

## CHAPTER IV

### JAPANESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS

"You have only to consider the trade statistics," Viscount Goto told me during my stay in Tokyo, "to realize how vital to Japan is the continuation of friendly relations with America. Even if no higher motives were involved, commercial interdependence would constitute for us an overpowering argument in favor of trans-Pacific peace."

The more one examines this subject the more apparent it becomes that business considerations are operating steadily and increasingly to mold Japanese foreign policy along peaceful lines. An index to Japan's international commitments in behalf of friendship with other powers is shown by the growth in value of her foreign trade from \$13,000,000 in 1868 to approximately \$2,500,000,000 in 1925. With no other country are good relations so important to Japan as in the case of the United States. This country is not merely her largest customer; we also supply a larger percentage of Japan's imports than any other nation. Taking around 40 per cent of Japan's exports in every year since the war, and providing her people with from one-quarter to one-third of all their imports, the United States has the same relative commercial importance to Japan that all of Europe has to the United States; and though this parallel is striking, it does not adequately bring out the supreme importance to Japan of uninterrupted trade relations with America. The natural resources of Japan are not

to be compared with those of the United States and her people are in every economic respect less self-sufficing and more dependent on the results of overseas commerce.

The foreign trade statistics of Japan proper for the last four years, measured in yen (par value 49.8 cents), are given in the following table. It also shows the value of exports to and imports from North America, which would be completely cut off in the event of hostilities with the United States. The reader will notice, moreover, how much America helps toward rectifying a persistently unfavorable trade balance.

Year	Exports (in thousands of yen)		Imports	
	Total	To North America	Total	From North America
1922.....	1,637,449	748,500	1,886,389	619,767
1923.....	1,368,799	622,643	1,922,239	536,804
1924.....	1,807,031	764,499	2,450,856	712,790
1925.....	2,305,588	1,032,693	2,570,590	704,973

Japanese exports to the United States fall largely in the luxury class. We purchase from her dealers enormous quantities of raw silk—over \$400,000,000 worth in 1925, representing 94 per cent of the total of this commodity sent abroad by the island empire. In addition America is a heavy buyer of Japanese grass rugs, tea, brushes, camphor, pottery, toys, and embroideries. Turn from this list of non-essentials to consider the character of American exports to Japan. According to figures compiled early in 1926 by E. R. Dickover, United States Consul at Kobe, the United States supplies 35 per cent of Japan's total imports of raw cotton, 80 per cent of imported lumber, 37 per cent of imported steel products, 40 per cent of imported wheat, 54 per cent of imported leather, 50 per cent of imported

machinery, and 88 per cent of her imported automobiles, a manufacture in which Japan is only just beginning to engage. Those are basic commodities, the uninterrupted supply of which is vital in time of peace, and absolutely essential in time of war.

The increasing dependence of Japan on the United States for these articles signifies, moreover, steadily increased insurance against war. It cannot be convincingly argued that Japan could readily turn to other sources of supply, when it is realized that in the case of iron and steel products, as an example, the percentage of imports taken from this country is more than double what it was in 1913, while in the case of both Great Britain and Germany the percentage of imports over the same period has been halved. At this point it is worth mentioning that the Russo-Japanese treaty, signed on January 21, 1925, and restoring normal diplomatic and trade relations between Japan and Soviet Russia, after eighteen months had not succeeded in restoring the almost negligible volume of pre-war commerce between the two nations. And while China is an immensely valuable source of supply to Japan, the chaotic republic could scarcely, even if willing, fill this rôle alone in case of war.

If business means anything, and whether or not we like the fact, trade is a determinant of increasing importance in the foreign policy of every modern nation; it means that talk of war between Japan and the United States is dangerous nonsense. In Japan the subject is seldom given consideration by any rational person. It need be regarded seriously only because a jingoistic and ignorant minority in both countries is disposed to play with the idea. If war should come, it will be because that type has been allowed to become numerous enough to force it. Fortunately, nearly every Japanese now realizes that the substitution of active hostility for

friendship would be completely ruinous to his country, irrespective of the military outcome. Among Americans excessive emphasis is laid on the authority of the military and naval cliques in Japan. It is high time that recognition be given to the way in which the growth of democratic sentiment and the weight of commercial considerations are bringing fundamental alteration to the old arrangements.

There can be no doubt, moreover, that American participation in the World War has influenced the prevalent Japanese attitude toward the United States. As in Great Britain there is a new and vivid consciousness of the rise of the United States to the status of a leading world power, reflected in the former country by establishment of such friendship-making organizations as the English-Speaking Union, and in Japan by the attention given in high quarters to the America-Japan Society. After a recent visit to Japan, Henry Morgenthau, our former Ambassador to Turkey, in an interview analyzed this new attitude on the part of her leaders as follows:

Where they used to regard us as an overgrown, provincial, smug, and self-satisfied nation with no military capacity, they have now come to recognize fully our enormous potentialities in peace and war. The Japanese statesmen, who are as keen and adroit as any in the world, fully appreciate the changed condition, and that we now hold the balance of world power. Therefore, they are now anxious to remove the notion entertained by some that they want to attack us, or covet any of our Pacific possessions. Instead, they emphasize their great and sincere admiration for America. To call that attitude propaganda is to misconstrue the word as ordinarily used. It is, rather, a natural outcome of increasingly close relations between the two countries.

Nevertheless, it must not be overlooked that increasingly close relations are apt to lead to increasing irritations. The outstanding, and indeed the only logical, cause of direct friction between Japan and the United

States at the present time is, of course, our Immigration Act, or rather the superfluous and provocative Japanese exclusion clause contained therein. It is superfluous because if Japan had been placed on the same quota basis as the European nations only 100 immigrants from that country would have been admitted annually; and it is provocative because of the direct racial discrimination, which applies equally, however, to the Chinese and other Asiatic peoples.

Passage of this Act by the United States Congress in May, 1924, while the wounds caused by the great earthquake only eight months previous were still raw, has been a severe blow to the justified self-esteem of Japan and has unquestionably done lasting injury to America's reputation in that country. Among the older generation, in particular, the absolute ban placed against Japanese emigration to the United States will always be regarded as a hostile action. Ample evidence could be cited to support that statement, but it will be sufficient to quote here part of a statement made to me by Viscount Shibusawa, the "grand old man" of Japan, who from the vantage point of eighty-six years has special qualifications in singling out what is significant and what is ephemeral in international relations. He said:

The sudden breaking of the Gentlemen's Agreement, in order to classify Japan with those people whom you discriminate against, has spoiled a splendid international relationship. The resentment aroused in my country has done much to wipe out the memory of past friendships, and it is well to remember that this resentment is as strong now as when the immigration act was passed. A proud and sensitive people are doubly offended if it is assumed that they can easily forget what seems a direct and personal affront.

On the other hand, many of Viscount Shibusawa's younger, but no less keen-minded, countrymen are fully cognizant of the fact that Japan herself long maintained an exclusive attitude, firmly prohibiting foreign owner-

ship of land, excluding foreigners from holding shares in certain of her companies and banks, and giving such slight encouragement to naturalization that change of allegiance is extremely rare except among the Chinese in Formosa. During the 1926 session of the Diet, however, legislation was passed abolishing all restrictions on alien land ownership, without regard to discriminatory land laws against Japanese in other countries. This characteristic action of present-day liberal Japan certainly heaps coals of fire upon American heads. But it does not alter the impression that what is objectionable in our Immigration Act in reference to Japan is not exclusion so much as a phrasing which made the recognition of a racial difficulty appear to the Japanese as an assumption of racial superiority.

Wise men waste no time on the idle question of whether the white race or the yellow is "superior," the answer to which must depend almost entirely on what standards of valuation are uppermost in the mind of the interrogator. The issue of whether severe restrictions on the commingling of the two races is not desirable for both is subject to more scientific analysis. In this connection a confidential letter written in 1892 by Herbert Spencer, for the advice of Count Ito, the then Premier of Japan, is still worthy of extensive quotation. It is also noteworthy that Lafcadio Hearn, reprinting this letter as an appendix to his finest and most penetrating book on Japan,<sup>1</sup> strongly approves the advice given, though himself a naturalized Japanese subject married to a woman of that race. The great English biologist and philosopher wrote:

Respecting the further questions you ask, let me, in the first place, answer generally that the Japanese policy should, I think, be that of *keeping Americans and Europeans as much as possible at arm's length*. In presence of the more powerful races, your

<sup>1</sup>"Japan, an Interpretation."



VISCOUNT EIICHI SHIBUSAWA

A great Japanese Liberal who tells his countrymen that "our friend across the Pacific has recently shown in her attitude toward Japan that she is not over-eager for the friendly relations we desire."



YOKOHAMA IN 1926

Three years after complete devastation by the earthquake, Japan's most famous seaport is rising slowly from its ashes.







position is one of chronic danger, and you should take every precaution to give as little foothold as possible to foreigners.

It seems to me that the only forms of intercourse which you may with advantage permit are those which are indispensable for the exchange of commodities—importation and exportation of physical and mental products. No further privileges should be allowed to people of other races, and especially to people of the more powerful races, than is absolutely needful for the achievement of these ends. Apparently, you are proposing, by revision of the treaty with the Powers of Europe and America, to open the whole Empire to foreigners and foreign capital! I regret this as a fatal policy. If you wish to see what is likely to happen, study the history of India. Once let one of the more powerful races gain a *point d'appui*, and in course of time there will inevitably grow up an aggressive policy which will lead to collisions with the Japanese; these collisions will be represented as attacks by the Japanese which must be avenged, as the case may be; a portion of territory will be seized and required to be made over as a foreign settlement; and from this there will grow eventual subjugation of the entire Japanese Empire. I believe that you will have great difficulty in avoiding this fate in any case, but you will make the process easy if you allow of any privileges to foreigners beyond those which I have indicated.

In pursuance of the advice thus generally indicated, I should say, in answer to your first question, that there should be, not only a prohibition of foreign persons to hold property in land, but also a refusal to give them leases, and a permission only to reside as annual tenants.

To the second question I should say decidedly prohibit to foreigners the working of the mines owned or worked by government. Here, there would be obviously liable to arise grounds of difference between the Europeans or Americans who worked them and the government, and these grounds of quarrel would be followed by invocations to the English or American governments or other powers to send forces to insist on whatever the European workers claimed, *for always the habit here and elsewhere among the civilized peoples is to believe what their agents or sellers abroad represent to them.*

In the third place, in pursuance of the policy I have indicated, you ought also to keep the coasting trade in your own hands and forbid foreigners to engage in it. This coasting trade is clearly not indicated in the requirement I have indicated as the sole one to be recognized—a requirement to facilitate exportation and importation of commodities. The distribution of commodities brought to Japan from other places may be properly left to the Japanese themselves, and should be denied to foreigners, for the reason that again the various transactions involved would become so many doors open to quarrels and resulting aggressions.

To your remaining question respecting the intermarriage of foreigners and Japanese, which you say is "now very much agitated among our scholars and politicians" and which you say is "one of the most difficult problems," my reply is that, as rationally answered, there is no difficulty at all. It should be positively forbidden. It is not at root a question of social philosophy. It is at root a question of biology. There is abundant proof, alike furnished by the intermarriages of human races and by the interbreeding of animals, that when the varieties mingled diverge beyond a certain slight degree *the result is inevitably a bad one* in the long run. . . . The physiological basis of this experience appears to be that any one variety of creature in course of many generations acquires a certain constitutional adaptation to its particular form of life, and every other variety similarly acquires its own special adaptation. The consequence is that, if you mix the constitution of two widely divergent varieties which have severally become adapted to widely divergent modes of life, you get a constitution which is adapted to the mode of life of neither—a constitution which will not work properly, because it is not fitted for any set of conditions whatever. By all means, therefore, peremptorily interdict marriages of Japanese with foreigners.

I have for the reasons indicated entirely approved of the regulations which have been established in America for restraining the Chinese immigration, and had I the power I would restrict them to the smallest possible amount, my reasons for this decision being that one of two things must happen. If the Chinese are allowed to settle extensively in America, they must either, if they remain unmixed, form a subject class standing in the position, if not of slaves, yet of a class approaching to slaves; or, if they mix, they must form a bad hybrid. In either case, supposing the immigration to be large, immense social mischief must arise, and eventually social disorganization. The same thing will happen if there should be any considerable mixture of European or American races with the Japanese.

You see, therefore, that my advice is strongly conservative in all directions, and I end by saying as I began—*keep other races at arm's length as much as possible.*

Whether its influence on government was direct, or indirect through its accordance with the reasoning of Japanese statesmen during the transformation, Herbert Spencer's advice has been followed in spirit and is still to a large extent influential in Japanese policy. Its value is most obvious by consideration of contemporary conditions in China, where the progressive seizure of

privileges by foreigners has contributed so greatly to present-day chaos. Holding the white man "at arm's length," Japan has come successfully through her testing period and risen with wonderful celerity to a position where she need fear the foreigner no longer. Does that mean that the underlying racial difficulties are solved? The proportion of Japanese who think so is as small as that among Americans; but the proportion who would bring tact and friendliness to ease the rough corners of the problem seems to be larger there than here.