

Apr 5, 1936

The Government continues to plug along with railway work and with defensive preparations of all types, though full diplomatic courtesies are observed during this period in which the Japanese leaders are trying to make up their minds what they will do to Russia and perhaps to China. The best available reports from Japan are about equally divided in expectancies: some that the concentration of attention upon Russia will let China off more easily for the time being; others that strong action will be taken in China within the present year. It is possible that a Russo-Japanese struggle would in the long run give China more chance to breathe, though the ultimate failure of one of the antagonists might leave the other more free to work its will unchecked by any fear of strong opposition on the eastern shores of Asia. But in any case the immediate result of communist-imperialist war would be sharp pressure upon China by the Japanese, at least to clear their way to Mongolia and to guard by intimidation against any possible Chinese activity undesired by Japan. Moreover, the Japanese insistence that China agree to "joint action against the communists" is open to the interpretation that China might be pushed hard to act against Russia or her interests in the northwest. As this is written (April 5), a Japanese threat of cooperation with Germany has just been printed in an official paper; this is the first admission of a probability long suspected, and it strengthens the judgment of those who look for the catalysm right soon. But even in the Orient it is often true that the summit of violence in language marks the last stage in reaching an understanding.

There is still no clear indication from Tokyo as to whether the long contemplated negotiations with Nanking will be allowed a fair chance of life. Ambassador Arita held preliminary conversations with Foreign Minister Chang Chun, seemingly without great satisfaction to either side; but already Arita was under appointment to become Foreign Minister in Tokyo, and the new Ambassador, Shigemitsu, has not yet received his papers. These changes of personnel do not in themselves portend a change in policy. Arita and Shigemitsu are both Hirota's men, the latter his Vice-Minister. Shigemitsu has previously represented Japan in this country, and is fairly well regarded here. He may have some sentiment in regard to China, for he left a leg in Shanghai immediately after persuasion by a Korean bomb.

There are significant stirrings in the perpetually difficult relations of Cantonese leaders with Chiang Kai-shek and the Nanking group. Wang Chung-hui, the generally respected jurist who has long served in the World Court at The Hague, has returned to China to act a political mediator. It is said by important persons that the most partisan of the Cantonese, Hu Han-min, demands for his faction a number of high posts in the Government plus a strong policy against Japan. The military and financial interests involved are carefully kept from the public view, though it is known that the Canton Provincial Government is in difficulty with its short term bonds. Thus there is a prospect that the largest disaffected political interest in China will turn to support the National Government. But the price asked, the memories of old hostilities and distrust, the seeming necessity for compromises that will cause dissatisfaction among various elements, must all give pause.

The name of unity is magic. But actually there are worse possibilities than the informal federalism of recent years, in which the southern politicians and generals managed their own regional shows, yet did not interfere with the national systems of customs and debt services, communications, justice, and higher education. The Cantonese can very

readily denounce the faults of Chiang Kai-shek and his crew; but from Central China it seems that they are too confident of their own right to manage revolution and nationalism indefinitely, and that they are the most clannish of regional groups. No one can deny their initiative and activity, but their local political record does not command respect. Individual Cantonese have served well in Nanking, often in the highest ranks; but organized sectionalism, as Americans should know from their own history, is hard to fuse in truly national government. Thus closer combination under pressure of the Japanese impact is neither so easy nor so surely beneficial as is commonly assumed. If it means filling the inner citadel with personal animosities and with dangerous emotionalism, unity and coolness of decision are not served. But ~~but~~ blessings on all genuine adjustment and cooperation!