

*Cautious summary report  
Spring 1937*

Upon the initiative of several groups interested in constructive attitudes toward the desperate relations between China and her chief neighbor, I recently visited friendly individuals and organizations in Japan, and was enabled by their help to meet a wide variety of persons whose knowledge and opinions were revealed with generous frankness and prevailing cordiality. They included highly responsible and competent men, and in total presented a picture of Japanese conditions and policies that I am convinced is essentially true, though naturally imperfect in detail. The summary given here must be deprived of life from names and specific evidence: but it is most carefully considered, and may be of some service as we look into the next months and years.

The effective propaganda for the army in all the schools, the general feeling that the army is uniquely the guardian servant of the Emperor and therefore of the nation spiritually considered, the popular trust in the character of military officers as contrasted with civil politicians, the fostered ties of sympathy between the anti-capitalist young officers and the burdened peasantry, all work for support of the military program to control Eastern Asia. Expansion is also justified by the population pressure and the lack of natural resources, now viewed in the dangerous flush of industrial triumph and the powerful desire on the part of growing capital and an ambitious people to better themselves by direct control of raw materials and of markets assured against rivals or disturbance. In the continuing mood of national and international strain, moderating elements are strangled by press restrictions and distorted reporting, and liberals are under police intimidation aggravated by direct action of violent nationalists. Four premiers have been assassinated in fifteen years, and the way of mild ministers, editors, and suspected internationalists has been perilous.

There is rising concern among some responsible and free-minded circles, lest narrow militaristic nationalism shall ruin good government and reasonable liberty at home. Yet men of such opinions feel helpless, and that at best they face considerable years of anxiety. There are some slight stirrings in the educational world that may mark the turning, but the road will be long and broken. As to policy abroad, there are few that question the right, the duty, the onmoving fact of Japan's expansion. China is considered usually as a passive prize in Japan's rivalry with Russia and with the overweening wealth of England and America: China's weakness is unfortunate for her, and that's all there is to it. Important groups of civilian officials and business leaders want the expansion to avoid extravagance in expenditure, and ill will from others that might affect Japan's world-wide trade or her eventual security: but they willingly accept acquisitions made by the military, and provide the necessary diplomatic cover along with the funds for exploitation.



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All in all, Japan may be expected to go ahead to dominate this part of the world by increasingly direct means. For the future there are possibilities of internal strife in Japan, of financial disaster in a war with Russia, and of collective economic of political opposition by western powers: but none of them is to be counted upon in considering the immediate outlook for China. That is the view before our eyes as we consider the fates of these nations and the issue of possible resistance by China.

There are valuable opportunities of friendly connections with select Japanese of conscience, who crave information that they may see the issues fairly: and there is the gloomy challenge to try to keep up faith and reason and good attitudes among Chinese who naturally slip toward despair and hatred as they face the events in North China and their probable sequels. For China the result of the game seems predetermined, but it must be played through to the end in the best spirit possible, with confidence that ultimately an attempt to dominate four hundred million people from without is destined to failure. But how much suffering, how much loss of normal human growth must there be meanwhile?

Japan is also justified by the population pressure and the lack of natural resources, now viewed in the dangerous flash of industrial triumph and the powerful desire on the part of growing capital and an ambitious people to better themselves by direct control of raw materials and of markets secured against rivals or disturbances. In the past few years of economic and international strain, moderating elements are discouraged by press restrictions and distorted reporting, and by police intimidation aggravated by direct action of violent nationalists. Four premiers have been assassinated in the past years, and the way of mild ministers, editors, and suspected internationalists has been perilous.

There is rising concern among some responsible and far-sighted circles, least among militaristic nationalists, that good government and reasonable liberty at home. Yet use of such opinions feel helpless, and what at best they have a few years of anxiety. There are some slight stirrings in the educational world that may mark the turning, but the road will be long and broken. As to policy abroad, there are few that question the right, the duty, the obvious fact of Japan's expansion. China is regarded merely as a possible prize in Japan's rivalry with Russia and with the overwhelming weight of England and America. China's resources in materials for war, and that's all there is to it. Important groups of civilian officials and business leaders want the expansion to avoid extravagance in expenditure, and that will mean that they will affect Japan's world-wide trade as her essential security: but they willingly accept acquisitions made by the military, and provide the necessary diplomatic cover along with the funds for acquisition.