

JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Written for The Ontario by

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In this excellent article Mr. Bice gives us a real insight into the foreign policy of Japan and reassures us that our western neighbors have no sinister designs upon the world's freedom.

Much speculation has been indulged in respecting Japan's real attitude and purposes since the great war. The trend has generally been in these speculations to the effect that Japan is going to take all that is in sight and give up nothing that she has captured.

But the fact is Japan is in perfect accord with the western allied powers in the effort to obtain an enduring peace, and her hearty co-operation will be given in achieving this end. She disclaims any territorial ambitions in either Siberia or China, and seeks only the establishment of friendly relations on the basis of mutual interests and good will.

This is the gist of the message presented to the Japanese diet recently by her Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His words concerning Russia and China were most reassuring, and all that could be desired. Immediate withdrawal of all military forces from Siberia he considers unnecessary, until conditions assume a greater stability, but reduction will be made in the number of troops engaged in policing that region. In the meantime he asserts emphatically that Japan has "no intention whatever of interfering in the internal politics of Russia."

Furthermore, he declares, "still less would our policy be shaped by any tendency to take advantage of domestic troubles in Russia to promote any selfish aims of territory or economic aggression."

Japan sympathizes deeply with the Russian people, he says, and looks forward confidently to their rehabilitation as one of the great powers contributing to the progress and civilization of the world.

Vigorous denial is given to the insinuation that Japan has territorial ambitions in China. A solemn pledge to respect her independence, territorial integrity and the "open door" is reiterated, and the promise is given that "upon the acquisition of the right of free disposal from Germany of the leased territories at 'Kwantan' they will be restored to China."

In accordance with the terms of the notes complementary to the treaty of May 25, 1915, regarding Shantung province."

It is encouraging to hear this note sounded from the island empire of the Orient at the moment when her representatives are meeting on equal footing with the great democracies of Europe and America. An interesting fact in connection with the present Japanese government, which has received scant attention in the U.S., is that the ministry holds itself responsible to the diet by agreement to resign at any time when it fails to obtain majority support for its policies. This is an extra-constitutional concession to the spirit of democracy.

The Japanese government is modeled on the fashion of the late and unlamented German government; the Ministry, under the constitution, is responsible only to the Emperor. The world would welcome a change in the constitution that would bring Japan into line with popular governments of the world, and the voluntary attitude of the existing ministry is a hopeful sign that such a change may be impending.

It seems but a few years ago that Japan was regarded as a barbarous, heathen nation, backward in everything tending to civilization.

The ancient history of Japan, as recorded by the native annals, is so completely enshrouded in mythological legend as to be absolutely untrustworthy. In these legends numerous deities play a conspicuous part, the country itself being styled the "land of the gods," and the pedigree of the sovereign traced back to Tensho Daijin, the "Sun goddess."

First there existed seven generations of "heavenly deities," followed by five generations of "earthly deities," who in turn were succeeded by mortal sovereigns, of whom the present Mikado or emperor is the 122nd. We can imagine the dense ignorance and superstition that prevailed in that country under the conditions named. From the 10th century the Japanese annals are more reliable, and in recent years she has run a neck to neck race with so-called Christian nations in everything bespeaking a high civilization.

Previous to the London International Exhibition of 1862, Japan had in fact been a sealed, back to the Western world, save in so far as a small collection of industrial and natural products of the country to be seen

at the Hague could afford information. The Portuguese, via Macao, and later the Dutch traders allowed to occupy a factory at Nagasaki in Japan in the 17th and 18th centuries, were in the habit of shipping a few articles for Europe, or utilitarian rather than ornamental character. These consisted chiefly of dinner services of porcelain made to order after European models—known as "Old Japan"—with heavy gliding and starting colors, as unlike any native work as can well be imagined.

When the London exhibition, therefore, made its display in the "Japanese Court," followed as this was by a great exhibition in Paris in 1867, and in Vienna in 1875, the Japanese contributions to which were carefully selected on a large scale by the Japanese Government itself, the rich treasures of art work came upon Europe as a new revelation in decorative and industrial arts, and have continued since to exercise a strong and abiding influence on all industrial art work. Today, but few if any nations can excel the Japs for proficiency in all lines of art and invention.

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Jerusalem in war time has become very much like one of the numerous febrile, army-infested towns of Northern France, and in her streets a thousand allures, from cheap jewellery to pink ice cream, appeal irresistibly to the passing thousands of dust-covered soldiers.

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