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The Ferment of Asia

The Tension in Manchuria, Where Japan and Russia Are Maneuvering for Control

By HENRY GEORGE, Jr.

THE conditions which are now disturbing the Orient have such an important bearing on the political fabric of the world — since the countries of Asia may become, to Western civilization, either an ally or a menace — that Collier's felt it desirable to send a special man into this region to report the situation direct. For his many qualifications we selected Henry George, Jr., the son of the great sociologist and political economist, himself an experienced journalist and publicist who is especially interested in the Orient. Mr. George's itinerary included Hawaii, Japan, China, and Siberia. His impressions will be fully set forth in a series of articles of which this is the first. The next article, dealing with recent corruption in Japan, about which practically nothing is known to the outside world, will appear next week

OUR Pullman train drew into Mukden exactly on time. I had felt much at home I on this Japanese-owned and operated, but American-equipped, South Manchurian Railway. But the moment I stepped off it to the Mukden platform I realized that I was in the heart of slothful, sleepy, dirty China.

As I had found her cleanliness, so I had found her morals. It appeared to me that Chinese morals — private morals and business morals — are about the same as those of other people in like conditions: low grade — very low grade — in many respects to the Occidental view. In our carriage we passed what looked to me like sentinel soldiers — uniformed and carrying guns. They stood in the middle of the roadway, with now and again a glint from a bayonet as we passed a stray light.

They were Chinese policemen! "If these are Chinese policemen, what are Chinese soldiers?" I asked. The chief reliance just now is upon these police; the Chinese are growing restive over outside interference, and they are rousing to self-assertiveness with their police, who are in effect soldiers.

What South Manchuria Means to Japan

I FELL asleep on a stone for a pillow thinking of the seventy-five-mile-long battlefield — one point only ten miles away from where I lay — where the Russians and Japanese, with 300,000 infantry on each side, the greatest number of contestants in one battle in recorded history, had so recently struggled over — what? South Manchuria. To Russia it meant, with Port Arthur and Dalny, seaports for the outlet of the stupendously vast Siberian country, and also a territory from which to dominate China and ultimately Japan. To Japan it meant, first and foremost, outer defense works for the Empire of the Rising Sun.

What did they mean — these military police, these soldiers, in slumbering old Manchuria? The question tormented me all day — from early morning when I visited the venerable Manchu palace until late in the afternoon, when I rode out through the suburbs, past the grewsome, lonesome, unfenced, forgotten, grasscovered conical burial mounds of the common people^ to the great, tree-topped, earth-mound tomb of the Manchu conqueror of Mongolia and founder of the reigning dynasty at Peking.

With a more intensive process -- the application of more tools, fertilizers, and brains -- the soil of Manchuria can be made to perform wonders. Experiments show that the highest grade of flour-making wheat can be raised from lands now largely given over to grass.

If Mukden is dirty and forbidding in dry weather, it is indescribable in wet. The unpaved, loam streets — if streets they may be called—turn to sticky, black mud, with pools of water innumerable, so that it is said horses drown at times.

There are two distinct jurisdictions in Mukden — Chinese and Japanese. The Japanese jurisdiction comes through the South Manchurian Railway, a concession originally given to the Russians, and after the war formally transferred to the Japanese. By virtue of the right to protect the railroad, the Japanese have a distinct police system of their own, with the Consul-General as their commander; a military garrison, with the Consul-General at its head; an extraterritorial court, with the Consul-General as high judge. There is also a separate Japanese telephone and telegraph system.

But what impressed me most appeared when going with Consul-General Koike in his carriage, with its picturesquely uniformed Chinese driver and no less picturesque outrider, to call upon the American Consul, Mr. Cloud. We stopped to get some money changed at the Mukden branch of that world-wide and truly great financial institution, the Yokohama Specie Bank. To get quick service, the Consul-General took me in by a side door. In going through a short hall to the banking chamber proper, I passed an open doorway, through which I saw, in a small room, with cartridge belts slung and rifles in hand, as if ready for instant call, six or eight Japanese regulars. A file of such soldiers does garrison duty on the premises day and night. What is the reason? Mr. Koike said, as if in explanation, that the bank building was being reconstructed and new vaults being put in. and that the place therefore needed protection against robbers.

But why not watchmen and, if necessary, some policemen? Why soldiers? And will the soldiers cease garrison duty after the new building is finished? Probably not.

The Japanese in Mukden are few. The total population of the ancient city is perhaps 200,000 — the Chinese themselves do not seem to know exactly. The Japanese keep a strict count of their own numbers—3,500. Of these, 300 are soldiers and 300 police. As to the country generally, it may give a clearer idea of the whole Manchurian situation to explain that there is far from the swarming population commonly supposed. Manchuria consists of three provinces, together embracing an area approximating that of France; but the population is only 2,500,000, as against

France's 50,000,000. The lowest or most southerly of these provinces — Shengking — contains 1,500,000 inhabitants.

A Lean Province

The impression upon you as you travel through the length of Manchuria is that of a sparse agricultural population — very few farmers' houses — and large towns scattered here and there. Land ownership is concentrated. Farm laborers flow in from the other provinces of China to work the land and then flow back again, getting such opportunity as may be to labor, but little or no opportunity to own or work land for themselves. This leads to the ill-working of the land or extensive cultivation. With a more intensive process — the application of more tools, fertilizers, and brains — the soil of Manchuria can be made to perform wonders.

photo caption: "The grewsome, lonesome, unfenced, forgotten conical burial mounds of the common people"

"It may be put down for a certainty that Japan will never willingly relinquish Port Arthur. She has abandoned the forts on the shoreward side, for she never expects to meet an enemy ashore that far south. The territory she took from the Russians she will hold under her domination"

This is especially true north of Mukden — that is, Changchun and Harbin way—where experiments show that the highest grade of flour-making wheat can be raised from lands now largely given over to grass. South of Mukden good wheat is grown, but more particularly millet and beans. The millet, maturing in the fall, grows as high as twelve feet and somewhat resembles our sorghum. In the disorganized condition of China, it offers a peculiarly favorable cover for the movements and raids of bandits, with which the country swarms; and during the recent war it hid military operations, so that often the belligerents came into accidental collision.

But the staple of the country — at least of lower Manchuria — is the white bean, most valuable not as a food, but for its fertilizing qualities, being shipped in large compressed cakes that resemble grindstones. The oil obtained during the compressing is used as an illuminant. These bean cakes are shipped to all the chief seaports of the East, and in immense quantities to Japan. The shipping season is during the spring months, when millions of them may be seen at Dairen under sheds and heaped up in the open, topped by tarpaulins, awaiting shipment.

The South Manchurian Railroad

The bean cake seems at present to form the chief article of traffic on the South Manchurian Railway, and next to that, coal, which the railroad gets out of its own mines. This is the traffic coming south to Dairen, out of Manchuria. The freight north is miscellaneous, and largely the things that the Japanese excel in producing or in respect to which they have more quickly than their competitors adapted themselves, as, for instance, in combining to fill a car, and thus dividing the expense of carriage, rather than shipping separately, and each having to pay for a car when using only a part of a car. It is such cases as this and the bitterness of trade rivalry that give rise to many of the charges of discriminating rates favorable to Japanese and against other nationalities.

The South Manchurian road is not extensive as Americans are accustomed to view railroads —

about 700 miles long. It runs from Port Arthur on the south to Changchun on the north, where it meets the Russian broad-gage system.

Built by the Russians originally, it was broad-gage until the Japanese took South Manchuria during the recent war. when the latter changed it to narrow gage, which is that used in Japan, from which engines and cars were brought. After the war, when the road was to be re-equipped, it was decided to change the gage to the American standard — four feet eight and a half inches — and to supply full American equipment. To do this cost the company \$100,000,000 in debenture bonds and stock. Besides five per cent on the debentures, it paid six per cent on the stock last year.

The term of this railroad concession from China runs for only a dozen or a few more years, at the expiration of which China is supposed to have the right of purchase; in which event the Japanese must clear out. But will they clear out? It may be put down for a certainty that Japan will never willingly relinquish Port Arthur, over which she fought two wars. It is plain to the most superficial visitor that while the Imperial Government is carefully Wiping up and guarding the fortifications at the harbor mouth at Port Arthur, it has abandoned North Port and the other forts on the shoreward side facing north on the peninsula. The obvious reason is that Japan never expects to meet an enemy ashore that far south: that any such enemy will be many miles north — north even of Mukden: and that all the territory she took from the Russians during the late war she will hold under her domination, if not as an integral part of the Japanese Empire, as Korea bar practically become. Japan regards South Manchuria as her defensive outpost, and she will fight to maintain that outpost in a country characterized at once by sloth, indifference, confusion, incoherency, corruption, and revolution; and which is surrounded by Powers that have already carved out "concessions" and impatiently await an excuse to enter upon the larger partitioning.

Changchun, the Transfer Point

THE dividing point between Japanese Manchuria and Russian Manchuria is Changchun. It is a night's ride north of Mukden. I had been called at four by the polite little Pullman car boy. I can hardly call him porter, since he seemed about the age and stature of the bell boys in Tokyo. Even the conductor of this crack train on this American-equipped South Manchurian Railway — called "Train Master" — seemed to be in the early twenties. At Changchun our train had pulled up against a long platform. On the other side, and precisely parallel with it, was the Russian train to which we were to transfer.

This Russian train belonged to the Chinese Eastern Railway, which runs north to Harbin, and then east and west, connecting Vladivostok with the Trans-Siberian line proper. It forms a kind of widely branching capital letter T, and runs through the backbone of Central and North Manchuria. The right of way is only a limited concession to the Russians by the Chinese Government, but when will the Russians give it up? "Never," says pretty nearly everybody in the Far East. It means the shortest obtainable line east to Vladivostok, and it means the command of the great North Manchuria territory.

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by express train to a little military town called 'Manchuria' before we reached the frontier"

In the interior of the station it was evident that I was out of Japanese Manchuria. In all the throng there were not half a dozen of the Nipponese. All the rest were Chinese (mostly big Manchus) and Europeans, or, as the Russians would probably classify them. Chinese. Russians, and Europeans; for the Russians commonly consider and speak of Russia as not belonging to. but being apart from, the rest of, Europe. A motley group of Chinese, in coarse, worn, and unclean clothing, struggled in front of a very small window — I concluded to buy fourthclass railroad tickets. There were a number of women in the place and some children. Except the tourists, they were Russians of the peasant class.

A Mysterious Woman

AND yet not all of them were peasants. I felt sure that at least one was not, despite the make and material of her clothes, which were of the poorest. A shawl, which had been over her head, had fallen about her neck, setting off her remarkable head — hair, dark, silky, luxurious, glorious, parted in the middle and waving back into the folds of the shawl: the features marked with a curious, even fascinating, mixture of feminine softness and masculine strength; her nose too well-shaped for a peasant's, and also her mouth, which, if large, full, and strong, was sensitive; her chin, firm; and her eyes — the windows of the soul — dark, gray, or brownish, and fixed in gaze straight in front of her — gazing, but not seeing.

I first noticed her from the far end of the station, and I approached to get a better view. The face strengthened as I approached — strengthened, and softened, too; and lines crossed the white forehead. It was a face of natural tenderness and refinement, backed by an iron will.

Plainly this woman had a history.

Who was she who could look at once a woman of the drawing-room and a woman of the frontier in this new-old country of Central Manchuria? Was she some aristocrat seeking to bury herself and her broken fortunes in this remote part of the world? Or was she a political exile who had thrown in her lot with the common mass and rebelled at the insufferable political and social conditions? If so, what was she doing in Manchuria? I was interrupted to get together my baggage for Harbin, and after attending to this I cast a glance about for the woman whose face had so wrought upon me, but she had vanished. It is women like that that make revolutions, and as my train rushed toward Harbin this woman fixed herself in my mind as the spirit of North Manchuria and Siberia—the spirit of determination and grief.

As if in keeping with this feeling, the soil of the country seemed suddenly to have changed. Along the South Manchurian line it had been red. Along this Russian road it was dark; in some places black. Professor Chamberlain, holding the chair of geology in the Chicago University, who was a fellow passenger, told me, in respect to this, that, generally speaking, the soil is red in the lower latitudes and grows darker in the higher latitudes. He also pointed out that the Chinese of North Manchuria are larger and darker, have larger hands and feet, and stronger individuality marked in their features than those in southern China. For my own part, I found many Chinese

along the Russian railroad line in Manchuria with features so marked and skin so dark as to bear striking resemblance to our Indians.

"The country might be mistaken for the Western United States. Sometimes it looks like rich Iowa and Nebraska; sometimes like re-swept Minnesota; or in places like alkaline Utah, and again like piny Oregon. The mineral wealth of Colorado is believed to exist in certain regions"

The Russian Excuse for Armament

THE Russians had built all the way down to Port Arthur, as if they had had no idea of ever leaving, and the Russian-built houses north of Changchun were of the same permanent nature as those I had found south of it. But a difference between those north and those south was that every house north was fortified, with a castellated and loopholed stone or brick tower and a surrounding wall. Each might stand a siege. The explanation given is that these are defenses against Chinese bandits that rove these parts and rob and kill. As if corroborating this, soldier or police sentinels are met with at every station. Military guards are found on the trains, and on the chief passenger trains, several guards. But notwithstanding all that is said, one gets the feeling immediately upon taking the Russian line — and it does not leave him — that most of this defense against bandits is a mere pretense to hide a defense against a much graver enemy — the one from Nippon. It gives excuse for a skeleton military occupation which could at short notice be swelled into immense offensive or defensive proportions.

Harbin proved to be quite a town, with a "Grand Hotel" and a number of pretentious buildings in the Russian quarter: but the Chinese part was nothing hotter than a huddle of huts with wooden and mud daubed walls and tiled roofs.

It is difficult to realize the great extent of Manchuria. Even from Harbin it extends still two hundred miles straight north, and we traveled almost twenty-four hours west by this express train to a little military town called "Manchuria" before we reached the Siberian frontier.

For that whole distance, and away eastward to Vladivostok, too, the rails of this Russian Government road hold all that part of North Manchuria in a steel grip which never will be released. Imperial Chinese police are thinly scattered through the country, and are occasionally to be seen at the stations, but they amount to nothing. Russia is dominant.

As for the nature of the country, it might be mistaken for the Western United States. Sometimes it looks like rich Iowa and Nebraska: sometimes like fire-swept Minnesota; or in places like alkaline Utah, and still again like piny Oregon. Even the cyclone of Kansas is in evidence constantly, and the mineral wealth of California and Colorado is believed to exist in certain regions.

The country is given over to sporadic, extensive cultivation and stock-raising. What it needs is settlers for intensive cultivation. In time they will come in great numbers out of the millions of Russia. But the present purpose evidently is to turn the currents of immigration, not into Manchuria itself, but into the Russian territory on both sides of it — into Siberia, west of it, and into the Vladivostok region, east of it.

And into those regions peasant farmers and their wives and children are literally being poured. You pass long train-load after train-load as you travel westward, until it appears as if the whole traffic of this great road spanning two continents was in human freight — unless we consider the railroad materials.

For practically all of these materials, save dirt and stones, have to be brought from Russia proper, little, suitable lumber for even ties being found in the Russian territory to the eastward. Nevertheless, the work of double-tracking is being pushed on apace by sections, with tremendous switching yards, obviously to meet military exigencies, since there could be no such commercial requirements for many years to come. It is a military road: and with a view to building up a human rampart, the Government at St. Petersburg is inducing the utmost of emigration by extremely low railroad rates, by the leasing or selling on mortgage of small pieces of land at very low figures, and by small loans of money.

We soon lost sight of the towered and loop-holed farmhouses and stations, although everywhere were the military police. Green fields lay embroidered with gold and purple flowers; hills in the distance rose out of misty blue, and the fleeciest of clouds flecked the sky — such a scene as when the maid Europa picked blossoms and the milk-white bull Zeus came to seek and carry her off.

Or changing its aspect, the country presented a flat waste of sand, spotted with a sage-brush-looking shrub, and camels grazing or quietly kneeling and chewing the cud.

Or still further along came a nestle of little wooden houses, with a red or blue or green minareted church spire over all, and with a little saw-mill close at hand.

How different from the Siberia we had been taught to think of—that illimitable desert region by summer, and snow and ice through the long winter; that dungeon of the political felon; that realm of despair; that place of Death in Life!

What is in Store for the Future?

AND yet humanity here is at low ebb. Many of these people have been sent out for crime — crime induced almost altogether by the conditions of bestial poverty. A large proportion of them have in the course of things worked out their penal sentences and begun new lives in that new country, but with hatred in their hearts for the despotic powers at the capital on the Neva.

But the intelligence most to be feared is that of the political exiles and of their children and children's children — among them men and women of station and of the best brains of Europe, many of whom might have been seen among the chained gangs that in times past, before the advent of the railroad, wound their way for a thousand miles on foot, weary unto death, to the remote penal farm colonies or the more deadly mines. Even now these exiles can be seen leaving the train at Irkutsk and stinting on foot for the infamous Kolymsk, six hundred miles due north.

If it be true that one man with an idea can make a revolution, then how many revolutions against such an order of things are these fire-fed intellects good for when the hour of freedom,

and perhaps of retribution, shall come? And here returns thought of that woman in the railroad station at Changchun! For womanhood will play a great part in the future of Siberia. The latest yearly statistics of the number of exiles I have seen are more than ten years old — those of 1898. Such things are not published to the world by the Russian Government. During that year 7,006 men and 314 women were exiled. These were voluntarily followed by 1,083 men and 3,275 women. That is to say, of 13,178 forced and voluntary exiles, 3,580 were women, *and of these, 3,275 were voluntary!* Who were these three and a quarter thousand women? Wives, most of them; mothers, sisters, and daughters, some of them.

Will this count for anything in the turbulent times just ahead in northern Asia? I think it will. The woman I saw in the Manchurian railroad station will again appear, with her face of determination and grief, and Throned Pride in the Kremlin and in the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva will tremble!