

OUR ASIATIC NEIGHBORS

The title of this paper was prescribed by your Program Committee. The purpose was without doubt the generous one of assigning a subject so broad that it would cover any thoughts which I might care to present concerning the peoples and states of Eastern Asia. I must confess, however, that the title intrigued me, for it offered an opportunity to consider for a few moments a subject which has long held my interest. A very important feature of neighborhood relations is the opinion which one party holds of the others, or which the others hold of him. So this morning I would survey rapidly the changing opinions which the Western World has held regarding its Asiatic Neighbors.

From the time of Marco Polo down to the early nineteenth century the works of Western writers dealing with the Empire of China were, with few exceptions, laudatory in the extreme. The missionaries, the diplomats, the travellers and traders dwelt upon the vastness of the Empire, the wealth of the Court, the stability of the Government, and the industry and civilization of the people. Whereas the early Portuguese and Spanish conquerors imposed their will upon petty Indian princes and East Indian chieftains they soon learned that such high handed methods brought swift punishment in the Middle Kingdom. Even the Dutch and English traders humbly solicited commercial privileges instead of dictating the terms under which they would trade. A very considerable literature exists, much of it based upon a surprising range of information, and in large part the product of European missionaries who had considerable opportunities for securing at first hand, or through their acquaintance with Chinese authors, the materials which they used.

It was not until the surprising defeat of the Imperial forces by a small British expeditionary force in the so-called Opium War that the tradition of Chinese power and wealth fell to the ground. From that time, until the early part of the present century the general opinion of the West respecting China steadily declined. From being suppliants for favors the great powers of the West became haughty dictators, and China, too weak to defend herself, was only saved by the jealousies of her masters. The principles of the "open door" and the "integrity of China" were

Western devices to prevent the growth of any dominant foreign power in China.

At no time did Western opinion of China reach so low an ebb as immediately after the Boxer Uprising, in 1900. But within a very few years a change for the better was noticeable, as China entered upon that program of reform which seemed to mark the introduction of Western methods of political, educational, financial, and industrial development. With the surprising success of the Chinese Revolution, in 1911-1912, and the adoption of American political institutions it was natural for American publicists to look upon China with a sympathy rarely expressed in the past. While it might be said that the traditional attitude of the United States toward China was one of sympathy and friendship, the treatment of Chinese immigrants in our Western states and our national exclusion laws demonstrated a popular attitude at variance with the diplomatic one. And it may be clearly shown that popular opinion favorable to China did not develop until after the establishment of the Republic. From 1911 until the present time, China of all the Asiatic nations, has held the first place in American esteem. This was clearly manifest in the popular support given to China in her later troubles with Japan, and especially in regard to the Shantung controversy. The only clauses of the treaty of Versailles, aside from those dealing with the League of Nations, which received any adequate consideration in the Senate Debates in 1919 and 1920 were those which transferred the German rights in Shantung to Japan. Even the political anarchy which swept over China after the death of President Yuan Shih-kai, in 1916, did not affect American sympathy, and at the Washington Conference in 1921, and when the Tariff Conference was in session at Peking, American public opinion was with rare exceptions, squarely behind China and her aspirations.

The development of western opinion regarding Japan is quite another story. The early writers were as strong in their commendations as were those who first told the West about China. But the unfortunate religious conflicts of the early seventeenth century colored the accounts of the churchmen who furnished most of the information about Japan. Dutch writers, on the other hand, who had no religious bias, kept alive the traditions of culture, wealth, and good government. With the opening of Japan to western intercourse, in the fifties, there began that amazing acceptance of Western ideas and methods which soon gave Japan a hybrid civilization. Western teachers and advisers dwelt

upon the talents of her pupils, Western missionaries praised a land where the field was ripe for the gleaner and yet where missionaries were safe from the dangers which their co-workers in China had to face. Japan, seeking wisdom in all quarters of the world, won the approval of the teachers whom she sought out. The British admired their navy and their railroads, for they had helped to make them; the Germans approved of their armies and their universities, and some of their law codes; the French were the first to admire their arts, but they also helped to codify their laws and organize their courts; Americans helped to establish a school system which in a surprising time made Japan the only literate nation in all the East. There were a few hostile notes, but only a few; the tone of most Western books written between 1860 and 1905 was pitched in a key of admiration and praise. And when Japan, the prize pupil of Western training, humbled China, the vast but powerless exponent of the unbending East, a higher note was reached, which swelled to a crescendo when Russia, most feared of European Powers was humbled on the high seas and on Manchurian battle fields.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, therefore, Western opinion ran strongly against China, and just as strongly in favor of Japan. But in both cases the tide soon turned. In that of Japan the ebb began with the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905. A school of publicists arose who swelled a chorus of alarm lest Japan, who had so decisively humbled Russia, would continue on a career of military aggression and expansion until she became the master not only of China but of all the European and American territories in the Far East. This very year saw the beginning of an anti-Japanese agitation in California which steadily increased in volume until discriminatory state laws, there and elsewhere, were followed by a Federal Exclusion Act in 1924. Just as opinion had been unreasonably favorable before 1905 it became as unreasoningly unfavorable after that year. Although some attempts were made to stem this tide of hostility, most of the books and periodical and newspaper articles in the past twenty years were relentlessly critical of Japan. Certain catch phrases carried great import. China was the sister republic of Asia, Japan was the embodiment of military imperialism. No matter what might be the merits of the case, in every controversy between China and Japan American public opinion swung strongly to the support of its sister republic.

These waves of popular opinion have had no little influence

upon my own work as a student of Far Eastern History. My appointment to this field of teaching at Stanford came immediately after the close of the Russo-Japanese War, in 1906. The first books which I read were products of the period when China was out of favor and Japan in high esteem. As I pursued my own investigations I soon found that in both cases the judgments of all but the most thorough scholars were too extreme. That in many cases China had been more sinned against than sinning, and that the statesmen of New Japan were, after all, human in spite of their splendid talents. So when the tide began to run the other way I had some materials at hand with which to appraise the new mass opinions, and I again found that unreasoning praise of the Chinese Republic was even less defensible than sweeping condemnation of the Monarchy, while it was a very easy thing to run down the rumors on which many of the hostile criticisms of Japan were based and demonstrate their absurdity. It was but natural, however, for students who entered the field at a later date to be unconsciously impressed by the prevailing opinion of the time, and to start their investigations with a strong bias in favor of China and in opposition to Japan. I am impressed with this fact every time I read an apparently scholarly treatise which accepts without scrutiny the statements of earlier authors whom I know to be absolutely unreliable, and whose works reflect the popular opinion of the period in which they wrote. Year after year my seminar at Stanford has studied the various controversial questions of recent years and the moment access is had to the facts in the case the absurdities of many of the standard authorities become apparent.

In the few minutes which remain I would like to give three examples of popular opinions which run counter to the easily ascertained facts.

Early in 1915 Japan made certain demands upon China which soon became known as the "Twenty-one Demands." Scarcely a book has been written about Far Eastern policies since that time which has not dwelt at length upon this episode. That Japan made a grievous mistake in making such demands upon China I have never failed to assert, and, I believe, the best opinion in Japan today agrees with this position. But with the rarest exceptions the books and articles which describe these demands and the subsequent negotiations are marred by grievous errors in fact and in interpretation. What is rarely brought out is that the original demands contained strong articles which were manifestly

inserted for bargaining purposes, and that the treaties which finally resulted contained very great modifications in the terms and included practically nothing which China was not prepared to yield at the very beginning of the long discussions. At the close of the negotiations China published "An Official History of the Sino-Japanese Treaties" while Japan issued a statement which simply included the most important documents. The Chinese statement has been published in full in many places, and is the basis for most of the secondary treatments of the episode. The Japanese communiqué can be found only in rather inaccessible works, and has had little influence on Western opinion. I might add that the same thing happened at Paris in 1919, the Chinese claim for the direct restitution of Shantung was given the widest publicity in America, and may even be found in full in the pages of the Congressional Record, whereas the very important reply of Japan to this claim was never even printed, and exists today only in a mimeographed version as issued to the press. About a year ago the State Department published a belated volume dealing with our foreign relations for 1915 which contain 127 pages of correspondence and documents dealing with these Sino-Japanese negotiations. In the light of this material every study of the Twenty-one Demands will have to be rewritten. I would mention three very illuminating facts. We here learned for the first time that in 1900 our Navy Department desired to secure a coaling station at Samsah Inlet, north of Foochow, and Mr. John Hay sounded Japan to see if she would object to our securing such a lease in Fukien Province, which was a recognized Japanese sphere of interest. It doubtless will come as a surprise to many students of Far Eastern History to learn that so soon after Germany, Russia, Great Britain and France has secured naval bases in China, the United States should have made such a proposal. Japan replied that she did not wish any power to secure a lease in that Province, and the matter was dropped. But this American proposal was the basis of Japan's demand that she should be consulted first if China needed foreign capital to work mines, build railways and construct harbor-works in the Province of Fukien. On the other hand the usual authorities instead of stating this real reason, give an apochryphal one.

We also learned that the American Department of State, after a careful scrutiny of the Japanese demands and in the light of information received from our representatives in Peking and Tokyo, informed Japan that in respect to sixteen of the demands

it was not disposed to raise any question. These included the demands regarding Shantung Province, for which Japan was so roundly denounced in the United States four years later, and regarding South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia. Only five of the demands seemed objectionable to our State Department, two of these on the ground that they would be a violation of the principle of the "Open Door" and three because they were "clearly derogatory to the political independence and administrative entity of that country." Japan acceded to our suggestions in every case. Four of the demands were dropped, and the fifth was changed to an exchange of notes which, following our suggestion, stated that China would not permit any Power "to construct a dockyard, a coaling station for military use, or a naval base or to set up any other military establishment on the coast of Fukien Province, nor shall they allow any like establishment to be set up with any foreign capital on the said coast." In other words, there was absolutely nothing in the Sino-Japanese treaties of 1915 to which the American Government had taken the slightest offense. Yet I am afraid it will be many years before American opinion recognizes these simple facts.

The third example, also based upon these recently published documents, is even more remarkable. You may remember that in 1917 an exchange of notes was effected between Secretary of State Lansing and Viscount Ishii, the special representative of Japan. These notes, which were harmless in themselves, were at once given distorted significance. The phrase which caused the most trouble was one which stated: "The Government of the United States and Japan recognize that territorial propinquity creates special relations between countries, and consequently, the Government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous." This was interpreted, by alarmists, to mean that the United States would allow Japan a free hand in China. The fact that the notes went on to say that both governments denied that they had any purpose to infringe in any way the independence or territorial integrity of China, and declared that they would always adhere to the principle of the "open-door" in China was quite overlooked. Critics of Japan asserted that Viscount Ishii had hoodwinked Mr. Lansing, and support was given to this belief when, in 1919, before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Mr. Lansing stated that the suggestion of inserting this statement in the agreement was made by Viscount Ishii.

We now have before us the letter of Secretary of State Bryan to the Japanese Ambassador, of March 13, 1915—two years before Viscount Ishii appeared in Washington—the very letter in which the American objections to five articles in the Twenty-one Demands were expressed. In this letter Mr. Bryan said: "The United States frankly recognizes that territorial contiguity creates special relations between Japan and these districts," namely, Shantung, South Manchuria, and East Mongolia. Thus the American Government, on its own motion, had frankly recognized the situation which, two years later, was expressed in the Lansing-Ishii notes. With these facts before us the whole framework of condemnation of Viscount Ishii and his government falls to the ground.

If time were available I could give many more instances of the conflict between popular opinion and easily ascertained facts. Every student of History is aware of this unfortunate situation. And the student of Far Eastern History should be especially on his guard because it is so difficult to get the facts and understand the other point of view when you are dealing with neighbors who represent a different culture, different ways of doing things, but who, after all, have the same aspirations and human needs as their neighbors across the Pacific.

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