CURRENT MAGAZINES

CHINA'S FIGHT WITH JAPAN

Pacific Retreat.—Mr. C. Hodges, in *Current History.*
Japan's Military Socialism.—Mr. A. Morgan Young, in the *Fortnightly.*
The Cost for Japan.—Editorial, in the *Spectator.*
Chinese Extraterritoriality.—Mr. C. Wang, in *Foreign Affairs.*

LATE last year, a very remarkable contribution was made to general enlightenment on Sino-Japanese affairs. This was the issue of a volume called *The Far Eastern Crisis: Recollections and Observations*. It was by Mr. Henry L. Stimson, who was American Secretary of State in those ever memorable years, 1931 and 1932. A reader who desires to understand what is happening at present in the Far East should acquaint himself with what Mr. Stimson then observed, and with what he now recollects.

I

The book describes how Japan's first fierce inroad into Manchuria began, how fruitless was expostulation or protest, how contemptuous was the attitude of Tokio towards every reminder of the pledges and covenants which were being violated. Mr. Stimson at the beginning of 1932, while there was still much in doubt as to the upshot, bethought himself of a scheme to bring pressure to bear simultaneously from Washington, Paris and London. He proposed that from each there should be despatched to the Japanese Government a note, in substantially identical terms, intimating

> that it does not intend to recognise any situation, treaty, or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the *Pact of Paris* of August 22, 1928, to which China and Japan are parties.

The British Foreign Office, under Sir John Simon, declined to send such a message, and the United States had to act alone. Immediately, it seems, there developed a far more confident and a far more exacting mood in Japanese action, due to such assurance of British support. Mr. Stimson quotes a passage from an editorial in the London *Times*, which declared Sir John Simon altogether right in his refusal, and ridiculed the silly American fear that

Japan might have some secret project to set up a puppet Government partial to herself in Manchuria. "It is clear", said the sapient *Times*, "that the Foreign Office does not share these apprehensions"! In the five years which have passed since then, we have had an opportunity to judge the prescience of that Foreign Office, and the insight of its journalistic commentator. One cannot blame Mr. Stimson for now publishing his proposal, and the criticism it encountered, in merciless juxtaposition. That paragraph of his book makes penitential reading at this hour, for diplomatists in Paris and in London.

For not only has the puppet State—that allegedly baseless dream of a fevered imagination in Washington—been set up exactly as the American observer foresaw; but the horrors of 1932, which then escaped with a few words of half-apologetic censure, have been repeated in 1937 with the confidence born of that earlier immunity. At the meeting of the League Assembly before which the *Lytton Report* came up for consideration, the Japanese representative was delighted with the speech of the British Foreign Secretary. He declared that in those terse, lucid sentences, the sort of eloquence so familiar to British Courts, Sir John Simon had stated the case for Japan in a form to which he had himself nothing to add. Is it any wonder that when Shanghai once again becomes the centre of conflict, neither side should be handicapped by restraints or usages of civilised warfare upon which, five years ago, the victims of attack relied in vain, either for immediate protection or for later sympathy?

But we shall not grasp the essentials of this conflict, now desolating the Far East, unless we go back considerably beyond even that luckless decision at the British Foreign Office in 1932, to consider the western ways in dealing with China of which this was a sample.

II

One is reluctant to add to the already crushing load of liabilities for later disaster which is now borne by the framers of the Peace Treaties of 1919. But it is impossible to resist the evidence that the Sino-Japanese situation was made very much worse by what they did.

At that time the "Republic of China" was just eight years old, the product of a revolution which in 1911 overturned a Manchu Empire of more than two and a half centuries. Young China, under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, had declared a republic—for a country as large as all Europe put together, but with hardly

even the beginnings of intercommunication. Obviously it would have to carry on for a very considerable time with the old officials. Amid the collapse of the Manchu governing *régime* before a republican *régime* could effectively take its place, each of these provincial authorities had a chance to become supreme in his own sphere. Chaos was bound to ensue. Nominally there was one seat of government in the North, at Nanking; one in the South, at Canton; but the country soon split up into the separate domains of numerous war lords. Everything depended upon the degree of influence each of them could command over armed followers who were called in terms of compliment "soldiers"; in another sort of term, "banditti"!

At the Peace Conference, delegates from both the Nanking and the Canton Governments appeared, making their appeal to the architects of a new world order. Their complaint of the old order was incisive. They had to speak about a long process of "nibbling", that dated back to the opium war of 1842; about the partitioning of China into spheres of influence for western powers; about the cool effrontery with which Chinese rights had been ignored and regard was paid only to the prompting of rival European ambitions. What was wanted was a source for cheap raw material and a market for western manufactured goods! Such had been the story of the French in Annam, the Germans in Shantung, the Japanese in Korea, the Russians in Manchuria, the British in Hong Kong, and of a curious motley assortment running "the International Settlement" in Shanghai. It was the story, too, of those amazing rights—which the architects of a new and self-determining order should be the last to preserve—the rights known as "extraterritorial". At the moment the question was about the disposal of interests in Shantung—which might serve as an illustrative case for much more.

The Allied and Associated Powers replied that the Chinese demand for a reconsideration of the whole principle of spheres of influence in China could not be granted. That would carry them far beyond the sphere of the Peace Conference. They reflected that it was no part of the business of "the Big Four" to deal with complaints about what had been happening for three-quarters of a century. It was strictly the Great War issues that came before them, and they had to consider what was the legitimate claim for China as one of the victorious belligerents. She must remember that she had not come into the war until August, 1917, and even after that date she took no very serious part in the hostilities. On the whole, they judged it equitable that such powers as Germany

had exercised in Shantung should thenceforth be vested in Japan, and that the Pacific Islands, which Germany had controlled, should likewise pass to Japan under Mandate from the League of Nations.

One is not surprised to learn that the Chinese delegates withdrew in some indignation, refusing to sign the *Treaty of Versailles*.

III

It was a desperately hard problem that confronted those architects of a Chinese Republic, trying to reconstruct their immense, illiterate, largely poverty-stricken country after the famous Three Principles laid down by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the leader of the revolution in 1911:—the *Principle of Nationalism*, that China should be primarily for the Chinese, not for foreign adventurers to exploit; the *Principle of Democracy*, that government should be by representative responsible assemblies: and the *Principle of Social Justice*, that the country's natural resources should be so distributed as to give every family a decent living. No one knew better than those leaders of Young China, no one else knew quite so well, how difficult it would be for a small minority of intellectuals, trained in western countries, to make a western plan of this sort work in such a country as China—its people so unprepared for such responsibilities. It was easy enough to stir furious rage against the exploiters who had come in from outside to steal the country's goods—the "foreign devils," as they were called in the Boxer Rising. But it was quite another thing to fashion native instruments for taking control if these should be dispossesed. And at every turn some foreign intruder,—above all, Japan—was found inciting, equipping, assisting rebels against the Republic to make the new *régime* unworkable. The story of what happened in the end to turn Manchuria into Manchukuo is just the last chapter in the development of Japanese intrigue.

Disappointed in their application to the Big Four at the Peace Conference, and thwarted continuously by foreign instigators of sedition, the Chinese republican leaders turned for help to Soviet Russia. There, at least, Japanese pressure would be powerless to injure them. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen managed to enlist Moscow sympathy, though he made it quite clear that Communism was out of the question as a system for China. Moscow was sufficiently attracted by the chance of working against the powers of capitalist exploitation anywhere, and the chief fruit of the Conference was to despatch Soviet officers to set up a Chinese Military College for organizing and training military Commanders for the National

Defence Forces of the Republic of China. The Principal of the College was Chiang Kai-Shek, whose name figures now almost every day in press dispatches from the Far East. The institution he controlled, under Moscow direction, was set up in 1924.

As might have been expected, an institution under such auspices developed a definitely Communist side, but Dr. Sun Yat-Sen—who had declared that Communism for China was impossible—proved right in so far as this, that the anti-Communists, whose chief leader was Chiang Kai-Shek, secured and kept the upper hand. It is here that one notes the dreadful possibilities of a country so vast, but so unorganized, continental in size, but with no means of rapid or effective communication. China has had for the last dozen years no one knows how many governments, controlling each a huge area, as a robber chief terrorizes a district. And at every turn there is the sinister figure of Japan, waiting to profit by intensifying disorder. The venture in Manchuria in 1931 is being repeated now in North China.

Regarding the justice of that Japanese enterprise six years ago, whose further grim development we are now contemplating, it is fortunately needless to conduct fresh investigation. The *Lytton Report* was enough for all who think in terms of our western respect for truthfulness and fair play. It was manifest to every observer that pledge after pledge had been disregarded at Tokio; that not only the *Covenant of the League* but the *Nine-Power Treaty* and the *Pact of Paris*, all signed by Japan, had been set at naught in this raid upon a neighbour without even the formality of a declaration of war; and that however the Japanese *Bushido* might, as the legend declared, resemble a mediaeval Code of Chivalry, the resemblance at least could not include the requirement of good faith. But it was urged, and it is still urged, in Japanese propagandist pamphlets, that Pacts and Treaties are for a normal time and a normal sequence; that in this case there was some extraordinary and compelling circumstance, some sudden challenge not only to honour but to national safety, of the sort which must always over-ride obligation to a written pledge. They argue that the situation in Manchuria, with its piteous appeal from a misgoverned people for a champion in their distress, together with the extreme peril for Japanese nationals, was just the sort of exceptional crisis which the framers of the League Covenant itself had in mind when they recognised certain quarrels as "non-justiciable", and hence outside the scope of collective action. Now whether exceptional circumstances dispense one from the application of a fixed principle, or rather require in a peculiar degree that

fixed principle and not shifting expediency should be the guide, is disputable. What is not disputable is the unwisdom of taking the word of a deeply interested and even infuriated party, that circumstances have arisen of such exceptional character as to dispense him from observing the common obligations of a covenant, and to authorize him to pursue instead his own material advantage. The Lytton Commission was sent out to Manchuria in February, 1932, to ascertain whether there had been real ground for such a plea, and the answer of that thoroughly disinterested tribunal, after sifting every kind of evidence on the spot, is before us. Naturally we read the present Tokio case in the light of it.

IV

It was in response to the urgent appeal of China that the League of Nations sent out these Commissioners, five men of talent and without prejudice; an Englishman, a Frenchman, an Italian, an American and a German. They spent five months in the Far East—in Tokio, in Shanghai, in Nanking, then on tour through Manchuria. By the end of July, 1932, while Japanese troops were still crushing the last Chinese resistance against the new *régime* of Mr. Henry Pu-yi, by appointment of Japan "President of Manchukuo", the Commissioners sat down at Peiping to reduce their data to an ordered statement, and to advise the League of Nations Council as to what should be believed or disbelieved.

That *Lytton Report* is commonly cited as altogether pro-Chinese. But those who refuse to follow the evil precedent set by critics of the *Treaty of Versailles*, leaving it unread so that their criticisms may be the less embarrassed, know how sharp was its comment upon many a feature of Chinese policy. It points out how China, after long acquiescence in foreign cooperation to overcome her difficulties and to develop her resources, had suddenly begun a furious anti-foreign campaign; how within a few years a very dangerous atmosphere had been created, not only by incitement of the younger element in the schools to bitter hatred of "the intruders", but by the economic boycott which threatened the very life of Japanese trade. Perhaps the whole interference by foreign Powers in China—the whole apparatus of concessions, international settlements, extraterritorial Courts—was bad. But it had been long in operation, in many respects to China's commercial advantage; and although Japan had not been the Power to begin it, her geographical position and accumulated interests were such as must make her the chief sufferer by its sudden re-

versal. The stake in Manchuria, established a quarter of a century earlier by treaty, had become enormous. Her lease for thirty-five years of the South Manchurian Railway had provided the opportunity for expansion such as native China had never known, and with characteristic energy Japan had embraced it. She had promoted industries and manufactures, giving work to multitudes of Chinese who would otherwise have been unemployed. It was not only this huge investment of Japanese capital, but the lives of some 30,000 Japanese workers in Manchuria, that the new anti-foreign propaganda and the economic boycott imperilled. The Lytton Commissioners were inundated with evidence about how ill Manchuria had been governed; about the constant danger to the South Manchurian Railway from bandit attacks at which the Chinese Government at least connived; about the construction of a "parallel railway", contrary to express pledge, that the South Manchurian line might be impoverished; and about the development, within the years after the close of the Great War, of a Chinese Communism by which the very existence of Japanese activity on the mainland might be made impossible. Manchuria, in short, was represented to be "the life-line of Japan":

> The likelihood of an alliance between the Communist doctrines in the north and the anti-Japanese propaganda of the Kuomintang in the south made the desire increasingly felt to impose between the two a Manchuria which would be free from both. Japanese misgivings have been still further increased in the last few years by the predominant influence acquired by the U.S.S.R. in Outer Mongolia, and the growth of Communism in China.

But while fully recognising the seriousness of these complaints, as of not a few others to which the machinery of conciliation is still held applicable, the Lytton Commission reported that Japan by her performance begun in September, 1931, had placed herself altogether in the wrong. Examination and cross-examination of a multitude of witnesses, some of them obviously terrified into reticence, had shown that the bombardment of Mukden was no "legitimate self-defence" for Japanese nationals in danger. In regard to the establishment of "Manchukuo", the Commission had convincing proof from many quarters that this was not, as alleged at Tokio, "a genuine and spontaneous independence movement", but a product of Japanese design, and that although certain local minority groups professed to welcome the change, it was regarded on the whole by the Chinese of Manchuria—that is to say, by the vast majority of the country's inhabitants—as a mere

instrument of Japanese aggression. In short, the pretext of exceptional circumstances and necessities, on which Japan claimed immunity from blame for violating the letter of her pledge, was found by these impartial investigators to have been a tissue of falsehood.

The League of Nations Assembly adopted this Report, despite the resistance of Sir John Simon. In reply, the censured nation gave notice of withdrawal from the League, to take effect two years later. That was in the autumn of 1933. One remembers with a shudder how we were soon afterwards told that "Japanese school children are writing essays on 'The Crisis of 1936' ".

At least in this resignation from the League there was a welcome outburst of veracity. That Japan had from the first no real business to partake the Geneva counsels, is as plain as anything can be. Not "collective security", nor "the international mind", —something far removed from this is the spring of her effort. General Araki, addressing his own people, is a better guide to what was in their mind than any manifesto of a Japanese delegate at the annual pacifist reunion by the Lake of Geneva. In a moving exposition of *Kodo*, that slogan of Japanese loyalty to the supernatural figure of the Emperor, the General, fresh from his conquest of Manchuria, made short work of scruples about the League. It is no plea for access to food stuffs or raw material that he puts forward in excuse for the raid. Berlin had taught him a very different type of appeal, and the General was quite outspoken:

> It is a big mistake to consider the Manchurian problem from a merely materialistic point of view, and regard it simply as a question of rights or interests or "life-line". The trouble has arisen because the corrupt materialistic ideas of the Chinese people, imported from the West, have defiled the racial spirit and national morality of the Japanese to firing-point. We Japanese are not afraid of blood, nor do we grudge to lay down our life for justice. It is the Imperial House that is the Centre of us. Herein lies the supreme virtue of the Imperial House. His Majesty is, *ipso facto*, Japanese morality, and to assist in promoting the prosperity of the Imperial House or the spread of Japanese morality is the basis of our existence. Lately, however, the burning national spirit has been on the wane...It is a veritable measure of Providence that the Manchurian trouble has arisen; it is an alarm-bell for the awakening of the Japanese people. If the nation is rekindled with the same great spirit in which the country was founded, the time will come when all the nations of the world will be made to look up to our *Kodo*. *Kodo*, the great ideal of the Japanese nation, is of such substance that it should be spread and expanded all over the world, and every impediment to it be brushed aside—even by the sword.

Thus General Araki, as reported in the *Japanese Weekly Chronicle*, May 16, 1933. The words have a curiously familiar ring, to those who remember Teutonic eloquence in the late summer of 1914.

V

It is with all this in mind that one reads the current despatches from Nanking and Shanghai and Canton. We obviously have to deal with a people whose way of thinking about ideals and standards and methods of imperial development is as remote from ours as our respective languages are different. The difference is perhaps never, in either case, so apparent as when a futile effort is made at translation. Prejudice, of course, should so far as possible be overcome, and the facts of a new situation should be examined with perfect readiness to find a change of heart in the chief agents. But a witness who has been convicted of large-scale mendacity must expect a very searching cross-examination next time he testifies, especially if it be on a similar subject, in which his own interests are similarly involved. The western observer, too, however disgusted he may feel with the chaos of competing Chinese war-lords, is likely to remember how perilous is the art of governing in Japan; how in 1930 a premier who conceded more than "the Camp" wished to concede on naval disarmament promptly fell by an assassin's revolver; how two years afterwards a like fate overtook his successor for daring to negotiate about a truce with China; how three years later still the members of a new Cabinet, chosen against the wishes of the war party, were subjected to group-massacre, in which the premier owed his own escape to having a luckless brother-in-law mistaken for him. Such is the recent political record of the country which now claims the right, in virtue of its mature and reliable statesmanship, not only to impose order upon distracted China, but to be acknowledged as guardian of the whole Pacific area—trustee of a Monroe Doctrine for the East!

What notoriously fires the imagination of Japan is the example of the British Island Empire, with the thought that British and Japanese capacities are closely similar. It is needless to dwell upon the peril which the attempt at such an evolution would mean for the British Commonwealth—a peril first to be realized at Hong-Kong and Singapore, next in Australia and India. The tempting opportunity of the Dutch East Indies, of Java and Sumatra and Borneo, constitutes another section of the picture. Very clearly does China understand, and very insistently are her spokesmen pressing upon the thought of western leaders, that this

risk is not hers alone, and that the ruthless aggression which some European observers so readily condone when only Chinese are its victims may soon have a more intimate reference to themselves.

But for the watchful and ever suspicious covetousness which makes them keen more to thwart one another than to protect the interests which they share in the Far East, the western Powers might well have compelled a reasonable settlement long ago. It is idle to object that Japan is, geographically, in an unassailable position. She is eminently assailable by the pressure of what we call in League parlance "Economic Sanctions": a boycott of her textiles, for example, would bring her very quickly to reason. The western Powers owe to the East, which they have so selfishly exploited, an equitable interference of just this kind. But to achieve it, they must first agree among themselves, and Japan's confidence arises from her conviction that this they will never do.

Nothing has been written above about the immediate provocative cause of the present outbreak in North China. Like the incident at Wal-Wal which provided at least the occasion for Italy's raid upon Abyssinia, it quickly became unimportant, except for the historical antiquary. Whether the first shot was fired by Chinese or by Japanese at this latest initial clash, is a detail lost in the sequence whose general character is all too plain. Nor am I for a moment denying that China has been heavily to blame—as the victims of aggression generally are, before long, when they get the chance to strike back. Japanese publicists can quote a great deal to show how plausible is the case for their country's strong measures; how maddening was the economic boycott; how gross is the hardship to foreigners now in China who are as free from responsibility for the original "aggression" as later British settlers in India for the doings of Clive and Hastings. If ever there was a problem calling for collective rather than for competitive settlement, it is this problem of the Far East. Nowhere has that rival "scrambling" of the old international order produced more ominous results. The League would seem to have been made for just such a case. And if Mr. Stimson can reproach Great Britain for the act of a Foreign Secretary which at the hour of crisis enfeebled it, he must expect from Sir John Simon the retort that the United States Senate had enfeebled it in advance.

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