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JAPAN'S UNBALANCED GROWTH

Japan's Future and Our Own—Mr. J. Robertson Scott, in the *Hibbert*.

On to Tokyo—Editorial, in *Life*.

Democracy in Post-War Japan—Mr. J. F. Embree, in the *American Journal of Sociology*.

The Key-Factor of War Against Japan—Sir Herbert Richmond, in the *Fortnightly*.

THERE is a well-known risk, in bringing up children, that their development may be "lop-sided." Their intelligence may be advanced ahead of their character. Is this true of the growing nation, as of the growing person?

Japan is a case in point. She had a very sudden, but partial, transformation. In a tremendous hurry she took over, ready-made, much of the technical apparatus of the West. But she kept at the same time unchanged the moral and religious habits of her primitive social system. I don't mean, of course, that those who organized her world trade, those who developed her factories, those who planned how her land and sea and air forces might cooperate for war with a western Great Power, retained their old "simple faith" in the absurd fairy tales of ancient Japanese religion. But they took care to allow no change in the forms of popular piety. Definitely and resolutely, leaders of the new Japan forbade any enterprize of educational disillusionment on these matters for the multitude. They maintained the superstitions which it would suit so well their coming purpose to exploit. Does this isolation, this separation of scientific from moral development, explain certain discords which have of late amazed us in Japanese behavior?

I.

Seventy-five years ago, modern Japan was born, and within a very few years of its birth it was displaying at least the outward appearance of a development which had occupied centuries elsewhere. It had abolished feudalism, established peasant proprietorship in farms, and inaugurated an elective Parliament with a responsible Cabinet. Such change had in western countries been the outcome of innumerable slow modifications in human relationship. As Burke said, "The States of the Christian

world have grown up to their present magnitude in a great length of time and by a great variety of accidents; they have been improved to what we see them with greater or less degrees of felicity and skill." For example, four hundred years of cultural progress on many different sides separated England's *Wars of the Roses* from the passage of the *Ballot Act* and the establishment of manhood suffrage. What took place in Japan was an experiment in setting up the finished product without the process that had elsewhere prepared for it. None of those circulations of the sap which, in George Eliot's apt metaphor, should precede the first appearance of the bud.

The Japanese bud was indeed, in some respects, far from the sort which sap such as had accumulated in the English, the French, the American stock was likely to produce. In London, in Paris, in Philadelphia, democracy was born from a very radical revolution in ideas of kingship. But at Tokyo a fully developed system of western parliamentary government was superposed upon belief in the Emperor as literally divine, and as the fitting object, for that reason, not only of obedience but of worship. The country's name, "Japan", had its origin in a Chinese phrase about the Rising Sun, and this meant to the people no mere reminder of the climate or the flowers in which they rejoiced. Obligation to sacrifice one's self for one's country has been translated elsewhere, by many orators, from Pericles in his *Funeral Speech* to President Roosevelt in almost every *Fireside Talk*, into enthusiasm for one's institutions and one's "way of life": but no such modernizing was allowed in the thought of the Japanese. To them the awful majesty of the Mikado ("Son of Heaven") was due to his personal inheritance, by unbroken descent for two thousand years, from the Sun-God. To ask for evidence of this, or to suggest that in popular consent rather than in supernatural investiture lay the true source of royal authority, was forbidden as a drift to "dangerous thoughts".

The Japanese venture, three-quarters of a century ago, was thus of a kind quite new in the evolution of government. A few chiefs, self-appointed, did it. There was neither formal choice by a Constituent Assembly nor preceding gradual process by which the people had been "educated up to" the change. Nothing remotely like a French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, an American *Bill of Rights*, a British experience of freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent. Trans-

formation could not have been more abrupt—like one of those sudden eastern changes from night to day: no twilight, no dawn. On Japan's government, as on China in Kipling's song, the Sun came up like thunder. It remained to be seen how successfully she could dispense with the preparation that had meant so much for a new order in the West.

For eight centuries she had been under the rule of a military Chief: not even Prussians have been by temperament more easily militarized. The *shogun*, formally servant of the Emperor, had exercised as Commander-in-Chief all the real power, and the nobility, who reproduced in Japan just the mutual quarrelling of great families in the feudal England of the days of Warwick the King-Maker, held their lands on the same condition of military service. When parliamentary government was installed, to take the place of the *shogunate*, the new system omitted—whether by accident or by design of its founders—one fundamental of western democracy. The armed forces of the State were not placed under direction of the civil authority vested in parliament. Chiefs of army and navy were to be responsible to the Emperor alone. It is still part of the Japanese Constitution that the Cabinet office of War Minister must be held by a soldier. A consequence is that the military caste can make and unmake governments. For, by the simple device of forbidding any of their number to accept the office of War Minister, the military Chiefs can block the path of the Civil Administration. Repeatedly the will of the army has thus prevailed in a political crisis at Tokyo.

Observers, too, from Europe, whose governing system Japan had formally adopted, were at a loss to understand a democracy in which *discussion* was forbidden. They wondered at schools whose first charge was to inculcate unconditional obedience to the Emperor as a supernatural personage; at the extravagance of personal loyalty, called *bushido*, under which a soldier must give his life with joy to avenge even an act of disrespect to the Throne; at the banning of books in which the basis of patriotism is treated as a subject proper for argument, and at the constant police vigilance over meetings in which there is even a hint of such disturbing speculation. This censorship was no merely initial phase of the new order, no mere lingering trace of a past which could not be abandoned all at once. As recently as 1924, when the United States enacted an exclusion law against the entrance of more Japanese, this

insult to the race whose Emperor was divine led to a spectacular suicide on the street before the American Embassy, and the action was accepted as a normal, even an admirable, display of *bushido*!

Such tenacity of old moral and religious custom was in strange contrast with the speed of change in other fields. What the western world called Socialism, though it was peremptorily forbidden in Japan so far as it meant a challenging of the autocrat by popular will, made extraordinary progress as nationalization of industry. Unlike Britain, the Land of the Rising Sun had in this respect no intervening period, in which the *laissez-faire* of a Middle Class regime bridged the passage from the old feudalism to the new State Socialism. No misgiving about individual victims, no scruple about anyone's personal right, was allowed to stand in the way of the State machine. Thus Japan became nationally stronger and stronger, while the sufferings of individual Japanese were treated like that breaking of eggs without which—as the proverb reminds us—no omelettes can be made. The product of mills in Kobe and Yokohama—shirts, hats, suits of clothes, children's toys—was quickly saleable in Canada and the United States at prices with which no American or Canadian manufacturer could compete, because of the conditions of life with which the Japanese worker was disciplined by his government to be content. No trade-union, no collective bargaining, no message about brotherhood of man (in either the Marxian or the Christian interpretation of that stimulating phrase)!

With this advantage, the Japanese government was able soon to boast trade returns of the most satisfactory sort. The Manchester School had been principal champion in England of free trade. But Manchester was also the centre of English cotton manufacture, and even there a certain doubt arose about free imports from a foreign country which made pieces of dry-goods at a price by the dozen not greatly higher than what the home producer had to demand for them singly. In British Columbia and in California, about the same time, fierce protest was raised against the presence of Japanese immigrants by whose competition in the Canadian and American labor markets the native worker, with a decent standard of household comfort, was being driven out of employment. Demand for "exclusion of Orientals" sprang from no mere racial prejudice. It was a demand for statutory exclusion of a labour known to be "sweated".

One has heard much of late about the need for a "planned economy," in contrast with the free play of individual action. It is commonly urged as a humanitarian reform, but whether it will turn out so or not depends on the ruling motive of the State, and an economy may be planned for merciless just as easily as for merciful enterprizes. Japan is an example. Her economy, like the Soviet Russian, was indeed planned out in advance by government. Wages, hours and conditions of labour, all that related to the cultivation of the silk-worm which provided the one great Japanese industry for foreign trade, were topics on which one dared not mention the humane considerations then agitating the western world. The occasional foreign visitor at Kobe, whose opinions were known to have a Socialist tinge, has in recent years been handled by government agents with a vigilance like that of Ellis Island at its sternest towards "moral turpitude". Ideas of the western social reformer have been watched for at the ports of entry like small-pox, and the quarantine has been rigid. Naturally such measures would stimulate here and there the very growth they were designed to repress, for intellectual beyond all other waters taste sweet when stolen. But for the multitude such stealing of intellectual waters was effectively stopped, and the few that enjoyed them illicitly dared not even speak of them.

Harrowing tales were brought back to Britain and America by tourists. They described a scene like that of the Hungry Forties in England: Japanese cities of the twentieth century like those of the English Midlands in the years after the industrial revolution, before Dickens and Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë, Kingsley and Ruskin had stirred the national conscience. They told of Japan's patriotic vision—that of a great exporting Island Empire, with domination over the trade of the Far East like that once secured by the British Island Empire over the trade of the West. It was a story which made some of us abate enthusiasm for government direction of industry. Before we hail the prospect of such more efficient manufacture and exchange which "economic planning" promises, at the cost of the personal liberty which has kept progress so slow, we shall do well to be sure of the interest in which the planning will be carried out. Installing an autocrat has tremendous risks. As we have handled goods marked "Made in Japan", wondering how such quality is possible at such a price, the lines of Hood's *Song of a Shirt* might well have come back

to us. True, the Japanese situation was in a sense the reverse of what the British had been. It was government intervention to stop the cruelties of *laissez-faire* that men such as Hood demanded: it was government insistence on *laissez-faire*, unchallenged by any protest whatever, that kept the horror in Japan. But in each case it was the same fierce separation of morals from business. No "idealism"! "Power politics" in the domestic scene.

II.

Rabindranath Tagore said it was western contagion that had spoiled Japan. With his habitual concern to say the best for the eastern contribution to mankind's progress, the Hindu poet in this way excused (though he denounced) the militarist drift at Tokyo—so conspicuous in 1917, when he delivered there his famous lecture on "Nationalism". Only two years had elapsed since Japan made her "Twenty-one Demands" on China. How could an observer, with Tagore's just and generous mind, have spoken without disgust of that spectacle? He could, however, make the very most of temptation by bad foreign influences. He could dwell upon the fearful example that the mature West had set before a young and imitative eastern people. The First World War was then raging in Europe. Tagore saw in this a disclosure of the very spirit of the western Powers, and he blamed the declension of Japan from the higher level of her own past upon the bad company she had begun to keep. A continent to which she owed so much in science, in commerce, in the manifold arts of life (above all, in the art of war) had been so easily accepted as a pattern also in character! The poet exhausted his copious resources of figure and phrase to lament this fatal mistake.

It was no mere coincidence, he said, that from the East had come all the great religions of the world, while the chief product of the West—unknown to eastern peoples until the West introduced it to them—was the conception of "nationhood". And what, pray, was the "nation"? It was the organizing of a people on the worst possible basis—disregarding racial and family and religious contrasts, making all else subordinate to the one purpose of maximum material strength. The western nation-builder was thus utterly contemptuous of much that the East had held precious. Tagore describes him as one for whom no difference however fundamental, no

conflict however "conscientious", is allowed to impede joint action for "success". Western state-managers, he reflected, were proud of the "mosaic" they had been able to construct: sometimes they talked enthusiastically of their "melting-pot": under such figures the extinction of specific character that the East judged it precious to preserve was actually extolled as a merit! Hence the poet's scornful phrases: his picture of "this great unwieldy car of progress, shrieking out its loud discords as it runs"; his branding of the two mottos so characteristic of the West—"Business is business" and "Honesty is the best policy"; his similitude of the nation trading on its neighbor's feebleness with "insects bred in the paralysed flesh of victims that are kept just enough alive to keep them toothsome and nutritious"; his account of nationhood as one of the most powerful moral anaethetics man has yet invented, and of patriotism as the particular western cultivation of moral blindness.

But is it really demonstrable that Japan was demoralized by the West in this manner? Or, without being demonstrable, it is even credible? That Japan in her behavior became a disgrace to civilized humanity is obvious. But Tagore's conjecture about western infection starting Japanese militarism is like the one which used to be current about the German military spirit arising as product of the *Treaty of Versailles*. "I seem to remember," protested G. K. Chesterton, "that the Germans showed evidence of being by no means Quakers in regard to war long before the *Treaty of Versailles* had been heard of." Recall some historical facts about a like development in the Far East.

Japan's first contact with the West was through the missionary effort of Jesuit missionaries led by St. Francis Xavier in the middle of the sixteenth century. That blend of Buddhist with Shinto rites of ancestor-worship which St. Francis found was not strong enough to resist his evangelizing zeal. The *shogun* Nobunaga, not because he had himself any impulse to be a Christian convert, but because the Buddhist monks were unfriendly to his regime and he desired a religious ally against them, gave the missionaries every opportunity. It seemed, for a time, as if Japan were on the point of official Christianization. But the real design of the official mind was very different, and the next *shogun*—Ieyasu—was no less determined to stamp out the Christians than Nobunaga had been to break the Buddhists. The measures taken by these two rulers in turn were such as seemed in the narrative almost beyond belief for their

ferocity, until we of late discovered that there is no limit at all to the cruelties of an "anti-Comintern" alliance. In particular, the ingenuities of torture inflicted by Ieyasu's order upon native Japanese who had become Christian and refused to recant were such as it was impossible to surpass until modern science had enabled the Gestapo to contrive forms of suffering previously unimagined. "Infection from the West" had nothing to do with that aspect of Japan.

For the next two and a half centuries, no foreigner was allowed to set foot on Japanese soil: an exclusion that was indeed unintentionally merciful to the foreigner. Nor were the natives permitted to travel abroad. Thus sealed against western contagion, the Land of the Rising Sun could not, at least until the third quarter of the nineteenth century, attribute any of its less creditable habits to a source outside itself. Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853, the forcible opening of trade, the establishment of "treaty-ports", inaugurated indeed in many respects a new era. A rumor became quickly current that Christianity had been re-introduced under the menace of American naval guns! The chief ground for this rumor seems to have been that the Treaty required abolition of the "trampling-board"—a curious piece of Japanese judicial apparatus, with a copper plate on which was stamped a crucifix for everyone to trample as he took an oath abjuring Christianity before a Japanese officer. It would have been inconvenient for Americans landing at the treaty-ports if this gesture had remained compulsory. But to eliminate the trampling-board was far short of forcible Christianization.

If one enquires after the way of conceiving life and conduct and destiny which for the Japanese filled the place taken for other races by a religion, one finds that it was at first the system of ancestor-worship known as *Shintoism*, that this was overlaid and transformed for centuries by *Buddhism*, and that the sudden entry of Japan into the competitive, combative modern world was marked by official displacement of the Buddhism, which had been imported, for return to the Shintoism, which was native. This last was a highly significant change, made nearly half a century before Tagore's indictment of the corrupting West. It was a change which presaged a warlike rather than a peaceful period, and however else it was prompted, it came much too soon for western example to have been its cause. The West indeed provides here an interesting analogy. Nazi craft insisted

on bringing back the old German gods—those personifications of natural (preferably violent) forces—and discrediting the religious ideals of mercy whose place of origin was non-German. In like manner Shintoism, with its cult of the Forces of Nature, was congenial to the New Japan, rather than the Buddhist symbols of a tender sympathy with suffering. A Tokyo publicist of the early 1870's might well have written of the deposed Buddhism as Rosenberg in Berlin of the deposed Christianity. To the Hitler Youth "the myth of the twentieth century" was Rosenberg's description of the Christian account of life: for those bent on the projects of the New Japan, Buddhism must have its hold (at least on the younger Japanese generation) definitely relaxed. It was likely to get in the way of the nation's purpose: Shintoism would be a stimulant, Buddhism must be a sedative.

III

The rest of the record is too tragically familiar to call for any rehearsing in detail. But what does seem to call for some explanation, in the subtler habits of international exchange, is the persistent pro-Japanese propagandism to which, until about four years ago, certain organs of the British press were devoted.

Suggestively enough, from the same section of journalism which had shrieked its disapproval of the break-down in the Anglo-Japanese alliance, we became accustomed, in the years between the autumn of 1935 and the summer of 1939, to complaint of the bad judgment which had led, through "Sanctions", to yet another "needless" quarrel—the quarrel with Fascist Italy. The means by which Italian friendship might have then been kept, at least temporarily, are plain enough. If Great Britain and the other fifty-five Powers which united in applying "Sanctions" had chosen instead to dishonor their Covenant, abandoning the victim they had sworn to protect and facilitating the aggressor they had sworn to restrain, Italy would have been for the time "appeased". That just this counsel of discretion was favored by the journals to which I refer, became shamefully obvious. The point at which, however he had been treated, Mussolini would have chosen to perpetrate the treachery which he perpetrated five years ago, might have been postponed. Attack on the British Empire might have been bought off, by British connivance at the pillage of others, at least until Italian designs elsewhere had been fulfilled. But would even such

expedient of dishonor have availed to preserve safe relations in the Far East? Experience of what had happened to the pledge against annexing Korea was enough to warn Americans of the risk. They knew too well the spirit of that strategy variously dignified with such titles as *shinto*, *bushido*, *kodo*, which would twenty years afterwards intensify still further at Pearl Harbor even the Japanese record for baseness. Thanks to Canadian pressure on the British Foreign Office, the Treaty which fell due for renewal or abandonment in 1921 was not renewed, and thus Great Britain was saved from either fulfilling or violating a pledge of disgraceful partnership. I offer no conjecture as to which of these alternatives the pro-Japanese press, so long voluble in Great Britain, would have advised the country to choose.

A hush of silence, since December, 1941, has fallen upon those powerful friends in London who previously had been so eager to give Japan always the benefit of the doubt, so watchful for the provocation that other Powers might be shown to have committed against her, so indulgent to her faults and enthusiastic for her virtues with an amazing partiality. On the very eve of the horror she committed in the first week of December, 1941, a great organ of the London magazine press was deploring the British diplomatic mistake of ceasing to be her trusted partner! Down the years, as Tokyo policy proceeded from fraud to fraud and from outrage to outrage, as China appealed time after time for support from other co-guarantors of some pledge which Japan had violated, as the Hall of Geneva was made to ring with accounts of mass-murder by Japanese forces in contempt of *Covenant of the League*, *Nine-Power Treaty*, *Kellogg Pact*, there was invariably some English voice raised in persuasive accents for Japan. Always some plea, in the guise of deprecating hasty action, that her victims should be left to her will until their fate was sealed! Sir John Simon's dexterous defence of the Japanese attack on Manchuria in 1931, in the speech which drew such plaudits from M. Matsuoka, will surely be recalled for generations to come, as often as an historian explains again how the League broke down. Neville Chamberlain stirred a British audience from time to time with glowing rhetoric about bad faith in the Far East, but he was still more successful in frustration of every effort to translate the fine phrase into effective act. Japan would indeed have been either forgetful or undiscerning if she had not come to

reckon on English statesmen such as these wherever in an emergency she could be helped by a diplomatist's contrivances of delay or by an advocate's ingenuities of confusion.

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What is the key to this mystery of pro-Japanese bias in London? The answer, in 1902, at the date of first signature of the pro-Japanese Treaty, was plain. Russian advance in the Far East was a profound concern to the British Foreign Office, and Japan then seemed the most desirable ally. That Japan would prove before long a much worse peril than Russia in that quarter, was not realized by the dignified, slowly-moving Conservative minds then in charge at Whitehall. What is described with unconscious humor as the *continuity* of British Foreign Policy once again proved disastrous: there are times when an abrupt change is the only safe course, but it was hard for British elder statesmen (and that class alone was then judged fit for international negotiation) to acknowledge that the proportions abroad had altered since they themselves learned their diplomatic art.

If there are perils such as I have endeavored to point out in a nation which achieves maturity—as the proverb says Nature never does anything—"at a leap", there are likewise perils in a national regime developing so slowly as well as so steadily that it can never adjust itself to a quickly moving neighbor in time. The Petains, with reliance upon a Maginot Line, are not French alone. They were disastrously influential in British foreign affairs of the Far East a quarter century ago. A principal need of the present and for the future is that their reappearance in posts of high trust shall be made impossible.

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