

# THE CONFLICT IN THE PACIFIC

BY A EUROPEAN

From *La Revue de Genève*, July  
(SWISS POLITICAL AND LITERARY MONTHLY)

WHILE we Europeans, with self-centred naïveté, are absorbed in our own difficulties and those of our immediate neighbors, a formidable storm is gathering over the distant ocean ironically named 'the Pacific.' The League of Nations is trying to put our continent — that old, blown-out, and almost extinct volcano — into a semblance of order; but meanwhile the still untamed and primitive forces of nature are straining at their bonds to shatter those remoter lands that are the classic home of grand cataclysms. In any case, however, the League is helpless. We can do little; and yet the globe is too small for us to avert our eyes from prospects that foreshadow more trouble for ourselves than we imagine.

Asiatic immigration into the United States is neither old nor large in volume. It was not until 1885 that the first Japanese settlers landed in California. The Tokyo Government is entirely right when it argues in its note of protest to the United States that sufficient time has not elapsed to draw final conclusions as to the adaptability and assimilability of these immigrants.

Neither do the Japanese appear to present a great danger to the vigorous American race in respect to numbers. In 1910 only 100,000 were dispersed throughout the territories of the Union, of which about 55,000 were in California. There has been no immigrant flood from Japan since that date, for the Gentlemen's Agreement of March 4, 1907, limited the issue of passports to Japanese not belonging to the work-

ing class, and to Japanese workers going to America to resume a residence previously established there, or to rejoin relatives residing in the United States, or to operate farms they had previously acquired. The Alien Land Law of 1913, which was made more rigid in 1920, prohibited Japanese from buying or leasing land in California, and thus limited still further the number entitled to enter the country under the Gentlemen's Agreement.

So it seems hardly plausible to a European, even assuming that some Japanese were illegally smuggled into America, that under this Draconian régime they represent a serious economic danger.

But that is not the real issue. The Americans, as we all know, are extremely sensitive in respect to the color question. At Sacramento, the capital of California, a farmer received an ovation when he declared: 'Up at Elk Grove, where I work, a Japanese with a white wife runs the farm next to mine. She is going around with a baby in her arms. What is that baby? It is not white; it is not Japanese. I'll tell you what it is — it's the beginning of the biggest problem that faces America.'

All logic pauses when confronted by a sentiment like this. That is why President Coolidge, who must have the votes of the West to be reelected, did not dare last May to veto a bill that prohibits absolutely Japanese immigration into the territories of the United States.

We can well imagine how a proud and sensitive nation like Japan took this affront. *Nichi Nichi* of Tokyo declared: 'It is an insult such as Japan has never before received in her history, and even those of our statesmen who are most Americanized cannot accept it passively. The hour has come for the Japanese to decide their policy toward the United States. And the foundation of that policy must be a firm determination not to submit to injustice or to insult. This misfortune has befallen us because hitherto we have shown ourselves either too feeble or too cowardly.' And the fact that in the modernized Japan of to-day, where such things are not common, a man committed *hara-kiri* before the gates of the American Embassy as a protest against the law, bears witness to the extraordinary agitation of the public mind.

Japan has felt especially outraged, as we can easily understand, because this law was enacted two years after the Washington Conference, and only a few months after the earthquake. *Hochi*, which is now the mouthpiece of the new Government, exclaims: 'After having persuaded us to reduce our naval armaments without following suit, after showing us sympathy in the midst of our misfortune in order to pave the way for making us a scandalously usurious loan, the United States now gives us the *coup de grâce*.'

As usually happens in moments of great popular excitement, many foolish acts have been committed. Some advocate expelling the American missionaries, although these are Japan's best champions in the United States. Others agitate in favor of boycotting American merchandise, forgetting that while the United States supplies Japan with thirty per cent of her imports, it buys from her fully forty-five per cent of her exports; so a boycott would prove a two-edged sword.

That is why the Cabinet of Count Kiyoura sought to divert the popular protest into diplomatic channels. In a note addressed to Washington, his Government declared that distinctions in the treatment of nations, no matter what their reason, are contrary to the principles of justice and equality upon which all friendly intercourse between Governments ultimately rests. The Cabinet then recalled its Ambassador from Washington, while the American Ambassador at Tokyo resigned to express his disapproval of the policy of his own Government. As a result, diplomatic relations between the two countries are practically severed. Last of all, Japan seems to be taking precautionary measures of a military character, including the establishment of a new aeronautical base in Formosa and extensive naval manoeuvres in the Pacific this coming autumn.

Since the crisis began there has been a change of Government in Japan. The recent elections, following a violent campaign, returned a majority for the Democratic Parties, and constitute a repudiation of the old aristocratic traditions of parliamentarism. It is significant that the portfolio of foreign affairs in the new Cabinet has been entrusted to a former Japanese Ambassador at Washington, Mr. Shidehara, a gentleman whom the American press has savagely attacked. It is not unlikely that the new Government, which is more responsive to public opinion than its predecessor, will resent even more forcibly the insult that the nation has received.

Does this mean immediate war? Not just now. Japan may fight some day; but not before she has made careful preparations. These preparations must cover a wide field — financial, military, and diplomatic — and will take time.

Some Americans pretend to fear

Japan's present military superiority. They say that her naval armaments have only apparently been reduced to the maximum permitted by the Washington Treaty; for battleships are not everything, and the United States is decidedly inferior in reserves and trained naval personnel. Admiral Fiske wrote not long ago that if Japan should seize the Philippines, and force the American Government into war, the latter would find itself in a deplorable situation, on account of the remoteness of its naval bases from the scene of hostility and its lack of trained men and equipment. No doubt this is the interested pessimism of an officer who wants to see his country have a strong navy. Just now Japan's army is in the midst of a reorganization. Her air force is in its infancy; her navy has been reduced; and her military appropriations have been cut radically to provide money for reconstruction after the recent earthquake.

Indeed, there is little danger that Japan will plunge into war right after an unexampled catastrophe that has forced her to borrow heavily abroad; especially into a war that would certainly be protracted and costly. She would soon suffer a setback in such a risky enterprise, and eventually succumb to the economic superiority of her adversary.

That inferiority can be overcome in only one way — by careful diplomatic preparations. Many forces in South America and in the Far East, both of which feel threatened by the unconscious imperialism and commercial prosperity of the United States, are working in her favor. Japan seems designed by nature to become the centre around which all these malcontents shall rally. Probably no one to-day can measure the depths of atomless blundering that made the Americans themselves set up a leader

for the coalition that is slowly but surely forming against them.

The first result of their shortsighted policy promises to be to unite the yellow races. Leaving aside for the moment the vigorous effort Japan is making to cultivate closer relations with Indo-China, — although this is a symptom of a broader policy, — the rapprochement of China and Japan, unexpected and paradoxical as it may seem, is surely making headway. Every intelligent observer in the Far East agrees that public sentiment in China is strongly behind Japan on the immigration question, and regards the American law as an insult to the whole yellow race. A movement even started at Canton to boycott American goods. In fact, the feeling of solidarity between China and Japan has already become strong enough to enable Li Yuan-Hung, former President of the Chinese Republic, to predict at Osaka 'an economic alliance between the two guardian nations of the Pacific.'

But there are perspectives still more vast. Japan has been courting for some time, albeit coyly, the Soviet Government. These negotiations are difficult and affect immense interests. Japan has never resigned herself to the loss of Sakhalin, which was part of her territory for almost two thousand years, and only half of which was restored to her by the Portsmouth Treaty. In 1920 a massacre of Japanese at Nikolaevsk gave the Tokyo Government a pretext for occupying 'provisionally' the northern half of this island, which is reported to contain valuable oil deposits.

The Russians have never admitted the legality of this occupation and, insisting on their legal title to this territory, in 1923 granted important oil-rights there to the powerful Sinclair Company of New York. But when the American prospectors landed

at Sakhalin they were promptly and summarily expelled by the Japanese military authorities. All know of the important part petroleum plays in the international politics of to-day. Sakhalin may well become a new apple of discord between Japan and the United States. [Since this was written Japan is reported to have relinquished North Sakhalin to Russia. EDITOR] There are reasons to believe that the Soviet Government would readily sell its rights in the island for a liberal sum — the figure mentioned is 200,000,000 yen, which is exorbitant.

However this may be, a rapprochement between Japan and Russia, though it will encounter many obstacles, is not impossible. The recent shifting toward the Left at Tokyo is likely to facilitate such an outcome, and it is significant that the representatives of Japan and Russia at Peking have just been given large authority by their Governments to negotiate with each other.

Simultaneously Japanese diplomacy has been active of late in Spanish America, and particularly in Mexico. Latin Americans, who grow indignant whenever they hear the United States called 'America,' resent keenly the imperialist designs that they imagine are hidden under the Monroe Doctrine. They would prefer less protection against imaginary enemies and more protection against their dangerous patron. This feeling is very strong all along the South American coast of the Pacific, and we may be sure that Japan is not ignorant of that fact — or neglecting it.

But Japan cannot count upon friends everywhere, and knows it. We may feel certain that Australia, New Zealand, and Canada approve and applaud the policy of California. The white race is conscious of its solidarity the moment it faces the yellow Orient.

Australia would not insist upon a powerful naval base at Singapore if she did not anticipate hostility from farther north. Canada, which has a compact with Japan resembling the Gentlemen's Agreement, is manœuvring to strengthen it. She is also emphasizing her diplomatic independence of Great Britain, evidently envisaging the possibility of some future conflict of policies with the mother country.

Thus premonitions of tragedy lurk in the air. Although England has denounced her alliance with Japan, a powerful section of British opinion would sympathize with that country were she to become involved in a war with the United States. On the other hand, most of the Dominions would give their moral, and possibly their material, support to America. What would happen then to the British Empire?

But it is not the British Empire alone that would be threatened by such an event. What would happen to the League of Nations? Racial equality was the great barrier at the Peace Conference — the greatest single obstacle in the way of realizing Wilson's ideal. The League of Nations was able to evade this thorny question only because the United States did not join its councils. Were the United States a member of the League, Japan would undoubtedly bring the immigration issue before that body. That is perhaps one of the reasons — and not the least — why the United States has kept out of the League. Immigration may be treated as a question of purely national jurisdiction, but none the less were the issue once brought before the League of Nations, the world would find itself face to face with a redoubtable moral problem.

That problem Europe will have to solve in one form or another. Though the United States has not joined th

League, Canada, Australia, New Zealand on the one side, and India, China, and Japan on the other are already members of that body. How can we imagine that they will not sometime, in some form, submit this controversy to its jurisdiction? Rumors are already current that Canada, fearing that the flood of Japanese immigrants diverted from California will turn northward, contemplates raising the existing barriers against her transpacific neighbors.

How will the League handle that? No controversy is without the purview of the League; that is what constitutes its strength. That is also what makes us responsible. Among all the grave preoccupations of Europe, there is one, it might seem, that might be spared her — the race question. But it is vain to hope for that good fortune. The clouds we now see gathering over the Far East are breeding a tempest that will reach us all.

## WHERE RACE LINES END

BY C. F. ANDREWS

From the *Modern Review*, May

(CALCUTTA LITERARY AND CURRENT-AFFAIRS MONTHLY)

THE greatest initial advance in the moral history of mankind, raising human life once and for all to a new spiritual level, from which it has never wholly receded, was when Gautama, the Buddha, brought home for the first time to the hearts and consciences of men, with living power and conviction, the supreme truth, that evil cannot be overcome by evil, but only by good.

Let a man overcome anger by kindness:  
Let him conquer evil by good.  
Let a man overcome greed by generosity:  
Let him conquer falsehood by truth.

When human kindness was thus made absolute — parallel to truth itself — the human standard of life began, which has not yet been worked out in its completeness even to-day. The animal nature in man, which retaliates, was left behind; the spiritual nature in man, which forgives, was entered upon, as a new stage in the

progress of the race. The law of retributive justice was put in the background; the law of compassion began to take its place.

It is true that sayings may be found in the Hebrew, Zoroastrian, and Confucian Scriptures enunciating the same great principle. But it is equally true that Gautama the Buddha gave to this one aspect of life the entire content of his unbounded personality. He thus made it current coin for all mankind. He made it live. He created a new birth of this principle as living truth in the consciences-of-millions of the human race, till it became a part of human nature, distinguishing man from the beast. Thus this word of 'compassion' that the Buddha spoke became spirit and life to struggling men and women all over the East. There had been nothing like it in human history before; for there is an essential difference between the life lived in India after the