

AMERICA AND THE PACIFIC

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FROM Cape Horn on the south to the farthest tip of the Aleutian islands on the north west, stretches the continent of America, interposing for thousands of miles the same mountain barrier to the long western breakers of the Pacific. Along it are scattered the descendants of people who, beginning at the Atlantic, have steadily worked their way westward until now the continent lies behind them and there is no more West . . . except at sea. Ahead of them there still lies the perpetual frontier of the sea, and even it they have done their best to bridge. Hawaii, Midway Island, Guam and the Philippines, these are the stepping stones on their way across. The American frontier may be said to have reached to Asia, where it has met and mingled with the eastward advance of other branches of the race. There at last the crusade of the white man seems to have come to a stop.

Perhaps advance has even changed into retreat. Shanghai seems to be going; Hong-Kong may go. The Philippines might go. There are alarmists who talk of danger even to the west coast. Whatever the future may bring forth, the Pacific, that misnamed ocean, is certain to be a region of unrest in world affairs, for in it east becomes west, white meets yellow, the newest meets the oldest, different worlds all.

If Japan could have been kept asleep for a while longer, it is not improbable that white expansion would have moved on into that oldest Asiatic world. Russia was pressing down into it; England, France and Germany were pressing up into it; and U. S. A. was close upon their heels. Today, had the Great War not changed our attitude towards such things, instead of Japan conquering China, that country might have been divided up among the whites.

While that was not to be, many of the initial steps had been taken. As respects America, or rather North America, to which my remarks must be confined, the twin agencies of white dominance had already become highly developed. These were cultural penetration, in the form of missionary endeavour, and commercial penetration. No other continent had given so many men or so much money to the cause of missions in China as had America. A simpler and less civilized society would have been overthrown by the new culture, but the Chinese did not succumb. They were

less successful against commercial penetration, because that had force behind it. The United States did not press her commercial claims as far as the other white countries. She wanted no territorial concessions. She wanted only the same advantages as the others were able to get. This policy of coming in at the death, and claiming a share of the spoils for which she had not fought, she entitled *The Open Door*.

The American commercial stake in the East, while large, has not been as large as that of Europe. Canada has little stake beyond her trade; the United States has some permanent capital, but her chief concern is with trade. Even so, American trade with the Orient constitutes a relatively minor proportion of total American trade. It is not as large by any means as trade between Canada and the United States.

But if America has not had first class commercial interests in the Far East, the continent has nevertheless not been able to neglect the area. America may not be so immediately concerned with what is going on in China as is Great Britain, but it *is* concerned, and that because of what might be called the Pacific balance of power. The Pacific basin is so large that heretofore this concept has not been very clear; but as the range and complexity of modern transportation increases, it will force itself upon us, and a threat of something like dominance by a single power will always be the occasion for trouble. America, for example, cannot afford to have a power on the far side of the ocean so strong as to constitute a threat. The chief reason why American opinion at the present time is uncertain and irresolute is that no such threat seems yet to have emerged. If, before it does, some other counterweight is thrown in, such as a Russian challenge to Japanese priority, the Pacific balance of power, as far as America is concerned, may for a long time continue undisturbed. This balance at present has as its factors Great Britain (and to a lesser degree France and Holland) in the South, Russia in the North West, Japan on the ocean, China here, there and nowhere, and the United States on the other side of the ocean, with Canada and Australia as lesser makeweights. The present conflict, while it has not yet affected the more remote equilibrium, is upsetting this present balance. China is counting for less and less. Great Britain, apparently in retreat from the Yang-Tze valley to at least as far south as Hong-Kong, is also counting for less. But the balance may quite well go on, though somewhat more precariously, among the remaining three, Russia, Japan and the United States. If Japan were to dispose of all her antagonists on the far side of the Pacific, she would then sooner

or later have to reckon with a western power that though far away would feel itself endangered by her predominance.

But the Pacific is very wide. It strains out the possibility of war to the death between the peoples on opposite sides of it. It may even strain out the degree of hate necessary for such a struggle. The disturbance of the balance of power would therefore have to be profound before it led to an attempt by an American power to restore it. While the strongest American nation, the United States, has two strings of stepping stones across the Pacific, one in the South and the other in the Far North, they are so far apart as to be used only by giants with seven league boots, in other words by the most modern of aircraft. If war were to come in the Pacific, as much use as possible would be made of advance bases and air power, but a decisive struggle could hardly be fought on that basis alone. The principal forces of the two powers would somehow have to become engaged, and one is puzzled to imagine how that would occur. At present the United States is completely dominant in the eastern Pacific. There is not the remotest prospect of Japan, or any other power, or all powers together, successfully challenging the supremacy of the United States Pacific fleet within its home waters. The same statement with some qualifications may be made about the Japanese navy in its home waters: Japan dominates the western Pacific from the equator to the Arctic, and other powers would hardly be able to land within it a single company of soldiers without her acquiescence, but it is subject to some limitations that do not apply to the United States fleet on the other side. The chief of these is the unknown potentiality of Russia. Russian submarines and aircraft might constitute a fairly serious limitation on Japanese freedom of action. At the present time all the other powers, the English in Hong-Kong, the French in Indo-China, even the United States in the Philippines are where they are more or less on sufferance. Persons who expected the Brussels Conference to do anything about China were therefore merely innocent.

This position of dominance within their respective spheres is probably the best of reasons for believing that Japan and America are unlikely to fight each other. If however they should, how, apart from airplanes, submarines and similar nuisances, could they get at each other? No seaman in his senses would take his main battle-fleet thousands of miles from its base, into hostile territory. Navies, as distinct from individual ships, are still unable to go very far away from home. A war between the United States and Japan, one has to believe, would be fought mainly by single ships and

airplanes and by the newspapers. Certainly fleets and armies would not have overmuch to do with it.

In such a war a good deal of local damage could be done. Japanese raiders could probably get in close enough to the west coast to bomb a city or to torpedo local coastal craft. The United States probably has already canvassed such situations and prepared for them. We in Canada are just waking up to their possibilities. Like other persons just waking, we are still pretty muddled in our thoughts. Many good people believe that the Japanese could land an army of conquest on our west coast. That is nonsense. Others believe that while Japan should be made to stop bullying China, there is no need to bother about the west coast at all. Others say that anyhow the British or American navies would defend it. The British navy, to the average Canadian who does not know the keel of a ship from its mast head, is a kind of mythical knight who will always come forward to our salvation at the right time. Anyone familiar with the situation, however, knows very well that in any circumstances under which we were involved in war with Japan, there would be no British ships to spare for the west coast. We could probably arrange for the protection of the American navy. But, no doubt, at a price. The best persons on whom we could rely, despite the lack of self-reliance so many of them seem to display, are the Canadians. Canada herself would be quite adequate to defend her own west coast.

At present our measures of coastal defence seem to be co-ordinated with British plans. Our equipment is almost entirely of British model, and most of it is made in England. Since the only way in which Canada is likely to become involved in a war is through her political connection with Great Britain, it may be assumed that any such war would be one that would take up British energies and so tax British resources of production that there would be great difficulty in getting supplies out to Canada. Our coastal defences might seem well planned on paper, but if a 9.2 gun had to be renewed, we might have to wait months before getting it from England, if it could be got at all. Meantime much harm might be done. If we are going to take seriously this business of defending our coasts, and if it is not just a piece of irrational sentiment, it would seem the part of wisdom to start with guns and munitions that can be replaced from within the continent, that is to say, with American equipment.

I have touched on the cultural, economic and strategic interest of America in the Pacific. What of all these added together? What of the totality of interest? Our neighbours are apparently

convinced that all their interests combined do not at present add up to the cost of a war with Japan. Should they take a broader view and lead a crusade against the Japanese law-breakers? The world missed the opportunity two years ago to wage a war in which there was a chance of vindicating the rule of law without too impossible a cost. The present case hardly seems to offer that opportunity. Almost certainly, interference with Japan at present would precipitate a world war of the widest dimensions. Americans are probably right in being wary of entrance to that quarrel.

Would the United States be justified in fighting for the sake of some long-run interests: to prevent, say, the complete domination of Asia by Japan, which might imply a very real "yellow peril"?

There are few sure bets in foreign problems. Nothing about international relations is certain except their uncertainty, and the only thing you can be sure of in your friend is that some day he will betray you. Germany and Japan are friendly to-day, but they may be enemies tomorrow—as they were yesterday. Until we can get back to some sort of clearing-house such as the League seems to offer, the best thing to do seems to be to wait until you are very sure of the result before you act. It may sound cold-blooded, but the world having missed the boat in 1935, it is probably now better for its future that things be allowed to take their course in China rather than that the strength and idealism of this continent, perhaps mankind's greatest hope, be dissipated. The time will come when America will awake to its destinies. Its people's glances will not always be turned inward. When that day comes, the world will listen to what it has to say.