CONTEMPORARY POLITICS IN THE FAR EAST

BY

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PREFACE

TWENTY years ago the oldest, the largest, the most populous country in the world—a huge continental empire long accustomed to esteem itself the sole repository of national strength and substance—was defeated in war and invaded by the armed forces of a little insular neighbor. In the treaty which followed, the partitioning of China was begun.

Japan's success in dealing with China encouraged European governments to press demands for territorial and other privileges, and there ensued the "scramble for concessions" which marked the years 1894-1898. One after another the leading European powers acquired material "compensations" and staked out "spheres of influence" at China's expense.

In 1899 the Government of the United States, departing from the theoretical dictates and traditions of American foreign policy, asserted its practical interest in what was occurring in the Far East by coming forward as the champion of the "open door" policy.

Writing just after the issuing of Secretary Hay's "open door" notes and just on the eve of the Boxer uprising, Dr. Paul S. Reinsch, then a professor at the University of Wisconsin, and now American Minister to China, said: "The suddenness with which the entire perspective of the political world has been changed by recent developments in China is unprecedented. That country, without question, has become the focal point of international politics. Vast interests are there under contention—even the very composition of the world civilization of the future is at stake upon the issue. Rarely have statesmen been under a graver responsibility than are the ministers in whose hands are the threads of Chinese politics, for they are in a position to determine the future course of history in such

measure as they understand and intelligently influence the forces there at work." *

The events of 1900 drew the attention of the whole world to China. Two years later the consummation of the first alliance between a Western and a Far Eastern state, whereby England formally recognized the wonderful progress which Japan had made during the preceding fifty years, gave Japan a new importance and new strength. Forthwith the statesmen and soldiers of this rising Oriental empire challenged a great European power to battle, and in the ensuing war they achieved a victory which won for their country a ranking among the major nations.

The failure of the Boxer uprising accelerated for China, and the success of the Russo-Japanese war encouraged for Japan, new developments and new activities destined to be of momentous consequence. China turned her back on the old régime and set herself to the task of adopting modern methods. Within a decade she had discarded a dynasty, undertaken the establishing of a new system of government, and embarked upon a gigantic program of social and economic readjustment. During the same period Korea had been removed from the roll of nations. Japan, with the sapience of an old and the strength of a young nation, appropriated for the exercise of her energies all of what had been Korea, and has so extended her authority that South Manchuria is within her grasp, while China has had to take orders from Tokyo.

During the past year there have occurred in the Far East events no less important than were those of 1894-1898, 1900, 1904-1905, and 1911-1912, but, so fully has the great war in Europe occupied the attention of the Western world, most of us have given little thought to the affairs of China and Japan. The significance and the effect of these developments will in time be more widely realized.

There are many reasons why we in the West should study the Far East. We forced ourselves upon Asia. We compelled

* Reinsch: World Politics, p. 85.

China and Japan to open their doors; we made them accept relations with ourselves; and we have driven them to adopt, if only in self-defense, instruments and policies patterned on ours. The present problems of the Far East are as much of our making as of Chinese and Japanese making. There is, just now, some inclination among Americans to accept the subtle suggestion that these problems do not and need not concern us. "Let the Chinese and the Japanese settle their problems for and between themselves." Or, with even less consideration, "Let Japan settle the problems of the Far East." This might be all very well, if the problems could be thus disposed of. The error of those who assume this indifferent attitude lies in their failure to look far enough either into the past or into the future. They are endeavoring to solve problems by ignoring them, to avoid issues by deferring them, to meet obligations by repudiating them. The United States, for instance, has responsibilities in the Far East; we have an interest in the fate and fortunes of its peoples; and we have a right to a share in the commercial future of the Pacific. No amount of present indifference will alter the fact that some day we shall insist that our wishes as to political settlements and commercial opportunities in the Pacific be given due consideration. We have not yet officially repudiated the "open door" policy. Do we intend to? We have recently intimated that it is our intention to establish the independence of the Philippines. Shall we carry out this plan? We have a "Japanese problem" as a part of the question of our immigration policy. This problem and that of our Far Eastern policy are intimately connected. The success or failure of our Far Eastern policy cannot but have its effect upon the problem of maintaining or discarding the principles upon which we base that part of our South American policy which falls within the scope of the Monroe Doctrine. What do we intend to do with these questions? Have we—and if we have not, is it not time that we plan to have—a reasoned and consistent foreign policy? Can we avoid facing these questions?

To understand these problems and the questions to which they give rise, some study of the underlying facts, some knowledge of the nations, the institutions and the situations involved are necessary.

There have been written within the past twenty years scores of books on Japan, many on China, and not a few on the Far East in general. Most of these books are either very broad or very special in their choice and treatment of subjects. Few have been devoted exclusively to politics. There is not one, so far as the writer knows, which has undertaken to give within a single cover a brief account of Chinese politics, of Japanese politics, and of some of the outstanding features of the international situation in the Far East. This the present book attempts to do.

Seven years ago the writer went to China to observe at first hand certain institutions and movements in which he had long been interested. He lived, traveled and studied in the Far East for five years. His own experience in endeavoring to acquire a working knowledge of the instruments, motives and forces which underlie and contribute to or make the problems of Far Eastern politics, together with experience in attempting to answer a variety of questions which are asked in this country with regard to these problems, has convinced him that an effort to make available within one volume concise accounts of a considerable number of related phenomena such as form the subjects of the following chapters should serve a useful purpose. By giving historical résumés; by describing constitutions and constitutional theories; by explaining the genesis and programs of political parties, and the origins, objects, accomplishments, and apparent tendencies of various policies, he has sought to construct a book of facts which will contribute to an understanding of certain institutions, lines of development and problems of the present moment.

It is not the purpose of the book to pass judgment upon

policies or to offer possible solutions for problems; the task in hand is that of setting forth facts. To this end, subjects and materials have been chosen and handled with a view to anticipating in some measure the demands of at least three classes of readers: the student, to whom these matters may be new and who requires both background and detail; the well-informed reader, who, with an already established familiarity with the past, wishes arrangement, a record, and an account of recent events; and the general reader, who, with a constantly increasing interest in Chinese and Japanese politics, finds it difficult, without searching widely, to discover what are the forces and instrumentalities which occasion and determine the developments to which he sees current reference. It is thus hoped that the book will prove useful to students, of some value to specialists, and not without interest to the casual reader.

While the chief concern of this study is with contemporary politics, nevertheless it has appeared advisable to include historical sketches and some non-political data as introductory to or having a direct bearing upon current political developments. Those who have studied Far Eastern politics will appreciate the necessity for elaborating at certain points and will make allowance for the exclusion at others of details which might be interesting but are not essential to the account. Considerations of space, chiefly, are responsible for the absence of chapters on certain special subjects—such as Russo-Chinese Relations, Mongolia, Tibet, Railways and Loans, Tariffs, and so forth—a series of which, particularly adapted to special studies, may be left to another volume.

It has seemed convenient to follow the topical rather than the chronological method, but the arrangement has been made essentially cumulative, everything which precedes preparing the way for what appears in the last few chapters. Thus the first two sections, dealing with politics in China and in Japan, stand as units devoted to their respective subjects; but they serve also to establish a background for the study of matters

of broader general interest in the field of foreign relations, treated in the chapters which follow.

Well aware of the great differences of opinion which prevail with regard to many matters in the field of Far Eastern politics, and believing that personal opinions, affected as they must be by personal sympathies, experiences and predispositions, are all too frequently given undue emphasis, the writer has chosen in the preparation of this book to give first place to statements of fact, to quote from documents, to cite the opinions of other authors, to refrain from extensive comment, and to make suggestions more frequently than positive assertions at points where conclusions are to be drawn.

In presenting this volume the author takes pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness for especially valuable assistance to Mr. Harold S. Quigley, Fellow in Political Science at the University of Wisconsin; to Mr. Ping-song Ho, for several years a student in his classes in China and later at the University of Wisconsin; to Mr. Feng-hua Huang, now a student at the University of Wisconsin; and to many other friends who have contributed information, suggestions and help. He begs also to acknowledge his indebtedness to former instructors and to many authors upon whose works he has relied and from whom he has freely drawn, and to express his appreciation of the courtesies of several editors and of his publishers.

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BOOK I

POLITICS IN CHINA AND IN JAPAN

CHINA

CHAPTER I

CHINA: THE REVOLUTION

THE bomb whose explosion precipitated the Chinese Revolution was not an extraordinary spark, but it fired an unusual charge of latent human energy. When a local mutiny develops within four weeks into a nation-wide revolt, leading within four months to the abdication of an undefeated ruling family, effecting an accepted revolution among from three to four hundred million people and involving four million square miles of territory, great forces have been at work. When the power of a once great dynasty crumbles as did that of the Manchus, either the explosive used against it has been very powerful, or the resistance very weak, or both. In any case, a successful revolt, however sudden and however much a surprise its outbreak, is not fortuitous; the conditions which develop revolution must have been present; the plan of the leaders, if not the weapons of their followers, must have been prepared in advance; the authority of the rulers must have been undermined, and the moment for action must have arrived.

The accident of the bomb explosion was merely incidental. The way had already been prepared for what followed. A certain ironical interest may be attached to the fact that the explosion occurred on quasi-Russian soil, that is in the Russian "concession" at Hankow. Activities of the Russian government had probably

contributed more during the preceding fifty years to the ripening of the conditions in China which bred revolutionary sentiment than had any other agency.

First among the antecedents of the revolution stands a matter of precedent: twenty-six changes of dynasty during the four thousand years of substantial Chinese history. As compared with the Japanese, who claim twenty-five hundred years of continuous allegiance to a single royal line, the Chinese have been decidedly given to sudden political mutations. In modern times alone, the last Chinese dynasty, the Ming, ascended the throne as the result of a revolt; from them the Manchus were able to wrest the imperial seat because the country had, in the weak years of their decadence, been torn again by the forces of rebellion; and the Manchus in turn were, after a century of decline, driven from their tottering throne by the irresistible force of crystallizing popular discontent. The sages of China have taught that a ruler should hold the throne only so long as he governs well and is a true and honest "father" to his people. Developing their thesis much as Locke elaborated for us the doctrine of the "governmental compact," they emphasized the right of the people to remove the scepter from the hands of a monarch who disregarded or was unable to fulfill his essential obligations. The revolutions have come at intervals, some long, some short, but averaging less than two hundred years, as variations in economic pressure and governmental efficiency have sufficed to upset the balance of forces within the state.

The turn of the wheel in 1911 was, then, no great surprise to those who, understanding Chinese history, were able to interpret the tendencies of the past half-century and were familiar with conditions in contem-

porary China. The power of the Manchus had been badly shaken by the great Taiping Rebellion, when but for foreign assistance the Imperial forces would in all likelihood have gone down before the "long-haired rebels." From the shock of that period the throne never recovered. During the whole of the nineteenth century, the increasing influence of the West, the invasion of Occidental ideas, methods and forces, together with the inability of the Manchu government either to put up a successful resistance to the increasing aggressions of foreign powers or to adapt itself to the new conditions, were arousing the Chinese people from their mental lethargy and bringing them to a realization of their country's weakness and peril. Internally, forces identical with those which had rendered the Mings an easy prey to the Manchus were now fast undermining the title of the Manchus. The later Ming Emperors had dissociated themselves from the administration, leaving the conduct of affairs to powerful menials and the chicanery of palace intrigue. Nowhere is the doctrine of the cycle in history more strikingly sustained than in the annals of the Chinese. A century or so on an ascending curve, the zenith, then a century of decline; the rulers begin to lose their vigor in the somnolent atmosphere of peace, prosperity and self-satisfaction; stagnation and decay set in; the people begin to suffer; from suffering proceeds rebellion; perhaps an invasion threatens; the dynasty is impotent either to stem the rising tide of discontent or to defend the nation against aggressions from without. The nadir in the nation's fortunes is reached. The dynasty falls, the débris is swept away, and a new cycle begins.

It is to history that the thoughtful student should go when prompted to musings as to the probable future

of the Chinese people. It is futile to attempt to judge China and to speculate as to her future on the basis, simply, of the past century; still more so to judge the revolution of 1911 by the events which have immediately followed; and it becomes absurd to estimate the capacities of the Chinese people in terms of what they have accomplished—or failed to accomplish—in the last few decades, years, months, and weeks. In China's history there lies material for the refutation of the gloomy prognostications of certain pessimists, material for the encouragement of skeptics, material with which to fortify the faith of optimists.

Returning, however, to the thread of events: During the first century of its power,[1] the Manchu Dynasty produced some of the most efficient and enlightened rulers that ever sat on the dragon throne—and the country prospered. During its last fifty years, the affairs of the central government were largely in the hands of women and palace hangers-on. The erstwhile virility of the Manchu stock had disappeared. When the crisis came, there was a baby on the throne and there was not a single really strong man among his relatives to defend the throne and the nation against the forces of rebellion which suddenly crystallized themselves.

Occurring a good deal as a matter of course, brought on by the operation of economic and social forces, the revolution was in its more immediate aspects the result of a conflict between two antipathetic tendencies: a movement toward centralization on the part of the government; insistence upon local autonomy in certain matters of vital contemporary interest on the part of the gentry in some of the central and southern provinces.

For a brief sketch of the immediate historical an-

[1] The Manchus took the throne in 1644.

tecedents of the revolution we need go back not more than twenty years. In 1894 and 1895 Japan treated China to a surprising and ignominious defeat in the war which had broken out between the two countries as the result of their opposing policies in Korea. The ensuing three years witnessed a scramble among the great European powers, together with Japan, for concessions, both territorial and industrial. By 1898 it had become a question whether China was or was not to be partitioned among the powers. In that year the Emperor fell under the influence of the Cantonese K'ang Yu-wei and embarked upon an extensive and ill-ordered program of reform. A riotous profusion of reform edicts ensued during what is called "the hundred days," which threatened thoroughly to upset the political, social, and educational systems of the country. Alarmed at this, and finally fearful for her own personal safety, the Empress Dowager suddenly effected the famous *coup d'état* of September 21, 1898, which resulted in her seizure of the reins of government.

Among the first of her acts, the Empress Dowager called on the officials and the people to resist, if necessary by force of arms, any further foreign aggression. Then she rescinded most of the Emperor's reform edicts and scattered his advisers. Reaction became the order of the day. Encouragement was given to the ultra-conservatives. The activities of a secret society, which soon became known to the world as the Boxers, were encouraged by powerful elements at the court. This led, in 1900, to the Boxer uprising, the siege of the foreign legations, the invasion of North China by troops of the allied powers, the flight of the Court from Peking—and its absence for eighteen months, the Protocol of 1901, the saddling upon China of a burden of