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The Japanese Mission and the War

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Date?

THE JAPANESE MISSION AND THE WAR.

Viscount Ishii, who heads the Japanese Special Mission about to come to the United States is one of Japan's foremost diplomatists. A great American, the late H. W. Denison, gave more than thirty years of his life to the Japanese service; was rewarded with every honor; and shared with Mutsu, Okuma, Ito, Komura, Katsura, and a long list of the ablest of Japanese statesmen in founding and moulding Japan's modern foreign policy. As a bureau chief, as Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, and as Ambassador Viscount Ishii developed in that school. He has also served as Minister for Foreign Affairs and indeed is a diplomatist of wide experience and of the highest training.

More than this, Viscount Ishii is a man of such candor, such quick and sound intelligence, such fine character, and such sympathetic personality as to make him liked and respected in any country. Some ten years ago he visited the United States and Canada for the purpose of observing the status of his countrymen in the two countries. He is therefore no stranger and is quite familiar with the little difficulties, so grossly exaggerated on both sides, that have sometimes engaged the attention of the American and Japanese Governments.

Those difficulties are so small, really, and so susceptible of reasonable solution, that, without some blunder yet undreamed of on the part of one country or the other, trouble between them is unthinkable, unless silly ignorant talk on both

sides can actually make an idée fixe of such a fancy. To tireless folly and ignorant prejudice nothing is impossible!

We can hardly hope to receive this distinguished Mission with a hospitality so exquisite as that accorded the various American missions hitherto sent to Japan; but our Government should try to do so. The object of the Mission is doubtless the discussion of Japan's part in the war. Both countries being relatively remote from the battle-fields, the two governments should find much in common in their problem. The world feels and doubtless Japan feels that the time has come for energetic concentration of all the forces of civilization to end the German menace once and for all time. In estimating what can reasonably be expected of the Japanese it will be useful to analyze, to some extent, their diplomatic position and their role thus far in the war.

After seizing Kiaochow and various German possessions in Oceania, Japan seemed to become quite passive. It will be recalled that Germany had taken a leading part with Russia (backed by France), in ordering Japan out of the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur which she had taken from China in the China Japan War of 1894-5; and that soon thereafter Germany had forced China to yield her Kiaochow. The opportunity to get even with Germany must have been a sweet one to the Japanese. They must have been glad to avail of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to bring them into the war. Beyond this very lucrative participation in the opening stages, and the equally lucrative business of supplying muni-

tions and materials for war, Japan had until quite recently done practically nothing, although remaining technically at war with Germany and not as a separate belligerent but as attached to the Entente Allies ^{through} by her treaty with Great Britain.

During the war Japan made with the Czar's Government a secret convention regarding China. There is no evidence that even her British ally was consulted in the matter. Without doubt that secret convention provided for mutual Russian-Japanese support of whatever special privileges or interests those two Powers might respectively assert in the regions of China, near or contiguous to their several territories and spheres of activity. Such an understanding with a powerful and aggressively imperialistic Russia was ideal from the viewpoint of promoting an energetic policy of peaceful penetration, economic exploitation, and political power by Japan in China. Backed by the only western Power that could conveniently throw great land forces into Eastern Asia the process of absorption so successfully practiced in Korea could go forward more easily in South Manchuria, so naturally adjoining that country and Liaotung. Indeed the classic phrase "protection, guidance and control," which is a poetic gem of aggressive diplomacy, and which occurred in the earlier Japanese-Korean negotiations, could serve as well further North. Possessed of Formosa opposite the coast of Fukien, since 1895, installed in Germany's place at Kiaochow, the key to Shantung; in possession of Port Arthur and Liaotung as successor to Russia in 1905; sovereign of Korea since a few years; enjoying the greatest economic

interests and a position of special authority successfully asserted, through colonization and in many other ways, in South Manchuria, no wonder that, with her new convention with Russia, Japan was satisfied. Add the fact that both Russia and Japan were considerably insured against harsh criticism from the West by the fact of there both being fellow belligerents with the Entente Allies, and the situation was perfect!

In outlining this situation, it is not intended to carp at it. Too much of the map of the world has been determined by such policies to make it otherwise than fatuous to do so. There are three things American statesmanship in foreign affairs should avoid as the pest. They are the dogmas of mere law-smiths; sentimentality; and blind devotion to exploded tradition. America is not China's keeper. If geographical, racial, and economic circumstances, ^{clearly} clearly availed of in pursuance of natural laws, have given the Empire of Japan, ^a special position in certain parts of China, and, through them, a special interest in China, that is a fact. And if it is a fact, it is merely irritating, ~~silly~~ and useless for the United States to hold back from recognizing that fact. With guarantees of equality of opportunity and the "open door" for our trade, industry and enterprise, our real interest in China ends. Cooperation with Japan, not obstruction, is clearly our proper part.

When China was recently threatened with a serious civil war our State Department is reported to have addressed the Chinese Government a note adjuring them to keep the peace and saying that

order and peace within China were more important than the question of China's attitude toward Germany. It has never been denied and must therefore be believed, incredible as it seems, that this was done without consulting either Japan or our other chief Allies in this war. Japan should have been consulted in advance, first, as a power having special interests in China; secondly, as our Ally in the war against Germany which war China's condition and attitude might effect; and, thirdly, because the Root-Takahira Agreement of about ten years ago provides for such consultation and might well have been observed, for once, by the United States at any rate. Naturally such crass action was resented across the Pacific. Japan is far more sensitive about her Chinese interests than about the immigration and land-ownership difficulties, which are local, are more fanciful than real, and can easily enough be overcome when they are taken out of unscrupulous and unpatriotic state politics and are approached with tact and skill.

But to return. Japan's situation was, then, a highly satisfactory one the day before the Russian revolution. There was, perhaps, a touch of cynicism and of selfishness in the complacent aloofness, from a war she remained in, which Japan displayed directly her own conquests had been made in the Far East. Possibly it is not ~~we~~ the American Government to emphasize this point. However, what is of vast interest is that the rebirth of Russia as a non-imperialistic democracy instantly knocked one side out of the powerful arch supporting Japanese policy in the Far East and in the world at large. Japan could not conveniently

stand alone and friendless in any case; and the thorough defeat of Germany became of still more obvious concern to her. As one of the Allies the peace conference would have something to say about her new war-won possessions; withdrawn from the Alliance she would have to fight Germany to retain them. But far more than this is the importance to Japan of having friends sympathetic to her reasonable ambitions in the Far East. In short, the transmutation of Russia necessitated a complete ^{reorientation} reorganization of Japanese diplomacy.

How quick to realize this were the statesmen at Tokio was evident. We soon began to hear of Japanese gunboats convoying Allied merchantmen in the Mediterranean. A most distinguished committee was appointed to study diplomatic questions. A mission was appointed to come to the United States. Tokio news dispatches came to life with war topics.

As the fourth year of war opens we desire to hasten by all means that coup de grace to the boundless ambition, arrogance and brutality which, as their state of mind, makes the German people at present impossible to live in the same world with. Not only gradually to gain victory on the western front, but also to wreck the Berlin-Bagdad dream, is an excellent means to the end in view. To bring about Bulgarian defection from the Central Powers, by force or by propaganda, or to separate Turkey from them, would be work of the first importance. The fatuous rôle of the Turkish ^{people,} enslaved by Germany with nothing to gain and

everything to lose, must be brought home to them. The Young Turks under Enver Pasha, whose character was formed during his many years at Berlin must be forced to relinquish their hold. ^{or to retreat} With the diffidence that must accompany any non-military thought upon a military problem, one wonders why, for these purposes, ^{use} ~~avail~~ could not be made of the submarine-free route from Japan to the Persian Gulf and the Aegean.

At all events, Japan now feels fresh need of her friends of the Entente Allies. As Motono, the Minister for Foreign Affairs lately intimated in the Diet, Japan is alive to her post-bellum interests in her recent acquisitions of Kiao-chow and in Oceania. Japan has ships and admirable troops in vast numbers. It ought to be possible to ^{put these to war uses} ~~avail of these~~. The "patrol of the Pacific" can be left to the sea-gulls and the flying-fish. China can "stew in her own juice" for awhile, if she will stew. The place for Japan's navy and for Japan's army is where they can do most to help beat Germany.

No squeamishness about recognizing the fact of Japan's position in China, so long as asserted within reason and with due regard to our material interests in Chinese trade, should for a moment stand in the way of full avail of Japanese participation in the war if such participation will be of military value.