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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

The month of September has brought us to a new and serious stage in the long story of Japan's advance at the expense of China. The three-point policy of Hirota (general cooperation, joint action against communists, regularization of relations with Manchoukuo), of which little was heard in the months of internal strain following the February mutiny in Japan, has been growing under flass. The spring and summer have seen long series of conferences among Japanese military, naval, and diplomatic chiefs, now in Japan, now in China. Each was closed with a statement of "complete agreement upon our unified and unalterable policy", while preparations were begun for the next. Something big was brewing.

The close of the summer brought a burst of unfortunate shootings. At Chengtu a crowd demonstrated against Japanese visitors at the time the Chinese Government was opposing the Japanese intent to open a consulate without treaty warrant. Local police work was inadequate, and in mob action two men were killed. (We must correct a previous statement by declaring that middle school students helped to collect the crowd; allegations against the West China University were unfounded.) At Pakhoi in Kwangtung a Japanese resident was killed, apparently by soldiers of the 19th Route Army amid hostile propaganda. For these two incidents the Chinese Government made proper apologies and took responsibility, realizing local fault in Chengtu, and its own inability at the moment to control the last splurge of the southern malcontents with their dangerous bluff of anti-Japanism. Two Japanese marines were shot in Shanghai, and a policeman in Hankow. The Japanese navy and other leaders were aroused, and they charged extensive plotting with connivance by the Chinese Government. Later they admitted that these cases were attempts of a tiny faction to injure the Chinese Government by causing trouble with Japan; and furthermore the murders were committed in concessions outside Chinese jurisdiction, where Japanese police were in full force.

All Chinese statements known to the writer regret these cases in themselves, and also as damaging to the general situation. They do not represent any general activity. It is only fair to say that in most countries there would be more of such attacks, considering popular resentment against China's losses at the hands of Japan, and the large number of Japanese engaged in unwelcome occupations all through the country. There is tremendous anti-Japanese feeling, though practically nothing of an "anti-Japanese movement." Organizations and publications of the type that flourished during the Manchurian trouble have been strictly banned for more than three years, and very little has escaped the authorities. The murder incidents are not being pressed now by the Japanese officials, but are used as a pawn in the bigger game.

Late in September the thick clouds of secrecy were broken, and it is known that the Japanese Ambassador is urging acceptance of Hirota's program with additions or applications: Autonomy of the five northern provinces (Hopei, Chahar, Suiyuan, Shantung, Shansi); Revision of tariffs in the Japanese interest; Right

to pass upon textbooks and to inspect schools as part of a guarantee against any public expression of resentment against Japan; Right to station forces in important river and sea ports of Central and South China (form of this uncertain). Undefined economic cooperation would secure in advance any sort of control over communications, currency and banking, or natural resources; and joint action against communists might drag China into war with Russia, or might justify military interference in the interior of China.

Chinese leaders have flatly refused to consider such a program of partition and domination. (An article in "World Call" will discuss the significance of the Japanese requirements for the future of China and for international relations.) Whatever the risks of a firm stand, the Chinese feel that they must take them. Improvements in morale and organization are such that they can rise above the utter hopelessness of earlier years; and they are driven by relentless pressure to struggle while it is yet possible to struggle, though at fearful odds in resources and equipment. The Chinese refusal has startled the Japanese, who seem to be trying now to combine the ideas of getting all they can without the involvements of war, and of demonstrating that the army and navy are prepared to do whatever is necessary to bring China to "reason" and "sincerity" in submission.

There is still an expectation of negotiations, which might drag along for months, and might even reach some partial or temporary settlement that would "paper over the cracks"; but at best they promise no reconciliation of the basic clash between Japan's claims and China's despairing assertion of her will to exist. Hirota and other high officers speak of "the last chance" and "peace or war", which imply an ultimatum even as they claim moderation. If one Japanese general or admiral acts on his own in the time-honored way, if Japanese policy turns to military force to carry out some particular step in North China, if some Chinese or plotting Japanese or Korean sets off a bomb in a Japanese barracks or consulate, the hope of negotiation may perish overnight.

Every friend of the two nations must still desire reason and time and conciliation. When once the military way is taken, the East can hardly be turned from a fearful series of conflicts running through the decades to the ruin of China and Japan alike. There is also no small danger of the ultimate involvement of Russia and perhaps of other nations with great interests in the Pacific; while the common policies of Japan and Germany make anxious connections with uneasy Europe.

M.S.B.

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