

T H E S I S

AMERICA AND THE EASTERN QUESTION

by

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The Russo--Japanese war lasting from 1905--1906 calls attention once more to the orient and to the far eastern questions. Although at the close of the late war this question seemed settled, this is not the case. The question that was settled was one of land supremacy, but now a far more important one has developed; that of commercial and political supremacy, involving as it does the mastery of the Pacific, and as such no nation is interested in the same degree as the United States.

Under our present system it is absolutely necessary that the United States find a market for her manufactured products as her factories cannot continue work under less than the maximum output. The home market is much more than supplied and all other markets with the exception of China, have been captured, so we must necessarily exert every factor in our power to gain the commerce of the Pacific.

Russia and Japan, though their struggle was a titantic one, formed but a vanguard of the greater armies made up of the civilized nations of the globe. The coming strife for commercial and political supremacy on that vast highway, though it may not be waged with powder and shot, will be the most gigantic the world has ever seen and it is the American people who have the most at stake in it. In a sense it is quite true that Japan has been fighting the American battle. The Jap, our pupil, stands or has stood, for most of the things this nation is striving for.

But very naturally Japan has interests exclusively her own. A time may come when her interests will clash with those

of America. She is ambitious, very ambitious, and though quite recently a leading Japanese, in speaking of his country's relations with the United States, compared them to the filial affections of a child--and in this probably was perfectly in the right--that is not saying that this feeling is not subject to change.

Certainly Japan owes her own awakening from many centuries of slumber to Commodore Perry, President Pierce, and the U. S.

This country first unbound the cerements which had held Japan in her living tomb, isolated and estranged from the entire world. It helped the land of the Rising Sun to enter the family of nations as a full-fledged member. It guided the halting steps of the new sister nation in its path onward and upward.

It opened wide the portals of American educational institutions and it inaugurated a policy of mutual friendship and mutually profitable intercourse.

But, after all a nation's duty is to itself first. This applies both to the U. S. and Japan, and it is quite a conceivable idea that the future holds in store situations differing so much from the present one as to make of Japan one of this nation's most assiduous rivals; possibly a foe.

As to Russia, the case stands very differently. Once Americans ventured forth on the Pacific, Russia inevitably became their enemy. It was Captain Mahan who first pointed this out very clearly in one of his most thoughtful books. But it requires no labored argument to show this. Russia's coast on the Pacific is today longer than that of the U. S. at the other extreme. Russia's aim is to be and remain the leading

Pacific Power. She is the archenemy of the open door in China as well as in her own possessions. Economically she is monopolistic and given over to fiscalism. The spread of her suzerainty, the enlargement of her "sphere of interest" mean the narrowing of every kind of opportunity for the United States. Conversely, the growing power of the U. S. along the Asiatic coast of the Pacific is tantamount to a diminution of Russia's power. All this, without considering at all the deep racial antipathy between Slav and Anglo-Saxon, the irreconcilable difference in the conception of life and its ideals in government and policy.

Russia is this country's foe and will remain so; all sentimental pleadings to the contrary. She could afford to be the friend of the U. S. so long as the latter was no world power and was furthermore on more or less strained terms with England, Russia's most dangerous rival during the whole of the 19th Century. This fact is so self-evident that it is strange indeed Americans as a body have not yet grasped it. Russia's friendly policy during the Civil War, her sale of Alaska, her assurances of friendship on many occasions in the past, all explain themselves in that way. To keep the two great English speaking races apart was the task of deep wisdom for Russian statesmanship. Russia is our chief rival in her main exports- kerosene, flour, wheat, lumber, cotton goods, and provisions. In short she is a natural producer of nearly all the articles which form the bulk of our exports to the Orient. Doubtless she will be an active and vigorous rival in the contest for the

that market, while Japan's productions are entirely different in character from those of the U. S. and in no way competitive.

To Americans it must be a matter of sincere congratulation that in this whole Far Eastern Problem, the foresightedness and fairness of our statesmanship and diplomacy have excelled those of any other nation. American good sense has achieved a signal victory in handling this most thorny question.

Of course there was plenty of precedent for that on our side. From the very out-set this country has displayed singular sagacity and been favored by as singular luck, in dealing with China, Japan, and Korea.

At any rate, the very letter which inaugurated regular international relations between the Celestial Empire and this Republic sent by John Tyler was a masterpiece of shrewdness and sound sense and the result was of a commercial treaty between China and the United States. By virtue of its terms certain ports were opened to Americans. This was the first "open door" by which our products could enter and the inauguration of that "open door" policy. Thus, it was that we, without any war of aggression, without risking blood and treasure, did more to open the commerce of the Orient than all the European powers combined. By our acquisition of the Philippines, China has become our great neighbor. At that time Great Britain, Russia, France, and Germany had already gained special advantages and exclusive privileges in portions of China, including acquisitions of territory. The dismemberment of China seemed at hand. That such designs were ripe at the time admits of no doubt. They were cloaked under the euphemistic phrase of

"sphere of influence," but they meant nothing less than the gradual slicing up of china's immense living body. These plans had rapidly matured since the close of the Jap-Chinese war of 1894--95 and it has been to keep the younger power, Japan, from sharing in these spoils, to nip in the bud any slumbering ambitions on her part that Russia, Germany, and France had torn up and the treaty of Shimonoseki, and deprived Japan of the fruits of her well won-victory.

At what diplomats call the psychological moment, this country intervened and to retain in China an open market for all the world's commerce, to remove dangerous sources of international irritation, and to promote reforms in China, greatly needed to strengthen the imperial government at Peking, and to maintain the integrity of China, was what the U. S. demanded and urged.

These negotiations were entirely successful, but which it was proposed by Mr. Hay that all ^{non}man-privileged nations entertaining commercial relations with China should in such relations, be treated as if there were no "spheres of influence" or other government present in China.

All that America asked was a fair field and no favors. This had scarcely been done when the world was startled by reports of frightful massacres and atrocities being perpetrated by the Boxers upon all foreigners in China.

It was during the awful time of suspense while the whole civilized world turned its eyes toward that small quarter of Peking where the ambaggadors and the other representatives of the powers were being besieged and in momentary expectation

of a frightful death, that one man and one nation did not lose their heads. When the ancient empire seemed tottering at its fall, there appeared on July 3, 1900 a clear, calm note addressed by Mr. Hay to all the powers having interests in China, containing a statement of the position of our government with respect to the affairs here. Then followed negotiations resulting in the protocol between China and the allied powers. The Protocol served to heighten the respect of the nations of the world for the straightforwardness of the government of the U. S. This nation was mainly influential in lowering the exorbitant demands of the other allies in the way of indemnity for wrongs inflicted during the Boxer troubles.

Early in 1902 this government received reliable information of the details of a proposed agreement between China and Russia regarding Manchuria. By the terms of this proposed agreement, there were to be conferred upon Russia in that important province, exclusive right and privileges which were in direct conflict with American treaty rights. Incidentally they threatened to impart seriously the sovereign rights of China in that portion of her domain. Manchuria is a province which holds much in store for American Commerce as its imports are precisely of the description which suits us best. Prompt action was taken and a vigorous protest was lodged by our government with both China and Russia, pointing out the deleterious effects of the proposed agreement upon American interests and those of the whole world, and also calling attention in unmistakable terms, to its conflict with solemn assurances previously given regarding the open door. In this instance again,

considerable modifications of the terms of the agreement were made in favor of other nations.

Our whole Chinese policy has been built from the start on the assumption that the integrity and independence of the Celestial Empire can and must be maintained. This is its cornerstone. Failing that, we should fail in our whole Chinese policy. It must be admitted that the situation, even before the outbreak of the late war was very difficult for China. The empire certainly hangs very loosely together. The present dynasty, the Manchus, is hated or despised by large portions of the Chinese population. The liberalising element in China, the men who have received a western education are to a man opposed to this dynasty. All through the southern part of China the feeling of dislike and contempt for the Manchus is especially strong. It may be questioned whether, even in such a conservative country and with a population so inured to passive obedience, this present dynasty be upset this immense people will remain, under new or old rules, a gigantic factor in the future developments of this globe. A people numbering more than one fourth the entire population of the globe, a people showing individually such immense vitality industry, abstemiousness and sobriety is not to be pushed aside by a mere phrase such as the "dis-memberment of China." Such would only make the problem harder to solve.

The United States must look to China as the only uncaptured market and here lies her hopes of future prosperity. To find new outlets for our manufactured products has become not

an urgent need but an absolute necessity. From one point of view inventions and labor saving appliances of every kind will make matters in this respect worse instead of better. England was once the workshop of the world. France and later Germany decided to supply their own home markets. They succeeded and now, like the United States, they too are seeking outlets for their surplus products.

All this means that the great manufacturing peoples are about entering on an industrial conflict, the bitterness of which has never been paralleled in the history of the world. Already foreign ministers of both Germany and Austria have publicly and officially declared that it may be necessary to form a continental European league against our growing commerce. It would be easy for them to shut us out by a Protective Tariff, but we Americans are already improving in this, and our foreign commercial necessity will some day make our foreign commercial policy rational, continuous, and far sighted.

But the condition of the roads in China at present make internal traffic almost one of the impossibilities. "Do you think that the long hoped-for reform of internal communication in China will begin as a natural result of the railroad through Manchuria" was a question asked of one of the deepest students of Oriental commerce. "(The greatest practical difficulty in extending commerce among China's four hundred millions is to get the goods into the interior, and internal transportation tax on foreign goods--sometimes irregular, exorbitant and corrupt--consumes all the profits before imports penetrate 200 miles from any port) "Yes," was the reply. "I have thought that myself, and

Englishman though I am, I will admit that if the Manchurian rail road would break up the ruinous, foolish, and villainous obstruction to foreign commerce in the interior, the world should accept it as a blessing, notwithstanding its menace to the supremacy of the other powers in the Orient and no possible help to the Chinese could be of such far-reaching benefit."

The theory of the Chinese government concerning roads has been that if there were no roads in China insurrection would be less probable and each community would be more firmly rooted in its own villages, explained a gentleman of forty years acquaintance with China and Manchuria. And the following patriotic reason was given by the governor of one of the Manchurian provinces. "If we had good roads the Russians or any other invader could march right down through Manchuria or any other part of China. This would invite invasion by our foreign enemies." So you see Chinese logic makes the building of fine high-ways the very substance of treason.

The bad roads and the "liken" are the two great obstacles to the Chinese commerce. But the Russian statesmen are extending their net-work of power over Asia with a farsightedness not exhibited in the foreign diplomacy of any other nation of the present day, except perhaps Germany. So it is that England may find herself helpless in the presence of accomplished facts and a series of impregnable diplomatic positions. Quickly, plausible, skilfully, and by the lasting method of material construction, Russia has achieved the first of her plans for the capture of the only uncaptured market of the world. So it is, that while England and America have been

wasting time on academic argumentations about unsubstantial theories, Germany has been forging ahead toward the maritime power of the 20th Century and Russia has been placing on the future, the mortgage of her material dominion.

And so we find the situation as it now exists, Russia, Germany, United States, France, England, and Japan, all being interested in China. To her they look for their future power and prosperity. This is what the land grabbing in the Orient for so many years has led to--a Commercial War. All through Russian history we see the patient Slav ever striving to reach the sea. This has been his one ambition and although his power for the moment seems checked, he is not entirely subdued and will make other attempts to regain Manchuria. Japan is also interested in China, Manchuria, and Korea, not so much for the commercial importance as to find room for her surplus millions.

Since July, 1907, Korea, over which Japan and China have been wrangling for so long, is now virtually under absolute control of Japan. But Japan will not be satisfied with this and looks with envious eyes upon Manchuria. Elated by her success in the late war she thinks she can conquer any foe and preparations for war are rapidly progressing in Japan at this very moment. England, Germany, France, and the United States are vitally interested in this situation from the commercial standpoint of view and with whom the clash with Japan will come, it is hard to determine.

This, then is the Eastern situation that confronts us. England, France, Germany are all striving for the eastern markets for their surplus products. Japan has also a vital inter-

est in China and Korea as she needs a place to plant her surplus millions. Russia continues her patient striving to reach the sea. But the United States, has the most at stake, as our future prosperity depends upon this eastern market. Our possessions in the Philippines have brought us in closer contact and make the question an even closer one. We must try with the greatest ardor to achieve the supremacy of the Pacific as it is an economic necessity.

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