events, and those who react to events. While the latter are often better known, greater in number, and seemingly more powerful, true power rests with the former. At the center of the global financial system, squatting like a spider at the center of its web, are the ultramontane imperialists, the Venetian financier oligarchy and its Norman chivalric partners. The wealth of these oligarchic families is historically concentrated in tangible things—land, oil, precious metals, strategic minerals—and in controlling the financing and trade of those items and other necessities and conveniences of life.

In the Venetian system, the perpetuation of the power of the group over world affairs is paramount. The families' funds, or *fondi*, are pooled for maximum effect, and deployed through a network of financial institutions which hide their origin from an unsuspecting public. This network includes insurance companies like Assicurazioni Generali of Venice, central banks like the Bank of England and the U.S. Federal Reserve, and merchant/investment banks like Rothschild and Lazard Frères, whose individual power is but a reflection of the power of the system as a whole.

The Con of Globalization

The post-World War II activities of Lazard (the Frères has been dropped) is indicative of the way this *fondi* system works. Lazard has been at the forefront of the mergers and acquisition business, which itself is a euphemism for the creation of a global network of giant cartels more powerful than nations, which control the necessities of life, and set the terms for their availability. This process, which is explicitly designed to destroy the United States and the very concept of the nation-state, is Felix Rohatyn's life's work.

The oil industry is perhaps the best example of how this process works. It is dominated by a cartel of giant companies which control the distribution and processing of crude oil and its byproducts, and a network of financial institutions which set the price through manipulations of the futures markets. This system, which reaches deep into the pockets of people around the world, was set up by Royal Dutch/Shell and its investment banks, Rothschild and Lazard, using the manipulated oil crises of the 1970s and people like the notorious Marc Rich. (Rothschild and Lazard were also behind Enron, which was part of an operation to do to electricity and natural gas pricing, what they had already done to oil.)

Rothschild, in particular, has a long history with Royal Dutch/Shell. By the early 1900s, grabbing control of newly discovered oil fields and the oil trade was a major concern of the *fondi*. Rothschild, acting for its masters, bought oil interests in pre-Soviet Russia and built up a fleet of tankers. In 1911, Rothschild consolidated its Russian oil interests into Royal Dutch and Shell Transport and Trading, making the House of Rothschild the largest shareholders in each of those since-merged companies. The close relationship between the bank and the oil company remain to this day, as both push globalization. Lazard has its own connections to Royal Dutch/Shell, representing the company in France, and both Lazard and Rothschild have been active in Houston. Lazard, through its investments in the business enterprises of the Bush family, has played a key role in inflicting two Bush Presidents upon the world, and it was Rothschild's George Soros who bailed George W. Bush out of his failed oil venture.

Both Lazard and Rothschild are tightly connected to the international metals and minerals business. Rothschild was involved in the financing, and with it, ownership interests, in Cecil Rhodes' De Beers diamond operations and Rio Tinto, now one of the world's largest metals companies. Lazard counted among its clients Philipp Brothers, then the world's largest metals-trading company, and Englehard Industries, the world's largest refiner of precious metals, which it merged into a company 22% owned by Anglo American. Lazard is also closely tied to the shadowy Société Générale de Belgique (SGB), a company with extensive raw materials holdings. SGB's chairman is Viscount Etienne Davignon, who is also the chairman of the Bilderberg Group and a former European Union steel czar, who launched the global restructuring of the steel industry.

Déjà Vu

Lazard's role in destructuring the U.S. automobile industry is nothing new. The bank has long represented Italy's Fiat, holding a seat on its board and assisting in its international operations. Lazard has also been intimately involved with France's Citroën. It was a major shareholder of Citroën in the 1920s, and arranged the spin-off of Citroën's SOVAC financing subsidiary, in much the same way and for the same purposes as today's spin-off of GMAC. Lazard helped push André Citroën out of his own company by starving it of credit and then selling the troubled company to Michelin, then later arranging the merger of Citroën and Peugeot.

Lazard also has close ties to the two largest private water companies in the world, France's Vivendi and Suez, while Rothschild has close ties to the privatized military world. The investment bank Dillon Read, identified by a former partner as a Rothschild bank, is a thread which ties the Rothschild interests to the protection of the German cartels after World War II, to Bechtel, and to Brown Brothers, the founders of Halliburton's Brown & Root.