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AMERICAN POLICY
IN THE
SINO-JAPANESE CONFLICTS
1931-1932

BY
RICHARD JOSEPH COLLINS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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IN
HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of American policy in the conflict between China and Japan in 1931 and 1932. The dispute is of tremendous significance since it was what has often been called the first step leading to World War II. The purpose here is to make a thorough study of the development of American policy in the Manchurian affair and the events that occurred in Shanghai early in 1932 and to draw some conclusion as to why American policy did not succeed.

The major source of primary research material was five volumes of The Foreign Relations of the United States, a comprehensive accumulation of diplomatic papers published by the State Department from 1943 to 1949. Also, considerable attention was given to The Far Eastern Crisis, the journal of the man most responsible for the policy of the United States, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson. The Report of the Assembly of the League of Nations, the body which passed final judgment against Japan, the State Department publication, Peace and War, and the Report of the League of Nations Commission of Enquiry were also utilized.

The major secondary source consulted was The Manchurian Crisis, by Sara R. Smith, a work published in 1948. The chief source of information regarding developments within Japan was War and Diplomacy in the Japanese

Empire, by Tatsuji Takeuchi.

The main finding of this study is that American policy was guilty of two major errors. First, the United States stayed out of the dispute publicly for the first two months. The purpose of this move was to avoid fanning the flames of nationalism in Japan and give the civilian element in the government a chance to wrest control away from the military. The result was the reverse of what was intended. The failure of the United States to apply strong and open pressure from the beginning and the military successes of this period encouraged the militant nationalists, and the liberal element never had a chance to regain control.

The second error was the failure of the United States to cooperate fully with the League of Nations, a failure which came after the State Department realized its first error in judgment. The fact that the League was never completely confident of American support encouraged that organization to move with extreme caution, and it was this type of caution that led to that body's downfall.

The policy of moral pressure and non-recognition of the puppet state of Manchukuo represented, in this writer's opinion, the best possible course of action against Japan, which the facts show to be the aggressor. Economic sanctions or armed force would probably have resulted in the war everyone wanted to prevent. Nevertheless, the action which was taken would have had a better chance of success had it been immediate and the result of close and complete cooperation between the League and the United States. Further, it

(v)

would have required a sincere effort on the part of all the nations of the world to assist Japan in her economic difficulties.

It is acknowledged that such a course would have had no guarantee of success, but, it is the firm conviction of the writer that such a policy represented the only possibility of a peaceful and permanent settlement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is the wish of the author to express his gratitude to the library staffs of the University of Rhode Island, Brown University, and particularly the Providence Public Library for their valuable assistance in obtaining the source materials for this paper. Also, appreciation is extended to Dr. Daniel Thomas, Dr. Frank Pelton, and Professor David Warren of the University of Rhode Island for their advice and suggestions. Finally, thanks are extended to the typist, Mrs. Ruth Collins, for her tireless and uncomplaining efforts.

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lished her domination over that country. This attempt by Japan to make China a protectorate was a direct violation of the Open Door policy, which had become the basis of American policy in the Far East. In 1899 Secretary of State John Hay had obtained the adherence of all the great powers of the world, including Japan, to this policy which guaranteed equal economic opportunity in China and ensured its political and territorial integrity.

Upon hearing of the Twenty-One Demands, the United States voiced objections to Japan. This stand of the United States compelled Japan to modify her demands. The resulting ultimatum to China did not establish a protectorate over that nation but did solidify the Japanese position in southern Manchuria. The Chinese accepted these modified demands by signing two treaties on May 25, 1915.

The fact that the United States was influential in the partial frustration of Japan's ambitions in China at this time increased the bitterness that was growing in Nippon toward her vast neighbor across the Pacific. Also, the immigration policy of the United States toward Japan was regarded as a grave insult to that country. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, a voluntary limitation by Japan, had not proved too successful, and in 1924 Congress officially restricted Japanese immigration. These factors brought about a definite strain in the relations of the two countries.

Following World War I, the nations of the world became vitally concerned with attempts to achieve a lasting peace. These efforts brought about a feeling of optimism that

American-Japanese relations were improving and presented hope that Japan would respect the provisions of the Open Door in China.

Probably the most significant step toward the goal of peace was the creation of the League of Nations. The United States, of course, had rejected this organization. Nevertheless, Japan was a member, and most people, including many Americans, looked to the League as the main hope for peace.

Even though it failed to join the League, the United States took an active part in the quest for peace in the nineteen twenties. In 1922 the major naval powers of the world, including the United States and Japan, agreed upon a tonnage ratio and construction holiday for capital ships at the Washington Conference. More important to this study, however, was the Nine Power Treaty which resulted from this meeting. The purpose of this treaty was to specifically protect China against designing outside powers. The signing nations, which again included the United States and Japan, agreed to respect China's sovereignty, aid in maintaining an effective government for China, use their influence to ensure equal economic opportunity, and refrain from using conditions in China to gain special rights.

Japan, by signing the Nine Power Treaty, seemed to have given up any ambitions in China and accepted the principle of Chinese independence. This conception gained strength in 1928 when Japan became one of the sixty-two signees of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. This Pact, promoted by

the United States and France, called for a solemn condemnation of war and an agreement that all international disputes would never be settled by other than pacific means.

The multi-nation treaties of the twenties certainly appeared to be a source of encouragement for the cause of world peace, but despite the acknowledgment of international cooperation by the Japanese government, the bitterness toward the United States still existed. Forces of nationalism were growing in Japan which were to make a shambles of the well intentioned efforts of the treaty signers. Furthermore, the fruits of the Revolution of 1911 in China were beginning to ripen. The Kuomintang, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, gradually was creating a sense of unity and nationalism. It became inevitable that these growing forces in both Japan and China would eventually clash and without question the most likely arena for that clash was Manchuria.

The Far East in 1931

Figure 1

CHAPTER I

THE MUKDEN CRISIS

By the middle of the 1920's, the Chinese Nationalists had increased their anti-foreign sentiment considerably. In the twenties several clashes with foreigners erupted in Chinese cities, the worst of which occurred in Nanking in 1927. This incident resulted in considerable property damage and the deaths of several Japanese, British, and American citizens. Gunboats of the latter two nations were immediately sent up the Yangtze River to Nanking and, threatened by this show of force, the Chinese apologized, paid reparations, and guaranteed further violence would not occur. Oddly enough, Japanese military forces did not participate in this incident. This was hardly caused by a lack of concern in Japan but was due to the fact that conservatives were still in control in that country and militant nationalism, which was to be the crux of all the later difficulties, was not yet in the open.¹

It would seem that a set back such as this would have hurt the cause of Chinese nationalism, but that was not the case. Rather, the incident strengthened it, for shortly afterwards, Chiang Kai-shek asserted that China would not make

¹ Samuel Flagg Bemis, The United States as a World Power (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950), p. 334

any more treaties of concession nor recognize those already made.² Such a nationalistic declaration particularly affected Japan, since her rights in Manchuria had been gained by treaties of 1905 and 1915, which were definitely treaties of concession, and would therefore no longer be recognized by the Nanking government.

The fact that China professed not to recognize these treaties did not cause Japan to leave Manchuria nor to discontinue the exploitation of her interests in that region. Her continued presence incited the Chinese and aroused their desire to rid themselves of the intruder. The Chinese soon found that their most effective weapon was the commercial boycott. The increasing hardship this boycott placed upon Japan, however, encouraged a militant attitude there, one which advocated positive steps to maintain Japanese interests in Manchuria.

Despite Japan's exploitation of the region, China had never considered Manchuria anything but her own. Basically, Manchuria was important to China as a defensive buffer between Japan and Russia and as a source of food. Manchuria has often been called the granary of China; some thirty million Chinese farmers had emigrated into the region to exploit its agricultural potential. At the same time, in spite of heavy commercial exploitation, few Japanese farmers had migrated to Manchuria, and in the eyes of most observers, the region was not only legally Chinese, as the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905

² Ibid., p. 335

had established, but Chinese in fact as well.³

In June of 1928, the Manchurian dictator Chang Tso-lin was assassinated in his railroad car. He had once been close to the Japanese but had been gradually drifting away, and his son, Chang Hsueh-liang, who succeeded him, had become even more anti-Japanese. The break between Manchuria's ruler and Japan was made complete in December of that same year when Chang Hsueh-liang declared allegiance to Nanking and became administrative chief of Manchuria.⁴

It would be an understatement to say that the Japanese had become alarmed by this turn of events. Japan considered her interests in Manchuria to be legitimately gained and vital to her welfare. First of all, by 1931 Japan had eight hundred million yen, or forty percent of her total foreign investment, tied up in Manchuria, particularly in the South Manchuria Railway.⁵ Second, Japan's economic well being depended upon her ability to industrialize and her nearest and greatest market was China. Also, if Japan were to continue to industrialize successfully, much depended upon her ability to obtain coal and iron from Manchuria. Another reason for Japan's vital interest in Manchuria was the fact that a possible solution to her food problem lay in the crops of that region.

³ Henry L. Stimson, The Far Eastern Crisis (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 18

⁴ Ibid., p. 24

⁵ Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds, Japan in American Public Opinion (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), p. 294

Further, some Japanese looked upon Manchuria as a possible outlet for their country's excess population, although as previously mentioned, few farmers had migrated there by 1931 and the total of 230,000 Japanese in Manchuria were almost all involved in the running or policing of the South Manchuria Railway.⁶ Finally, although it was not well defined, there was a feeling in Japan that the thousands of lives lost in preventing Russian acquisition of Manchuria in the war of 1904-1905 had given to the Japanese a position of special interest.⁷

Two conflicting ideas as to how these interests should be maintained existed in Japan. Baron Shidehara, who was head of the Foreign Office from 1924 to 1927 and from 1929 until the early stages of the crisis of 1931, had long advocated a conciliatory policy toward China. Shidehara hoped to solve Japan's economic problems by gaining the confidence of China and the rest of the world in regard to Japan's motives in Manchuria and, with this confidence gained, to open vast markets for trade hitherto closed to the Japanese.

There was, however, a growing feeling in Japan that only by a more aggressive policy could Japan maintain her interests in Manchuria and, if it became necessary, military force might have to be used. It was this feeling that led to the intervention in Shantung by the less conservative government of Baron Tanaka in the later part of 1927. The move was

⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 16

⁷ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., pp. 294-95

caused in part by the fear of the spreading of China's civil strife; it resulted in another vigorous boycott of Japanese trade by China. Shortly afterwards tempers cooled a bit and the Japanese forces were withdrawn, but the seeds of bitterness had been planted and they soon began to grow.

Nineteen Twenty-nine marked the return of conservative leadership to Japan, but by 1931 it was becoming increasingly apparent that Prime Minister Yuko Hamaguchi and Foreign Minister Kijuro Shidehara would have a difficult time maintaining a policy of conciliation toward China. The tremendous flood of anti-Japanese propaganda by the government of Chang Hsueh-liang was only serving to increase the influence of the proponents of an aggressive Manchurian policy in Japan. Further, competition from newly built Chinese railroad lines was being felt by the South Manchuria Railway and was causing considerable concern among the Japanese.⁸

The situation became explosive in the summer of 1931 when anti-Chinese riots broke out in Japanese-held Korea over the molesting of migrant farmers from the latter country in Manchuria. Many Chinese were massacred in these riots and the resulting increase of China's boycott on Japanese trade only intensified the situation.⁹

The most severe cause of tension, however, occurred in June when a Japanese army officer, traveling in Manchuria,

⁸ Stimson, op. cit., p. 25

⁹ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 293

was arrested and killed by Chinese officials. This was the first instance of violence against a Japanese military official by the Chinese, and the Japanese press made considerable copy out of it, arousing public opinion and encouraging a more aggressive policy.¹⁰

Actually, the Japanese public was not informed of all the facts of this case. The Japanese officer, Captain Shintaro Nakamura, had been traveling in Manchuria posing as an agricultural expert but was in fact on a military reconnaissance mission. He was detained by Chinese soldiers while on his way to the city of Taonan. The Chinese considered this detention strictly a matter of routine, but upon examining Nakamura they claimed to have found narcotics on his person and also documents which proved conclusively that he was a spy. There is only the Chinese version of the story to go on from this point, but it was their contention that after his discovery Nakamura tried to escape and was shot by a sentry.¹¹

The complete details of the Nakamura incident may never be known. There seems to be little doubt that the latter's mission was of an illegal military nature. Yet whether the Chinese had actual proof of this and whether Nakamura was really shot while trying to escape instead of being executed remains a mystery. The Japanese reaction to the case was no

¹⁰ The United States Consul at Mukden to the Minister in China, August 20, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 1

¹¹ Sara R. Smith, The Manchurian Crisis (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 18

mystery, however, and most people close to the situation felt that this incident was a key factor in the bitterness which paved the way for the crisis in September.

The Nakamura case pointed out vigorously to many Japanese the need for action in Manchuria. Few were unaware that the loss of Japanese interests in that area would mean a crushing blow to Japan's economy, already in a precarious position.

The twenties had been particularly difficult for Japan. A financial panic had occurred in 1920, the terrible earthquake had come three years later, and a banking crisis and famine had struck in 1927. All of these had contributed to a situation of falling prices, decreased wages, and unemployment.¹² The world depression and the Chinese boycotts had resulted in a fifty percent decline in foreign trade, upon which Japan so greatly depended. With farms overcrowded, more and more Japanese were migrating to the cities; unless the country could expand industrially, they would become a burden to society. However, with markets declining and the sources of raw materials being shut off, the hope of greater industrialization became less likely.

As the Japanese farmer and particularly the Japanese youth looked at the situation, they began to feel that a fundamental reorganization of the economic and social order was necessary. More and more these discontented groups began to

¹² Tatsuji Takeuchi, War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1935), p. 340

look upon greater exploitation of Manchuria as the answer to their problem and they availed themselves of military leadership with its theories of positive action.¹³

It would seem that as long as the Minseito party controlled the Japanese government and Baron Shidehara remained the head of the Foreign Office, a conciliatory policy rather than an aggressive one would prevail. However, it must be pointed out that the position of the military in Japan at that time was unusual. High military officials had what was known as direct access to the emperor. Thus, questions of military policy were often brought before the emperor without consulting the civilian government, making it possible for the military to follow a course of action of which the government would have no knowledge. This privilege of direct access gave the military a position of great importance and enabled it to carry out a course of action in September in spite of Shidehara's conservative policy.

The military had been much stirred by the signing of the London Naval Treaty in 1930. This treaty re-established the battleship ratios of the Washington Conference, but these were now considered very unfavorable to Japan, no longer willing to accept a position of inequality. So great was the opposition of the military to this treaty that Prime Minister Hamaguchi was assassinated by a fanatic. The assassination did not result in the fall of the cabinet and Baron Shidehara remained the head of the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, the

¹³ Stimson, op. cit., p. 238

Minseito government, now headed by Reiyiro Watasuki,¹⁴ found itself in a most difficult position since it was opposed by the military, which was now convinced that a conciliatory policy would lead to Japan's eventual loss of her special interests in Manchuria.¹⁵ Then, with the occurrence of the Korean riots and the death of Captain Nakamura, the opponents of the government held no doubts that an aggressive policy in Manchuria was the only possible solution to their difficulties.

In September of 1931, high Chinese officials were well aware of this growing hostility and the power of the military in Japan. In spite of the relatively cooperative attitude of the Japanese government, these Chinese officials were convinced that Japan would attempt to occupy Manchuria before the close of the year.¹⁶ The United States Minister in China, Nelson Johnson, reported this fact to the Secretary of State on September 15 with the comment that as long as China adopted an attitude inimical to Japanese interests in Manchuria, incidents were bound to occur which could lead to a serious conflict.¹⁷

It was not long before these fears were realized. On the night of September 18, 1931, at approximately 10:00 P.M.,

¹⁴ Smith, op. cit., p. 13

¹⁵ Takeuchi, op. cit., pp. 345-46

¹⁶ Memo of the Minister in China, September 11, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 3

¹⁷ The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, September 15, 1931 - Ibid., p. 7

a bomb exploded on the tracks of the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway at Liutloka Station just north of the city of Mukden.¹⁸ This explosion immediately led to a clash between a Japanese patrol and Chinese forces in the area. Upon hearing the news of the fighting, Lieutenant Colonel Shinamoto, the local Japanese commander, ordered an attack on the Chinese barracks at Mukden, and by 6:00 A.M. that objective had been captured. The Japanese did not stop with this success; by evening of the nineteenth the entire city of Mukden was under their control. Within forty-eight hours they had taken all of southern Manchuria.

The Chinese version of the incident, of course, was that it had been entirely unprovoked. Furthermore, they contended that Chinese troops in the area were under strict orders to offer no resistance, and followed these orders explicitly with the exception of one regiment in the Mukden barracks which had no alternative but to defend itself.

The Japanese claimed self-defense. It was their contention that the explosion was caused by the Chinese, and when a patrol led by Lieutenant Kawamoto arrived at the scene to investigate, it was fired upon by a force of Chinese soldiers numbering between three hundred and four hundred men. Upon being informed of the clash, Lieutenant Colonel Shinamoto ordered an attack upon the Chinese barracks where some ten thousand troops were stationed.¹⁹

¹⁸ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 340

¹⁹ Smith, op. cit., pp. 19-20

When informed of the situation on the night of the eighteenth, General Shigero Honjo, the chief commander of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria, ordered the occupation of Mukden and the other cities of southern Manchuria. The Japanese contention was that with only 10,400 troops in the entire area as compared to 220,000 Chinese, and with the lives and property of Japanese civilians in the region in serious jeopardy, it was necessary to act swiftly to forestall a serious disaster.²⁰

Despite the Japanese explanation, the swiftness and efficiency of its army's movement and build up of munitions and supplies make it obvious that this was not a spontaneous action. There was little doubt that it was a thoroughly planned and well executed military operation. The League of Nations' Commission of Enquiry recognized this fact but acknowledged that all armies make detailed plans for any possible eventuality, and the Japanese in this case simply executed just such a plan. The Commission did not justify the Japanese explanation of self-defense yet recognized that the Japanese officers involved may have thought they were acting in that capacity, and it was not definitely concluded that the incident at Mukden was a deliberate plot.²¹

The version has been refuted in a recent study of

²⁰ Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, September 24, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1943), II

²¹ Smith, op. cit., p. 21

Japanese nationalism by Richard Storry. Storry's thesis, which he backs with considerable evidence and which is accepted as accurate by this writer, is that the railroad explosion and the entire incident was the work of the Japanese, not the Chinese. The operation was planned in its minutest detail by Colonel Itagi, Lieutenant Colonel Ishihara and Major Hanoya, all members of the headquarters staff of the Kwantung Army and possessors of remarkable power in that organization. All three of these men were members of an ultra-nationalistic society of junior army officers known as the Sukurakai.²² This secret society, devoted to reorganizing the Japanese government along militaristic lines, had failed to execute a government coup d'etat in Tokyo earlier in the year and since that time had become more determined than ever to bring about direct action in Manchuria.²³

On September 15 the Japanese Consul General in Mukden reported to the Foreign Office that a Captain Kawakami had stated that an important incident might break out on the evening of the eighteenth, and he had been entrusted with the capture of the Mukden airfield if this became an eventuality. Upon hearing this, Foreign Minister Shidehara expressed his concern to the Minister of War, General Jiro Minami, who was also questioned on the matter by the emperor. Finally, Minami consented to send an envoy to Mukden with orders to

²² Richard Storry, The Double Patriots - a Study of Japanese Nationalism (London: Chatto and Windus Company, 1957), p. 84

²³ Ibid., p. 55

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General Honjo to stop an incident at all cost.²⁴

The envoy, General Taketawa, traveled to Mukden by train, arriving on the evening of the eighteenth. Instead of delivering his message promptly, the general decided to wait until the next day and spent the rest of the evening relaxing in a geisha house. Thus, before the message which was supposed to prevent a clash was ever delivered to General Honjo, the fatal incident had occurred.²⁵

It is a known fact that General Minami was the only member of the cabinet with definite militaristic views, and it is believed that he pretended to reconcile the government while actually encouraging the military plot. Evidence of this is his lack of urgency in sending General Taketawa by train instead of by air, and even more important, the selection of Taketawa in the first place. The fact is that this envoy, who was supposed to go to Mukden to prevent an incident which had been plotted by members of the Sukurakai, was none other than the founder of that organization, although the general was not an official member due to his rank. Thus, the remarkable incompetence of such a high ranking officer, entrusted with so important a task, is logically explained. General Taketawa never had any intention of stopping the incident, and the Minister of War knew that when he sent him. Storry concludes by stating that Minami and Taketawa were probably not the instigators of

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75

²⁵ Ibid., p. 86

the plot, but gave it their whole hearted support.²⁶

At first, reaction in Japan to the railroad explosion and subsequent military moves was divided. The surprise of the incident brought about some criticism of the army, especially by Ikuo Oyama, the head of the Japanese Labor Party.²⁷ The rightists, however, constantly gained in strength, and as the days following the incident passed, the pendulum swung farther and farther toward acceptance of the military's aggressive policy. The Seiyakai Party, the leading rival of the Minseito, did everything possible to discredit the conciliatory policy of the current government. By early December, public opinion had shifted drastically in favor of the military. Everywhere Japanese citizens had become convinced that the action in Manchuria was in self-defense and necessary to Japan's welfare.²⁸

The Japanese reasoning in this situation was adequately summarized by Ambassador W. Cameron Forbes in a letter to the Secretary of State. Forbes explained that the Japanese were convinced that the intervention was necessary because Manchuria was in a chaotic condition, administratively and financially, and that the Chinese officials there were unable to do anything about it. Banditry was rampant, and since there was no power to enforce order in Manchuria except in the Japanese railroad area, the Japanese had no alternative but to

²⁶ Ibid., p. 56

²⁷ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 362

²⁸ Ibid., p. 367

protect their interests by establishing order themselves.

Furthermore, the Japanese were convinced that their exploitation of Manchuria was an economic necessity, and since China no longer claimed to recognize the provisions of the Twenty-One Demands which established these rights, force became necessary to preserve what Japan felt to be rightfully hers.²⁹

It is interesting to note that Forbes informed Stimson at this time that what Japan was doing was right and necessary, but it was being done in the wrong way. In Forbes' mind Japan's position was justified even though her course of action was not. This, of course, made the determination of American policy in dealing with this crisis extremely difficult. The tendency today is to look upon Manchuria as a deliberate act of aggression and the feeling is that our policy should have been determined accordingly. This writer does not argue with that contention; in fact he has pointed out that the crisis was more of an act of aggression than was generally realized at that time. Nevertheless, Forbes was correct in pointing out that there were extenuating circumstances as far as Japan was concerned. It becomes obvious that these circumstances must be born in mind if one is to analyze properly the American handling of the situation.

One of the big difficulties in this crisis was that the facts were not out in the open. Japan contended her action was

²⁹ Ambassador Forbes to the Secretary of State, January 29, 1932, The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1948), 109

strictly a matter of self-defense and, as soon as the safety of Japanese residents was assured, she would withdraw her troops to their original positions. China, on the other hand, maintained that the attack was strictly of Japanese origin and that it came with absolutely no provocation. The Chinese questioned, with much justification as the situation unfolded, Japan's intention to withdraw and openly advocated a neutral investigation, a course of action which Japan steadfastly opposed at that time.³⁰

Japan contended the matter should be settled by her and China alone. China recognized the disadvantage of such an arrangement and sought outside help. The day following the initial clash former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wellington Koo, visited the United States Minister in China, Nelson Johnson, seeking American leadership in bringing about a settlement of the dispute.³¹ The United States was unwilling to provide such leadership and China, recognizing that she would not get the assurance she sought, decided to bring the case before the League of Nations. On September 21 China formally appealed to the League, seeking restoration of the status quo, prevention of a renewal of the hostilities, and reparations for damages.³² Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek, in an address made to the leaders

³⁰ Stimson, op. cit., p. 33

³¹ The United States Minister in China to the Secretary of State, September 19, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 12

³² Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 354

(25)

of the Kuomintang, impressed upon them the necessity of remaining calm while the appeal to the League was being acted upon, and being ready to fight if no satisfaction were realized.³³

³³ The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, September 23, 1941 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 41

CHAPTER II

INITIAL AMERICAN POLICY

Upon hearing of the clash at Mukden and the subsequent occupation of southern Manchuria, the United States Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, immediately called the Japanese ambassador, Katsuji Debuchi, to his office for a conference. When asked by Stimson to cancel a planned trip home, Debuchi asserted that he had already done so. Further, the ambassador expressed surprise over the Mukden incident and assured Stimson that his government would take steps to control it.¹

Secretary Stimson states in his book, The Far Eastern Crisis, that his initial reaction was uncertain as to whether or not the Japanese government had sanctioned the action of the army in Manchuria.² It appears that he took the assertions of the ambassador at face value and assumed that definite steps would be taken to control the situation. It later became obvious that such was not the case; the political situation in Japan gave one no assurance that simply because a civil official of the government promised a course of action, the army would honor that promise. The dual nature of the

¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 25

² Ibid., p. 31

Japanese government has already been discussed. There seems to be little doubt that in his initial policy Secretary Stimson was not entirely unaware of the special position of the Japanese military but did not attach sufficient import to it.

Soon after the initial clash, Stimson received a communication from Minister Johnson stating that the Nakamura incident had raised the ire of the Japanese army in Manchuria, and the killing of Japanese soldiers on the South Manchuria Railway on September 18 had incited it into action.³ This, of course, was the Japanese army's version, but it substantiated the growing belief in the army's responsibility for the incident. Finally, on September 21 the State Department reached the official conclusion that the Mukden incident was strictly a clash among subordinates and that neither governments was involved. It was acknowledged that Baron Shidehara may have feared such a coup by the army, which it has already been shown he did, but the Foreign Office was definitely not a party in the action, and the State Department was convinced that in no way could this incident be termed a violation of the Kellogg Pact.⁴

Despite the fact that the State Department did not place blame upon the Japanese government, Secretary Stimson was convinced, almost from the beginning, that the origin of

³ The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, September 19, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 13

⁴ Stimson, op. cit., p. 34

the clash was the Japanese army and the Chinese bore no significant responsibility. His agents in the field determined this early, as a telegram from Minister Johnson on September 22 indicates. Johnson, basing his information on a report from his Vice-Consul at Mukden, called the Japanese action a definite act of aggression⁵ and asserted that the swiftness of the latter's troop movements precluded any possibility of the clash being of Chinese origin.⁶

While recognizing that all armies are expected to be prepared for any contingency the United States accepted the contention that the swiftness of the Japanese movements and the extremely well coordinated and efficient conduct of the operation were proof that Japan was the aggressor. Washington concluded that although the military authorities had not actually planned the affair, they had seized upon a minor incident to force a general liquidation of the outstanding issues between themselves and the Chinese in the area.⁷ It is now clear that the United States was in error in this assumption but was correct in its belief that the Foreign Office was not responsible for the army's action.

⁵ Peace and War, United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington: The Department of State Publications, 1943), p. 4

⁶ The Vice Consul at Mukden to the Minister in China, September 20, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 19-21

⁷ The Charge' in Japan to the Secretary of State, September 22, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 4

With this interpretation of the incident, Secretary Stimson undertook a policy which has since received much criticism. Assuming the clash was only a local incident, Stimson was convinced the Japanese government could handle it. He was aware of the nationalistic and militaristic sentiment in Japan and did all in his power to avoid difficulties with those elements in order to give Shidehara every possible chance to settle the question.⁸

On September 22, Stimson sent a note to the Japanese Foreign Office indicating that the United States held Japan responsible but would give the government every opportunity to work out the problem.⁹ The note was not made public, nor any subsequent dealing, in order to avoid antagonizing nationalists in Japan and make things difficult for the government. Stimson's policy of no publicity was based upon the fear that foreign intervention would only fan the flames of militarism. He felt that if the United States forced a settlement upon Japan it would simply rekindle the old bitterness between those countries and ruin what he called the international progress of the past decade.

Stimson was convinced of the good faith of the Japanese government because the latter had been following a conciliatory policy for the past ten years. Shidehara was an avowed advocate of the principle that Japanese economic problems could be settled by friendlier trade relations instead

⁸ Smith, op. cit., p. 29

⁹ Ibid., p. 45

of conquest. His government had exemplified this spirit of cooperation by bringing about the troop withdrawal in Shantung and participating in the London Conference. Furthermore, the Secretary was aware that many elder statesmen and business men in Japan spoke of caution and feared international difficulties, and he hoped that by keeping the United States out of the issue publicly these elements would combine with the government to bring Japanese policy back into line with western ideals.¹⁰ It is obvious now that Stimson overestimated the potential of this faction and greatly underestimated the power of the nationalists.

Acting upon the principle of not making public our attitude toward Japan's responsibility and with the assurance of that country's cabinet that it had no territorial ambitions in China,¹¹ Stimson issued a note to both the Chinese and Japanese requesting that they refrain from further hostilities.¹² This apparent stand of the State Department, which implied dual responsibility, raised considerable concern among the Chinese. Soon after the initial clash, the Chinese had sought American leadership in bringing about a settlement and were worried over their failure to get it. Also, the American attitude that governments were not involved and

¹⁰ Stimson, op. cit., pp. 34-36

¹¹ The Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, September 24, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 11

¹² Stimson, op. cit., p. 46

that the Kellogg-Briand Pact had not been violated came as a severe disappointment to China.¹³

Since the United States would not provide leadership in settling the issue, China, as previously mentioned, appealed to the League of Nations for a neutral investigation under Article XI which declares any war or threat of war a matter of international concern. Japan, of course, favored a settlement arranged by her and China alone and would not consent to such an investigation. The United States, following its policy of giving Shidehara every opportunity to bring the matter under control, came out in opposition to China's proposal for an investigation on the grounds that Orientals best solve their differences without outside interference. Actually, however, Stimson's reason for opposing China's proposal was the fear that an outside investigation would only inflame Japanese nationalists even more behind the military and make the task of settlement by the government an impossible one.¹⁴

Officially, the Council of the League of Nations had assumed jurisdiction over the dispute upon China's request on September 21. Although opposing an investigation at this time, the United States decided that the League was the best vehicle for bringing about a settlement along the lines considered most desirable. On September 24 Secretary Stimson sent a note to the League expressing the willingness of the

¹³ The Consul General at Nanking to the Secretary of State, September 27, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 80

¹⁴ Stimson, op. cit., p. 44

United States to cooperate.¹⁵⁽³²⁾ It was his hope at this time that pressure from the League, of which both China and Japan were members, would bring about the conference between the two disputants that would settle the issue.

Thus the United States preferred the use of this organization which it had refused to join and in which it had shown a lack of confidence. In now turning to the League, Washington illustrated growing awareness of the League and its potentialities. Stimson argued that it was sound judgment for the United States to back the international organization rather than assume leadership in this case, since it would now appear to be Japan vs. the world rather than Japan vs. the United States. Further, Stimson contended that since the League had already assumed jurisdiction and had all the mechanism for settling disputes at its disposal, the United States would have no justification at all in any other course of action.¹⁶

Despite this American position, the League was handicapped throughout the crisis by its doubt as to the extent to which the United States would cooperate. There seems to be little question that the American conception of cooperation and what the League had hoped for were not the same. In The Manchurian Crisis, Sara Smith criticizes Stimson considerably for the rather reserved approach toward cooperation taken by the State Department. Miss Smith contends that

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 46

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 40

American cooperation with the League should have been carried out to the fullest extent. This writer agrees that if the United States were determined to rely upon the League, it should have granted that organization its complete support. This was not Stimson's policy, however. A careful study of his note to the League on October 5 makes it obvious that the League could not depend upon the United States. The secretary stated in this note that the United States would act independently through its diplomatic representatives to reinforce League action.¹⁷ Meanwhile, although professing to be relying upon the League mechanism, Stimson sent two envoys, E. Lawrence Salisbury and George C. Hanson, to Manchuria to bring back information.¹⁸ This was not an investigation and in fact met with Japan's approval; nevertheless, it was apparent to the League that American support at this time might be no different from its previous record of non-cooperation. Obviously, Stimson did not mean to create this impression, but the League had good reason to be suspicious of the motives of the United States toward it, and an expression of independent action at this time could do nothing but enhance that feeling. There is no question that conclusive action depended upon American support, and because of this the League moved with extreme caution.

¹⁷ Bisson, T. A., American Policy in the Far East 1931-1941 (New York: International Secretarial Institute of Pacific Relations, 1939), p. 22

¹⁸ Smith, op. cit., p. 70

This contention is strengthened by the fact that the League's first official action met with no American comment.¹⁹ On September 30 the Council, expressing a conviction that China would protect the lives and property of Japanese Nationals and that Japan had no territorial ambitions in Manchuria, formally requested that both parties do all in their power to restore normal relations.²⁰ This would have been the time for a positive statement of support by the United States. It is true that this action by the League was not of much significance; nevertheless, positive support rather than the note implying independent action would have given the League a much needed feeling of confidence in American cooperation.

Despite the uncertainty of the American position, the lull in military activity prompted a growing optimism that a peaceful solution might be realized. This feeling received a rude jolt on October 8, however, when Japanese planes bombed the City of Chinchow. Chinchow, located more than 100 miles southwest of Mukden and at no place closer than 50 miles from the South Manchuria Railway, had recently become the temporary capital of Chang Hsueh-liang.²¹ The Japanese claimed their planes were on a military reconnaissance mission, since Chinese troops were concentrated at Chinchow, and dropped

¹⁹ Smith, op. cit., p. 73

²⁰ The Verdict of the League, China and Japan in Manchuria, The Report of the Assembly (Boston: The World Peace Foundation, 1933), p. 28

²¹ Smith, op. cit., p. 83

(35)
bombs only after being fired upon.²²

The nations of the world did not accept the Japanese explanation and were shocked by the destruction of civilian property and the killing of women and children as well as of military personnel. The bombing had come within forty-eight hours of the time Japan had announced it would no longer recognize the authority of Chang Hsueh-liang and had dropped leaflets referring to the Manchurian leader as a "stinking, rapacious youth."²³

The official reaction of Baron Shidehara and the Japanese Foreign Office was that the bombing was an isolated incident of no real importance to the solution of the Manchurian problem.²⁴ Secretary Stimson immediately instructed the Charge' d'affaires in Japan to issue a protest to Baron Shidehara. This protest, however, was not made public. Stimson was still striving to allow Shidehara to gain control of the situation, and as far as the American public was concerned, the Chinchow bombing had caused no serious concern in the State Department.

It is obvious the official American attitude was beginning to change. The Japanese Foreign Office was informed

²² The Charge' in Japan to the Secretary of State, October 10, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 18

²³ Smith, op. cit., p. 83

²⁴ Memorandum of Under Secretary of State Castle, October 12, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 165

that the bombing could not be minimized nor considered unimportant. Chinchow was more than 50 miles from the South Manchuria Railway and the Chinese had every right to concentrate troops there. Furthermore, the protest continued, the United States considered the bombing of cities and civilians to be completely unjustified and the Japanese explanation of the situation inadequate.²⁵

Shidehara immediately replied to Stimson that he did not mean to minimize the incident, but it was an isolated military action and did not represent the real attitude of the Japanese government.²⁶ Upon reflection, this statement almost seems like an admission by Shidehara that the Japanese government was losing rather than gaining control of the situation.

Amazing as it may seem, Secretary Stimson never discussed the Manchurian situation with President Hoover until after the bombing of Chinchow. Unquestionably, the reason was that Hoover was too preoccupied with the American financial crisis; yet three weeks is far too long a time for the State Department to be conducting a major policy without presidential consultation. At this time, however, the President agreed with Stimson that the United States should sit jointly with the League in the forthcoming discussions as long as they centered around the Kellogg Pact. Hoover was convinced

²⁵ The Secretary of State to the Charge' in Japan, October 13, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 20

²⁶ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, October 12, 1931 - Ibid., pp. 22-23

the Kellogg Pact would be a less offensive instrument to Japan than the Nine Power Treaty.²⁷ As has been seen, this was the opposite view from that of Stimson who favored the use of the latter document. There is no question that Stimson was beginning to consider a stronger policy at this time but was still a long way from making any decided change. This slowness was primarily due to Stimson's determination to carry out his initial policy, but the cautious Hoover also contributed to this delay. The fact that Hoover did exert influence upon the Secretary is evidenced by the acceptance by the latter of the Kellogg Pact approach.

On October 16 the United States accepted the invitation of the League to send a delegate to sit in with the Council deliberating upon the Manchurian crisis. Prentis B. Gilbert, the Consul in Geneva, was instructed to participate only in discussions which involved the Kellogg Pact.²⁸ Many in the United States supported the decision to send a representative to the League, but many isolationists were just as vehemently opposed. The powerful Hearst newspapers used the headline "Heaven Help Us" to describe the move and indicated that war would be its most likely result.²⁹

The Japanese violently opposed this conference of the Council and in particular the decision to invite the United States to participate without the consent of both parties to

²⁷ Smith, op. cit., p. 86

²⁸ Stimson, op. cit., p. 63

²⁹ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 299

the dispute. The powerful General Minami declared, "The fundamental policy of Japan to seek settlement of the Manchurian affair through direct negotiations cannot be modified No good can be accomplished by the intervention of the League or any third party who possesses no knowledge of the situation."³⁰

Despite Japan's objections, Gilbert sat in on the conference, whose first official act was to request all of its members to send independent notes to China and Japan calling attention to their obligations under the Kellogg Pact. The United States was in agreement with this move and sent its notes to both powers on October 20. Immediately following the sending of these notes, however, Gilbert was taken off the commission.³¹ There is no doubt that the Japanese objections to American participation in the conference worried the State Department, and Gilbert was withdrawn in an effort to avoid any further complications with the Japanese, who were still being coddled in an effort to enhance Shidehara's liberal position. As far as the League was concerned, the removal of Gilbert was another indication that it could not rely upon American support.

The action of the Council was climaxed on October 24 with the proposal of a resolution which called upon the Japanese to withdraw their troops back into the railroad zone by November 16 and for the Chinese to make arrangements for

³⁰ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 359

³¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 66

retaking the proposed evacuated territory provided full protection was accorded to Japanese property and lives. The resolution also provided for direct negotiations between the two disputants once the Japanese withdrawal was completed.³² Resolutions of the Council, under Article eleven, however, needed unanimous approval including that of the disputants, and this one failed to get it because Japan, a Council member, would not give its consent. In rejecting the resolution, the Japanese stated that they would not withdraw their troops and would accept a joint Japanese-Chinese conference, only if it were based on certain fundamental points. The Japanese stipulations were that both countries repudiate aggressive policy, that China's territorial integrity be respected, that all movements interfering with freedom of trade be suppressed, that all peaceful pursuits of Japanese nationals in Manchuria be protected, and that complete respect be given to all Japanese treaty rights in Manchuria. It must be added, however, that at the time of the rejection of the Council's resolution Japan was not interested in a solution even on these desirable terms. This is indicated by the fact that while the Council was in session the Japanese spoke of five fundamental points but did not make them public until after the Council had adjourned.³³

This proposal and the manner in which it was presented after the Council had adjourned were an open defiance

³² The Verdict of the League, China and Japan in Manchuria, op. cit., p. 31

³³ Stimson, op. cit., p. 68

of the League by Japan. Obviously such a settlement would have eliminated the Chinese boycott and completely established Japanese domination of Manchuria. The degree to which American unwillingness to go along with the League encouraged this Japanese position is uncertain. There seems to be no doubt, however, that it did play a part. It is possible that Japan would have defied the League regardless of the American position, but it is doubtful that she would have done so as quickly and with such boldness.

The United States indicated that it would probably not support any forceful League action by sending Gilbert as its envoy. Hugh Gibson, the Ambassador to Belgium, and Hugh Wilson, the Minister to Switzerland, were both of greater diplomatic rank and influence than Gilbert, and both were available and willing to attend.³⁴ It is obvious that the United States wanted to avoid serious entanglements, so it sent one of the lesser members of its diplomatic family. As if this were not evidence enough, the attitude of the United States was made conclusive by the withdrawal of Gilbert before the Council adopted its resolution.

One explanation of this cautious policy lies in a definite conflict of attitudes within the State Department. There were some, like the chief of the Far Eastern Division, S. K. Hornbeck, who were definitely pro-Chinese. However, the greatest influence in the department was exerted by W. R. Castle, a former Ambassador to Japan and an acknowl-

³⁴ Smith, op. cit., p. 102

(41)
edged sympathizer with that country. A week after the initial clash at Mukden, Castle had asserted after a conversation with Ambassador Debuchi that it was obvious that the Premier and Shidehara were regaining control and a settlement was imminent.³⁵ It is known now that this was definitely not the case. Furthermore, Castle was known to be a close personal friend of the President, a fact which contributed to his influence.

The initial, very cautious policy of the United States was designed, therefore, not to antagonize Japan but to avoid any positive action. President Hoover and Secretary Stimson, as has been shown, were influenced appreciably by Under-Secretary Castle, and were convinced that any definite action might be disastrous. They were particularly concerned that the League Council might resort to economic sanctions, a move which was within the power of that organization. There is no question that it was the fear of being involved in such a step that prompted the removal of Gilbert from the Council discussions. The American leaders felt that economic sanctions would be a terrible blow to our sagging economy and might even precipitate war. The depression, the weakened position of the navy in the Pacific due to the Washington and London Conferences, Hoover's Quaker background, and strong isolationist sentiment in this country precluded any policy that might even remotely threaten war.

³⁵ Memorandum of Under Secretary Castle, September 25, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 67

Thus, Japan was allowed to consolidate her gains in Manchuria with nothing more than an expression of the world's concern. The United States showed that it was fearful of the consequences of opposing Japan, and our policy seemed only to encourage her to further aggression.

Manchuria in 1931

Figure 2

CHAPTER III

THE STIMSON DOCTRINE

Although it rejected the League resolution of October 24, the Japanese government claimed that it did not intend to expand the Manchurian conflict. This promise was broken in early November, however, with the attack upon Tsitsihar, the capital of Heilungkiang, Manchuria's northernmost province.¹

An internal struggle between two Chinese leaders in northern Manchuria had resulted in the destruction of a railroad bridge over the Nonni River. The bridge was located thirty miles south of the junction of the Chinese Eastern and Taonan-Anganchi Railroads; its destruction interfered with the flow of traffic including much needed food to the South Manchuria Railway. Japanese authorities of the latter line demanded the bridge be repaired immediately. When no assurance of such action was given by the Chinese, Japanese laborers, accompanied by military troops, were sent to put the bridge back into operation. On November 4 the Japanese force arrived at the Nonni River and clashed with Chinese troops in the area. By November 6 the Japanese had gained control of the river and repair work had begun.²

¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 70

² Smith, op. cit., pp. 129-30

When confronted by Secretary Stimson with a query about the new outbreak, the Japanese Ambassador asserted that the troops were only to be used to protect the reconstruction of the bridge, and there was absolutely no intention to launch an offensive from the Nonni River.³ As usual, however, this was the promise of the Japanese government not the military. General Honjo, the military commander in Manchuria, had orders from Tokyo not to pass a line fifty miles southeast of Tsitsihar. The general ignored these instructions, however, and issued an ultimatum to the Chinese leader in the region, General Ma Chan-shun, demanding that he evacuate his capital. When the ultimatum was rejected, General Honjo launched an attack on Tsitsihar and captured the city on November 19.⁴

As a result of this breach of faith by the Japanese Secretary Stimson recognized that his policy of conciliation was not going to work and that a more positive stand must be taken. Another factor unquestionably contributing to this feeling was a telegram from Ambassador Forbes, received the day before Tsitsihar fell, which acknowledged that rumors were strong in Japan that the conservative government, whom the State Department had tried so hard to assist, was about to fall.⁵

On November 21 Stimson again called in the Japanese

³ Stimson, op. cit., p. 70

⁴ Smith, op. cit., p. 131

⁵ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, November 18, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 474

Ambassador who assured him that the troops would be withdrawn from Tsitsihar as soon as possible and that his government was now willing to consent to a neutral investigation.⁶ For the first time, Stimson did not accept the Japanese government's assurances and declared that the United States considered the attack upon Tsitsihar a direct violation of the multilateral peace treaties, and that hereafter all deliberations between the United States and Japan would be made public.⁷ Thus, a milestone in American policy was reached. No longer would the State Department keep its negotiations with Japan secret and attempt to make the American public regard the situation as a minor incident that could easily be put under control by the Japanese government. At last Washington was aware that the military was in complete control. The excessive care that had been taken not to embarrass the liberal civilian element in the government had the opposite result from that intended. The American hands off policy had not helped the government but had given the military a chance to gain complete dominance. It was now obvious to the State Department that to continue the present policy would be futile.

There can be no question that Stimson's move was a wise one, but it undoubtedly would have been more effective

⁶ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, November 21, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 46

⁷ Memorandum of a telephone conversation between the Secretary of State and the Secretary General in Geneva, November 21, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 515-23

had it been made sooner. The Japanese were now becoming extremely ambitious, in large part due to the encouragement given to them by the cautious American policy. Reports were beginning to come in that they were now eying Chinchow. Chang Hsueh-liang had established this city in the south as his capital, and it represented the last stronghold of the Chinese north of the Great Wall. Control of Chinchow meant complete domination of Manchuria for the Japanese. The reports were that they were building up supplies and troops near the city, and General Honjo was threatening to attack if Chang Hsueh-liang did not evacuate.⁸

Again Secretary Stimson called in the Japanese Ambassador, but this time he did not seek any assurance. The Ambassador was informed that the United States considered the Chinese forces in the Chinchow area no match for the Japanese, and that the latter were in no danger of attack. Further, the American government could see no justification or excuse for an attack on Chinchow, and if it occurred it could be considered as nothing but an act of aggression.⁹

As expected, the Japanese Ambassador implied that there was no need for American concern, but by this time his assertions merited little regard. The American military attaché in Tokyo, Colonel McIlroy, had been sent to Manchuria and confirmed that the Japanese were making military prepara-

⁸ Smith, op. cit., p. 188

⁹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, November 22, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 534-35

tions aimed at Chinchow. The Colonel informed the State Department that the assurances of the Japanese government were meaningless since the army, not the cabinet, was determining policy in Manchuria.¹⁰ Also, a report from the Minister in China indicated that the Japanese intended to destroy the final power of Chang Hsueh-liang in order to protect a probable united puppet government in Manchuria.¹¹ In late October nominal municipal and provincial governments had been organized and in large part administered by the Japanese. This fact seemed to be a forerunner of a new Japanese-dominated government for Manchuria which would not be able to exist unless all Chinese authority in the area was eliminated.¹²

Largely due to the protest of Secretary Stimson and also similar ones from the British and French Foreign Offices, the Japanese called off the impending operation at Chinchow. This halt only proved to be temporary, however, and came after a misunderstanding of some remarks by Stimson which nearly resulted in serious consequences. An Associated Press report in Japan of a press conference quoted the Secretary as saying that the Japanese claimed to be only protecting their interests and repeatedly had given assurances that they would make no aggressive moves. Yet, they had attacked one city after another. The report indicated further that Stimson had stated

¹⁰ The Assistant Military Attache' in Japan to the Adjutant General, November 28, 1931 - Ibid., p. 582

¹¹ The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, November 26, 1931 - Ibid., p. 569

¹² Stimson, op. cit., p. 192

he was losing patience with the Japanese and warned that an attack on Chinchow would destroy entirely the peaceful negotiations now taking place.¹³

The Japanese press made considerable copy of Stimson's remarks and provoked a bitter public denunciation of the Secretary and the United States. It also raised a storm against Baron Shidehara who was accused of revealing military secrets in assuring Stimson there would be no attack upon Chinchow.¹⁴

Stimson, through Ambassador Forbes, denied the press version of his remarks. He stated he had simply been informed by press dispatches of an impending attack and had expressed his hope to the Japanese Ambassador that there was no basis for such reports.¹⁵ It is obvious that Stimson did not make the statements attributed to him by the press, but it is also evident, as has been shown, that his talk with the Ambassador was a great deal stronger than he was willing to admit publicly. Baron Shidehara vigorously denied he had given away military secrets, and the controversy died almost as quickly as it had been born.

The situation quieted because Japan had decided to

¹³ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, November 28, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 51-52

¹⁴ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 367

¹⁵ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan, November 28, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 53

follow a new course in regard to the League and had called a halt to the Chinchow operation. This act might seem to be an indication that the government was regaining control, but such was not the case. The Japanese had almost completely solidified their position in Manchuria and were now suggesting that an investigating commission be established. This course was advocated in order to prevent punitive action by the League. British, French, and American protests over the possible attack upon Chinchow had indicated to the Japanese that a continuation of the operation might result in the League taking unfavorable action against them. An investigation would give the Japanese time to complete their domination of Manchuria, while punitive action at this point might undo all the military had accomplished.¹⁶

With Japan now advocating a policy almost completely contrary to her original one, the Council of the League reconvened in Paris on November 16. Once more the United States decided to send a representative to the proceedings, this time selecting Charles G. Dawes, the Ambassador to London. Much criticism had been raised over the selection of Dawes. Despite the prominence of the former Vice-President, his diplomatic experience for such a task was questionable. Also, his friendship with the Japanese Ambassador to London, Tsuneo Matsudaira, has brought accusations that he was pro-Japanese. In light of a statement made to Matsudaira upon a visit by the latter to his hotel suite, there seems to be some justification for this

¹⁶ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 369

view. At this time Dawes declared: "The Chinese are altogether too cocky. What you people need to do is give them a thoroughly good licking to teach them their place and then they will be willing to talk sense."¹⁷ The biggest criticism of Dawes, however, was the fact that he stayed away from the council meetings and conducted all his business in his hotel suite. This unavailability of the American representative again raised the doubts among the League powers as to just what extent they could depend upon the support of the United States.¹⁸

Despite the uncertainty of the American position, the Council accepted the Japanese proposal; by a resolution of December 10 it established a neutral commission of inquiry. This commission, when formed, consisted of the Earl of Lytton representing England as chairman, General Henri Claudel of France, Count Aldrovandie-Marescotti of Italy, Dr. Heinrich Schnee of Germany, and Major General Frank McCoy of the United States. Its members were responsible to the League, not to their individual countries; it was to go to Manchuria to ascertain the facts and present them to the League for adjudication.¹⁹

The United States was very much in favor of the resolution of December 10, which also included a promise by Japan

¹⁷ Ferrell, Robert H., American Diplomacy in the Great Depression (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 146

¹⁸ Smith, op. cit., p. 161

¹⁹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 206

to refrain from further hostilities. Secretary Stimson expressed his approval in a note to the League sent immediately upon the adoption of the resolution and also allowed General McCoy to participate in the inquiry.²⁰

The creation of the Lytton Commission did not represent as significant a step as many believed. The initial clash was already three months in the past, and by the time the commission was able to organize and get to Manchuria, the evidence was no longer fresh. Furthermore, the investigation had not come until Japan was ready for it, and it now served that country's aggressive ambitions. While the United States and the League awaited the findings of the Lytton Commission, the Japanese were granted the time necessary to make their domination of Manchuria complete. As a consequence the resolution and the creation of the Lytton Commission ended in promoting rather than hindering Japan's designs.

On December 11, the day following the establishment of the Commission, the Minseito cabinet fell from power. There has been some dispute as to the cause of this fall. Sara Smith, for instance, states that the fundamental cause was the inability of the government to meet the financial crisis.²¹ More likely, however, is the contention of Tatsuji Takeuchi, in his excellent study War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire, that an internal struggle within the Minseito Party over its handling of the Manchurian question

²⁰ Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 38

²¹ Smith, op. cit., p. 51

was the major cause of the cabinet's resignation rather than its financial program.²² At any rate, the government fell, and on December 13 a new cabinet was formed by the rival Seiyukai Party with Takeshi Inukai as premier and Kenkichi Yoshisawa as foreign minister.²³

The new government proved to be much more sympathetic to the ideas of the military leaders than its predecessor. At a meeting held on December 17 the cabinet accepted the request of the new War Minister, General Sadao Arakai, to send reinforcements to the Chinchow area to assist in the drive against Chinese bandits. The Japanese contended that the Chinese had broken their word by not evacuating their troops from Chinchow and were unable to control bandits running wild in the area.²⁴ Colonel McIlroy, the American military observer in Manchuria, confirmed the new build up of Japanese troops, reporting that military headquarters in Mukden had informed him that the purpose was to put down Chinese bandits, and there was no intention of taking Chinchow if the Chinese troops were withdrawn. The Colonel doubted, however, the Japanese would not go all the way.²⁵

Colonel McIlroy proved to be a wise prophet. The alleged operation against Chinese bandits began on December

²² Takeuchi, op. cit., pp. 365-66

²³ Ibid., p. 361

²⁴ Ibid., p. 369

²⁵ The Military Attache in Japan to the Adjutant General - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 689

23, and one week later, with Japanese forces attacking the outskirts of Chinchow, the withdrawal of the Chinese troops in the city began. By January 3 all the Chinese troops were out of the city, and the Japanese occupation of Chinchow had been officially accomplished. The Japanese then proceeded to make contact with their troops stationed at Shanhaikwan, just south of the Great Wall. With this Chinese authority completely disappeared from southern Manchuria.²⁶

The military events following the fall of the Minseito Cabinet were regarded with grave concern by the American State Department. Secretary Stimson, as mentioned, had given up hope of helping the Japanese government find its own solution after the fall of Tsitsihar and the initial movement upon Chinchow. Still, there had been no definite statement of American policy. Stimson now realized, with these new developments, that the United States could no longer appear disinterested and that a definite statement of policy was necessary.

Two days before he made an official pronouncement, Secretary Stimson explained in a departmental memorandum the reasons for the need of a change in policy. He stated that in several instances Japan had used military force to obtain national objectives and was, therefore, violating the Kellogg Pact. Further, the Secretary contended that despite the absence of any formal resistance by Chinese troops, the Japanese had destroyed the administrative integrity of the government

²⁶ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., pp. 39-40

of China in Manchuria. The Japanese had broken a solemn promise, made in the Council of the League on December 10, to refrain from any new initiative which would result in loss of life and to keep only enough troops in Manchuria to protect the South Manchuria Railway. Stimson concluded that the attack on Chinchow was a definite breach of this promise and called for positive action by the United States.²⁷

Stimson called in the Japanese Ambassador prior to delivering the note informing him that while the United States was reserving final judgment until it had seen the report of the Commission of Enquiry, the complexity of the situation required that a statement of policy be made. He indicated to the Ambassador that the United States had no quarrel with Japan's rights in Manchuria nor did it have any desire to intrude upon the terms of a final settlement which might be made between the two disputant countries, as long as that settlement did not impair American rights in China. Further, the Secretary made it plain that no settlement which had been made under military pressure and in violation of the Kellogg Pact would be recognized.²⁸

The note itself, sent to China and all the signers of the Nine Power Pact as well as Japan, was delivered on January 7, although actually drafted two days earlier. The

²⁷ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, January 5, 1952 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1948) 5

²⁸ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, January 7, 1932 - Ibid., 8

Stimson Doctrine, as this tremendously significant step in American policy came to be called, stated:

With the recent military operations about Chinchow, the last remaining administrative authority of the government of the Chinese Republic in South Manchuria, as it existed prior to Sept. 18th, 1931, has been destroyed. The American government continues confident that the work of the neutral commission recently authorized by the Council of the League of Nations will facilitate an ultimate solution of the difficulties now existing between China and Japan. But in view of the present situation and of its own rights and obligations therein, the American government deems it to be its duty to notify both the government of the Chinese Republic and the Imperial Japanese government that it cannot admit the legality of any situation de facto nor does it intend to recognize any treaty or agreement entered into between these governments, or agents thereof, which may impair the treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China, including those which relate to the sovereignty, the independence, or the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic of China, or to the international policy relative to China, commonly known as the open door policy; and that it does not intend to recognize any situation treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris of August 27, 1928 to which Treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States, are parties.²⁹

This statement of American policy represented the strongest pronouncement made by any nation, outside of China, since the crisis had begun in September. China, encouraged by the strength of the American stand and feeling that the League's efforts were heading for failure, again began to press for positive punitive action by the United States against Japan. The Chinese hoped that such action could be achieved through a conference of the signers of the Nine Power Treaty, but the United States felt that such a move

²⁹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, January 5, 1932 - Ibid., 8

would be inadvisable at that time.³⁰ The Stimson Doctrine did not represent a complete condemnation of Japan, and it is obvious that the United States was not yet ready to attempt such a stand. The administration wanted to avoid any policy that might seem war-like, particularly with an election coming up and already bearing as it did the brunt of the blame for the financial crisis. Furthermore, the disappointing reaction of the European powers to the Stimson Doctrine influenced the State Department greatly in its unwillingness to go any farther than this moderate exertion of moral pressure. Secretary Stimson had requested in his notes of January 7 that all of the signers of the Nine Power Pact draft pronouncements similar to his own. He was of the opinion that a multi-nation statement would be far more effective than that of just one power. There is no question that he was correct in his assumption, but although some of smaller powers supported the policy, the major powers all considered it too strong.³¹

Stimson was particularly hopeful that the British would join him in his pronouncement and in The Far Eastern Crisis states that there was no reason to believe that they would not.³² The Labor government of Ramsay MacDonald had participated in several international conferences with the

³⁰ Memorandum of the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs Hornbeck, January 8, 1932 - Ibid., 10

³¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 98

³² Stimson, op. cit., p. 100

United States, and both countries had resolved to direct national policy toward fulfilling the pledge of the Pact of Paris. Even though MacDonald's government had been defeated in October of 1931, the new Coalition government had given no indication that it intended to follow any policy other than continuing this cooperation. Nevertheless, when put to the test, the new British government opened the door of appeasement to Japan and would not go along with the American policy.³³

Sir John Simon, the head of the British Foreign Office, replied to the American request that his government accepted Japan's statement of October 13, 1931, that she was the champion of the open door in China. Furthermore, on December 28 the Japanese Premier had restated this fact and declared that his country would continue to adhere to the "open door" and would welcome foreign participation and cooperation in Manchurian enterprises. In view of these assertions, the British declared that they saw no need to address a formal note to Japan other than to seek confirmation of these statements.³⁴

The London Times, in justifying the British refusal to issue a statement similar to the Stimson Doctrine, referred to China as an unorganized state. The Japanese quickly capitalized upon this unofficial viewpoint. In reply to the note

³³ Smith, op. cit., p. 235

³⁴ The Charge in Great Britain to the Secretary of State, January 9, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 19

of January 7, the Japanese asserted that they accepted the binding nature of the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact but denied that their actions violated these agreements due to the unsettled and distracted state of China which had not been contemplated by the contracting parties. They further assured the United States that they had no territorial aims or ambitions in Manchuria but reminded that government that the welfare and safety of that region and its accessibility for general trade were matters of deepest interest and extraordinary importance to the Japanese people.³⁵

Despite the politeness of the Japanese reply, it was still a notice to the United States that they intended to hold on to the gains made in Manchuria. The Japanese public proved to be very much in favor of this stand. On February 20 a general election was held with this policy of the government the primary issue. The result was an overwhelming victory for the cabinet and an endorsement of its apparent defiance of the Stimson Doctrine.³⁶

Often, the failure of Stimson's pronouncement is attributed to the lack of European and particularly British support. Although it is probable that European support would have made the Japanese more cautious, it is doubtful that even with this backing the American policy of moderate moral pressure would have been successful at this point. The Japanese had gone too far to back down now and would take their chance of

³⁵ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 371

³⁶ Ibid., p. 373

suffering any possible consequences rather than endure the public humiliation that a retreat would bring. They had tasted both military and diplomatic victory and were now destined to spread the bitter conflict with the Chinese into even wider areas.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHANGHAI CONFLICT

There is a tendency to consider the crisis in Manchuria separately from the events which occurred in the city of Shanghai early in 1932. The Japanese contended that the two incidents were not related, but it would be incorrect to accept this position. There were circumstances which made the Shanghai incident somewhat different from that in Manchuria, but both were clashes going on almost simultaneously, and both involved the same disputants. It is difficult to believe that Japan would have adopted the aggressive policy that she did in Shanghai had she not been so successful, militarily and diplomatically, in Manchuria. It is logical, therefore, that this study of American policy include the Shanghai incident as well as the Chinese-Japanese conflict in Manchuria.

Shanghai, China, one of the world's largest cities, had several unique features in this period. Located in the midst of this typically crowded and cramped oriental city was probably the most modern and cosmopolitan community in Asia. This section was known as the International Settlement and was inhabited by some 40,000 British, French, American, and Japanese citizens, all busily engaged in the thriving commerce of this, the economic heart of China. The particularly unusual

feature of the International Settlement was the political privileges its citizens enjoyed. The people of the settlement had definite municipal powers for their section, including control of its police force and taxation, entirely separate from the Chinese government of the city proper. Furthermore, in addition to the police force, the major nations represented in the settlement stationed troops there to protect their interests. Included in this group were some 1,250 American Marines.¹

The basis of the tension that began to build up between the Japanese citizens in the International Settlement and the Chinese in the city was the boycott by the latter of Japanese goods initiated in the summer of 1931 as a weapon designed to decrease that nation's exploitation of the area. This movement was given tremendous impetus by the Manchurian crisis. As already mentioned, the boycott was a severe economic blow to Japan. Next to the United States, China had been the greatest purchaser of Japanese goods, and when the boycott struck, it was naturally felt strongly in this industrial and commercial center.²

There is no question that the Chinese were guilty of some violence in carrying out the boycott. This fact, coupled with an anti-Nippon press campaign over the Manchurian crisis and the large number of Japanese Marines stationed in Shanghai, had raised much antagonism against the Chinese in

¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 113

² Ibid., p. 111

the Japanese quarter of the settlement. This resentment reached a climax on January 18, 1932, when five Japanese citizens, including three monks, were attacked in front of a Chinese factory. All of the Japanese involved in this incident were seriously hurt, and one of the monks met his death. The Japanese protested that the laxity of the Chinese police in putting down previous demonstrations and minor acts of violence had led to this serious incident, and it was asserted that the Chinese government in the city would be held fully responsible. The latter immediately denied responsibility and declared that the whole affair had been occasioned by the large number of Japanese Marines stationed in the city.³

The serious situation created by the attack on the monks was magnified two days later when Japanese citizens retaliated by setting fire to a Chinese factory. This act of destruction resulted in a fierce clash between the fifty Japanese responsible for it and local police. Before the battling was over, several had been wounded and one combatant on each side had been killed.⁴

Tension in the city now reached a fever pitch. On January 22 the Japanese sent a landing force of 500 men supported by one cruiser, one aircraft carrier, and four destroyers into the area to back the 3,000 troops already sta-

³ The Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, February 7, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 186

⁴ The Consul General at Shanghai to the Secretary of State, January 20, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 40

(64)
tioned in the city.⁵ Soon after, an additional squadron of twelve destroyers joined this force, and the Chinese found themselves faced with an imposing show of military strength.⁶

Backed by this increased military power, the Japanese Consul General in Shanghai delivered a set of demands to the Chinese Mayor, Wu Tieh-cheng, on January 25. This communique demanded that a formal apology be delivered to the Japanese government, that those responsible for the incident of January 18 be arrested immediately, that the Chinese pay the hospital bills and damages of the Japanese citizens involved, that the anti-Japanese movement be put under control, and finally, that all organizations promoting that movement be dissolved.⁷

In The Far Eastern Crisis, Secretary Stimson states that he had hoped that the note of January 7 would have ended discussion on the Chinese-Japanese issue, but the threat resulting from the Japanese military build-up in Shanghai convinced him that he must do more. He was aware that if the boycott did not bring Japan to terms China might resort to war, and a war between China and Japan at this time would be disastrous to American trade. On the other hand, China might relegate herself to a subservient position to Japan, a situa-

⁵ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, January 22, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 49

⁶ Ibid., January 27, 1932, p. 77

⁷ The Consul General at Shanghai to the Secretary of State, January 25, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 58

tion the United States would consider equally undesirable. The Secretary was also of the belief that the new threat to British trade might lead that nation to cooperate on this matter, and he called in the British Ambassador, who agreed that some action should be taken. Encouraged by this attitude, Stimson sent a note to Japan expressing his concern over the possible use of the International Settlement as a base for hostile action against China and urged that maximum restraint be used. Meanwhile, the American fleet in Hawaii for maneuvers was instructed to remain in that location in an effort to quiet the fears of the citizens of the International Settlement and show the Chinese that the United States was aware of the situation.⁸

At first, the affair seemed to be straightening itself out. Upon receiving the Japanese demands, the Chinese Mayor of Shanghai informed all parties concerned that he intended to make all possible concessions to avoid a clash.⁹ A report from the Consul General in Nanking on January 25 stated that the Japanese had indicated that the Chinese reply was satisfactory, and American officials in the area were of the belief that the tensions were lifting and the situation could be resolved.¹⁰

This optimism proved to be unwarranted. Neither the

⁸ Stimson, op. cit., p. 133

⁹ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 41

¹⁰ The Consul General at Nanking to the Secretary of State, January 25, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 60

Mayor's reply, the earlier American note, nor the presence of the United States fleet in the Pacific area had changed the Japanese attitude. The Chinese reply to the Japanese demands had indicated that the former would accept the first three points but felt that the fourth, controlling anti-Nippon behavior, would be difficult. After studying this reply, Admiral Koichi Shiozawa, the commander of the Japanese forces in the city, issued a warning that unless a satisfactory reply was received necessary steps would be taken to protect Japanese rights and interests. Despite a repeat of the original Chinese assurances, Shiozawa issued a second warning on January 27, demanding that all four points be accepted by 6:00 P.M. the following day.

The residents of the International Settlement were now convinced that the Japanese military forces were serious. At 2:00 P.M. on January 28 a meeting of the Municipal Council, which included Japanese members, was held, and a state of emergency was declared. Under such a condition a prearranged system of defensive positions for the area had been organized with each of the nations represented assigned to a definite sector. With the situation ready to explode at any minute, the Chinese Mayor formally agreed at 4:00 P.M. to meet the Japanese demands completely. An immediate public pronouncement by the Japanese Consul General termed the reply satisfactory, and it appeared a clash had been avoided.

The relief of the people of the settlement was short lived, however, when soon after midnight there came the sound of gunfire from the Chinese district of Chapei. Although it

would seem unnecessary under the circumstances, Japanese forces, after giving the Chinese officials only thirty minutes notice, had begun to move into their assigned defensive sector at 11:45 P.M. Part of the Japanese sector was located just outside the settlement area in the district of Chapei. Chinese troops in that area, whom the city officials had not had time to inform of the Japanese intention, took the move as an attack and opened fire. Immediately the Japanese returned the fire, and the clash which the Chinese had strived so hard to avoid had happened.

As soon as he had received the news of the fighting, Admiral Shiozawa sent the entire complement of Japanese troops into the battle and at 4:00 A.M. ordered the planes at his disposal to bomb Chapei. By sunrise the entire quarter was in flames from incendiary bombs, hundreds of civilians had met their death, and an estimated 250,000 refugees were pouring into the International Settlement.¹¹

The bombing of cities became commonplace in World War II, but in 1931 the unwarranted killing of women and children as well as of military personnel came as a severe shock. Public opinion in the United States had been mixed and in some cases disinterested in the Manchurian crisis, but this atrocity in Shanghai resulted in almost universal concern. Condemnation of the Japanese was severe. On February 2 the Philadelphia Inquirer expressed the feeling of the American people when it stated: "The bombing of residential sections, the murder of

¹¹ Stimson, op. cit., pp. 118-21

helpless men, women and children puts Japan beyond the pale of civilized warfare."¹² Even more vociferous was the New York Daily Mirror which declared that the "Arrogance and ruthlessness characterizing the Japanese naval descent on Shanghai ought not to surprise anybody. Humble and conciliatory when the bayonet is at his own belly, this yellow dwarf, pretending recognition of civilized usage, gives no quarter and shows no mercy in a contrary situation."¹³

At the request of the British Government, which as previously mentioned took a much different view of the Shanghai affair from that of Manchuria, the United States sent a joint protest to Japan. Also, both the British and American fleets in the Pacific were sent to the immediate scene of the conflict as a means of showing the concern of those nations. Secretary Stimson always considered this move as being instrumental in averting an all out war.¹⁴ Such an assertion, however, is questionable and open to speculation. Certainly no evidence, other than Stimson's word, substantiates this position.

An immediate discussion was also held between Stimson and the Japanese Ambassador. The latter conveyed the explanation of the attack given by his country's Consul General in Shanghai, who maintained that previous tensions had thrown the city into a frenzy, and the forces had gone out into the Chapel

¹² Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 322

¹³ Ibid., pp. 320-21

¹⁴ Stimson, op. cit., p. 140

district to protect the lives of Japanese citizens in the area. Upon entering the sector, the Japanese troops were fired upon, and the subsequent attack was simply self-defense. The Ambassador then promised that as soon as the Chinese forces withdrew from the area the issue would be settled.

Stimson by this time was not receptive to any further Japanese claims of self-defense. He informed the Ambassador that it made no difference if the Chinese had fired the first shot. By bringing a strong naval force into Shanghai and threatening a landing, Japan had created an explosive powder keg, and it was immaterial who applied the match.¹⁵ In The Far Eastern Crisis, Stimson defends this viewpoint by stating that the move coming at night in secrecy and with little warning indicated the Japanese were trying to make it look as though the Chinese had started the clash. The Secretary states further that Shiozawa "was courting such a clash and must have known it."¹⁶

The League of Nations stepped into the picture on January 30 with the appointment by the Council of an investigating commission. By the Council resolution of December 10, the League had committed itself to an investigation before passing judgment, and it would place itself in an embarrassing position if it followed any other course here.¹⁷ Such a process

¹⁵ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, January 30, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 166-68

¹⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 123

¹⁷ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 8

would undoubtedly be time-consuming, and everyone involved wanted to bring about a solution as soon as possible. Consequently, the eyes of the world began to turn to the United States for a settlement.

Public opinion in Japan was not nearly as strong in its support of the military's action in Shanghai as it had been in regard to the Manchurian affair. Many Japanese felt that the Shanghai incident had unfavorably affected their standing in world public opinion. Whereas they felt that they had primary interests in Manchuria, other powers had interests just as great, if not greater, in Shanghai.¹⁸ In view of this, a truce proposed by the British and American Consuls was accepted at 8:00 P.M. on January 29. The following day the Japanese sought the good offices of the United States, charging that Chinese troops had fired upon them the morning after the truce was accepted, and that Chiang Kai-shek was concentrating reinforcements in Nanking. The Japanese requested that the United States use its influence to prevent the Chinese from sending reinforcements to Shanghai and to persuade them to withdraw their troops already in the city in order to avoid further clashes.¹⁹

It appears that the Japanese had realized they had made a severe mistake in provoking this incident. They had attacked Shanghai with too small a force and when seemingly

¹⁸ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 374

¹⁹ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, January 31, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 169

repulsed had resorted to an atrocity, the bombing of Chapel, which shocked the civilized world. It was apparent that they now wished to get out of the situation with as little embarrassment as possible and were hopeful that if the United States accepted the request for good offices it might result in a satisfactory solution.

The United States did accept and began to work out a settlement. The American efforts were nearly destroyed on February 1, however, when Japanese planes, supposedly on a reconnaissance mission, bombed the city of Nanking. The bombing of this city, located two hundred miles up the Yantze River from Shanghai and the scene of a Chinese troop concentration, indicated that the Japanese military officers in the area were extremely irresponsible, and a satisfactory solution would not be easily achieved.²⁰

Secretary Stimson immediately called in the Japanese Ambassador again and demanded such unwarranted operations as the bombing of Nanking be stopped. He asserted that if they were not stopped the Japanese could not expect any satisfactory results from the American good offices. The Ambassador expressed his deep regret over the incident and placed the blame upon irresponsible officers. At this point Stimson decided not to press the issue any further and offered the American proposal for a settlement.²¹

²⁰ Stimson, op. cit., pp. 144-46

²¹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, February 1, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 173

The American proposal, presented with some misgivings after the bombing of Nanking, consisted of the following five points:

1. A cessation of all acts of violence by both parties.
2. A halt in mobilization and preparation for hostilities.
3. A withdrawal by both sides from all points of mutual contact in Shanghai.
4. The creation of a neutral zone, policed by neutral troops, to divide the combatants.
5. Upon acceptance of these conditions, Japan and China would promptly proceed to settle all outstanding controversies in the spirit of the Pact of Paris and the December 10 resolution of the League.²²

The day after the Japanese received the American proposal, Ambassador Forbes talked with Foreign Minister Yoshizawa and reported that the latter was willing to go along with the first four points, but the fifth, which obviously referred to Manchuria, was considered completely unrelated and unacceptable. The Minister hoped, however, that the United States would consider Japan's acceptance of the first four points as satisfactory.²³ Secretary Stimson replied that the United States would go along with a settlement based upon the first four

²² The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan, February 1, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 174

²³ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, February 2, 1932 - Ibid., I, 175

points if Japan would agree to consider and not reject the fifth.²⁴

While the Japanese Government was seeking the good offices of the United States, the military was preparing for a possible resumption of hostilities. Secretary Stimson was concerned throughout the preparation of the five point proposal that the Japanese, despite their avowed good intentions, would not accept any solution that was not a Chinese retreat or humiliation and a Japanese victory. Stimson's willingness to modify but not eliminate the fifth point did not constitute such a victory, and on February 4 the Japanese formally rejected the American proposal and resumed the hostilities.²⁵

Foreign Minister Yoshizawa informed Ambassador Forbes that the Japanese would not have renewed the fighting if assured that the Chinese would have ceased hostilities, but due to the unreliability of the Chinese in the past this was not possible. Furthermore, the American proposal had to be rejected on the basis of the fifth point since it was settled Japanese policy not to accept any neutral participation in a settlement of the Manchurian question.²⁶ The Japanese further attempted to justify the rejection of the American proposal in a formal communique to the State Department. This statement

²⁴ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, February 2, 1932 - Ibid., I, 176-77

²⁵ Stimson, op. cit., p. 150

²⁶ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, February 4, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 180-82

charged that the Chinese had fired upon Japanese troops after the truce had been accepted, had continued to build up reinforcements, and were responsible for the whole incident in the first place. The Japanese felt, the statement continued, that they could accept no solution which did not place complete blame upon China.²⁷

The Japanese had now committed themselves openly to an aggressive policy in Shanghai. A Reuters News Agency report of February 8 declared that the Japanese Foreign Office no longer gave even lip service to the Nine Power Treaty and now favored the scrapping of the Open Door and a return to the old policy of dismemberment. This convinced Secretary Stimson that it would be futile to attempt to reason with the Japanese any further. From this point on, American policy in Shanghai was designed to protect the interests of her citizens living there.²⁸

Throughout the conflict, the International Settlement was in great fear for its safety. Its citizens were also deeply concerned over the possibility of incidents which might bring the United States and the British into the conflict. In an effort to prevent such a situation, the United States persuaded the Japanese, with considerable difficulty, to stop using the settlement wharf for landing troops. Even more dangerous was the fact that the Japanese often moved troops through the American sector, and there was always the possibility of a

²⁷ The Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, February 7, 1932 - Ibid., pp. 186-88

²⁸ Stimson, op. cit., p. 159

clash with marines stationed there. After considerable effort on the part of American officials, this practice was also halted.²⁹ This represented the extent of American negotiations, however. Stimson sent a note to Ambassador Forbes ordering him to make no further effort at conciliations since it would only result in another rebuff and humiliation for the United States.³⁰ American faith in Japan's sincerity was now completely shattered, and as the fighting in Shanghai continued, the State Department began to consider stronger action.

²⁹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, February 15, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 194

³⁰ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan, February 10, 1932 - Ibid., p. 191

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMON POLICY

The developments in Shanghai convinced Secretary Stimson that some additional step must be taken to help the American people better understand their country's policy and to bolster the morale of the Chinese, who were becoming discouraged by the lack of aid and the failure of the world powers to take a positive stand.¹

Stimson felt some definite restatement of policy was necessary and hoped it could be accomplished jointly by the signers of the Nine Power Treaty. From the beginning, Stimson had considered the Nine Power Treaty a much more appropriate basis for judgment on the question than either the Kellogg Pact or the League Covenant, because it did not deal in generalities and specifically referred to China.² It had been at President Hoover's suggestion that initially an attempt was made to invoke the Kellogg Pact. Now, however, the magnitude of the situation and the failure of previous efforts compelled the Secretary to return to his original approach.

Two important factors determined the United States'

¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 98

² Memorandum of the Secretary of State, February 18, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 373

decision to make a further positive statement at this point. First, the round table conference at Shanghai, which had been initiated by the League after the resumption of hostilities, was showing definite signs of breaking down. The United States had refused to take part in this conference since the Secretary of State no longer had any faith in Japan's sincerity. Also, the Secretary feared outside powers might use the meeting to force a settlement of many time worn grievances with China due to the international character of Shanghai.³

Despite this attitude, it is evident that Stimson secretly hoped the conference might be successful in solving the Shanghai question. In a memorandum of February 18, he stated that one of the reasons he had held off making a pronouncement was the fact that the conference had looked so encouraging.⁴ Within a few hours after Stimson had prepared this memorandum, a communique was received from the Minister in China, Nelson Johnson, which indicated that the conference was breaking down and any hope for a settlement from that source was futile.⁵

The other factor influencing the Secretary's decision was the creation of the state of Manchukuo. As previously

³ Stimson, op. cit., p. 180

⁴ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, February 18, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 373

⁵ The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, February 18, 1932 - Ibid., p. 373

mentioned, the Japanese had taken the first step in the organization of a new state in Manchuria on October 31, 1931. The Japanese continually referred to these efforts as an independent movement of the people of Manchuria, but several reports had reached the State Department indicating the Japanese were responsible for the movement and were completely behind it.⁶

On February 18, the same day Stimson received word of the probable breakdown of the Shanghai Conference, the local governments of Manchuria joined together in what was called the All Manchurian Organization and declared their independence from China. The following day the new organization decided to form a republic. The new state was to be known as Manchukuo, and the heir to the old Manchu dynasty, Henry Pu Yi, long since living under Japanese protection, was invited to become the chief executive.⁷

Stimson's hope was to promote a joint pronouncement of the signers of the Nine Power Treaty against both the Shanghai attack and the creation of the new state. The Secretary was particularly anxious to obtain British cooperation, just as he had been when he delivered the note of January 7.

⁶ The Ambassador in Japan to the Secretary of State, January 16, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 78

The Minister in China to the Secretary of State, October 2, 1931 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1931, III, 106

⁷ Stimson, op. cit., pp. 192-94

There was now reason to believe the British reaction would not be the same as it had been at the time of the publication of the Stimson Doctrine, due to the willingness of that country to cooperate when the Shanghai situation had first exploded. This assumption did not prove to be correct, however, since the British were members of the League and were extremely reluctant to take any action while the question was still under consideration by that body. After numerous telephone conversations with Sir John Simon, the head of the British Foreign Office, Stimson decided not to press the issue any further. It was evident that if the United States wished to take action at this point, it must do so alone.⁸

The problem now was to determine what form the American action should take. A direct note, similar to the one of January 7, would probably only lead to another rebuff. Consequently, Secretary Stimson decided to use an old policy of Theodore Roosevelt, the writing of an open letter. Such a course would make it possible to get off an announcement without contradiction or discussion. Further, it would not be weakened before being published by the expressed doubts of influential people.⁹

It was decided to write this open letter to Senator William Borah, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Borah was an ideal addressee due to his prominent position and due to the known fact he was anti-

⁸ Bisson, op. cit., p. 23

⁹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 165

Japanese. At the time of the Mukden incident the Senator was quoted as saying, "Even though the Japanese reasons were ten times as truthful as it can be assumed they are, there is no justification for force in Manchuria"10

The basis of the letter was to be the Nine Power Treaty, which, as has been said, was favored by Stimson because of its specific reference to China. The letter was to be directed to five unnamed addressees. It was to serve as a message of encouragement to China, an explanation of policy to the American public, a suggestion of future possible action to the countries who would be assembled at the next meeting of the League of Nations, and a gentle reminder to the British that they were co-authors with the United States of the Open Door Policy and the Nine Power Pact. Finally, the letter was to serve as a reminder to Japan that if she chose to break down one of the treaties agreed upon at the Washington Conference, certain nations might see fit to release themselves from others as vital to Japan as the Nine Power Treaty was to them.¹¹

Thus, with the belief that an open letter would be as effective to the five addressees as a direct note, yet would not bear as many dangers, Secretary Stimson published the letter to Senator Borah on February 23, 1932. The length of the letter precludes its being quoted here, but the import of it does merit a rather extensive summary.

¹⁰ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 297

¹¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 175

The letter began by reaffirming the Open Door Policy in China. It then went on at some length to explain the Nine Power Treaty, which the Secretary stated, assured all interested powers their rights in China while also assuring the Chinese people the right to develop unmolested their sovereignty and independence.

Stimson continued by declaring that Japan was a definite supporter of this treaty at the time it was signed. He substantiated this assertion by quoting Baron Shidehara, who said at that time, "No one denies to China her sacred right to govern herself. No one stands in the way of China to work out her own national destiny."¹² Stimson went on to say that six years later the provisions of the Nine Power Treaty received powerful reinforcement with the signing of the Kellogg Pact, which also included Japan among its signers.

Now dealing with the situation in question, the letter stated that the hostilities in Manchuria and later Shanghai had brought home the vital importance of faithful observance of both the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact by all nations interested in the Far East. It asserted that the United States felt that if the powers had stuck to the principles advocated by these covenants, no matter where blame may lie, the hostilities in Manchuria and Shanghai never would have developed. Also, compliance with these covenants would not have interfered with the legitimate rights of any of the treaty signers.

¹² Ibid., p. 170

It continued with a statement of the note of January 7, which advised China and Japan that the United States would recognize no agreement reached by those nations that violated the international treaties. It asserted that this was still the policy of the United States and urged that the other nations of the world adopt a similar stand.¹³

Finally, Stimson concluded the letter by stating of the United States:

We concur with those statesmen, representing all nations in the Washington Conference, who declared that China was entitled to the time necessary to accomplish her development. We are prepared to make that our policy of the future.¹⁴

Thus, the United States had reaffirmed its intention not to recognize any gains of Japan accomplished through violations of the international peace treaties and, although not directly condemning Japan's action, had brought moral pressure upon that country. Public opinion in the United States was very much behind this policy. Leading newspapers throughout the country hailed the letter to Senator Borah as a fitting rejoinder to Japan's arguments seeking to justify the operations in Manchuria and Shanghai; they were almost unanimous in urging the support of the American people.¹⁵ Furthermore, this policy was not regarded as coldly by the European powers as was the Stimson Doctrine, and it became the guide

¹³ Stimson, op. cit., The Letter to Senator Borah is found on pages 166-75

¹⁴ Stimson, op. cit., p. 175

¹⁵ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 340

post for their impending action.

In the meantime China had made a second appeal to the League of Nations at the outset of the hostilities in Shanghai, this time under Article XV of the League Covenant. As previously mentioned, a conference had been set up to conduct an investigation and seek a solution. On February 2, during the early truce, this group had declared that the incident was a definite state of war in everything except official name. Beyond this declaration, however, the conference showed little sign of bringing about a solution after hostilities had been resumed. The Japanese attacks were increasing in magnitude each day, and, becoming desperate, the Chinese decided to invoke the provision of Article XV which permits the Council to refer a dispute to the League Assembly. This decision was predicated upon the belief that the smaller powers of the world, which had considerably more influence in the Assembly than in the Council, would be more sympathetic to the cause of a victim of aggression than would the great powers. After a vigorous debate, the Council acceded to China's request, and the issue was referred to the Assembly on February 18.

Meanwhile, it was obvious that Japan had underestimated the Chinese in Shanghai. For almost a month they continued to attack the Chinese positions frontally with only moderate success. It was not until the last days of February that the Japanese gave up the frontal attacks and flanked the Chinese positions by a movement up the Whangpu River.

This move gave the Japanese the upper hand, and on February 26 they decided to seek an end to the fighting. The heroic resistance of the Chinese and the adverse effect the operation had had upon world public opinion left the Japanese in a difficult position. Now that their forces had gained the advantage, they were anxious to get out of an embarrassing situation as quickly as possible.¹⁶

On February 29 the Council of the League of Nations, acting upon Japan's request, proposed a cessation of the Shanghai fighting. The powers represented in Shanghai were instructed to sit down at another round table conference with China and Japan to conclude arrangements to make the cessation of hostilities definite and the withdrawal of the Japanese troops complete.¹⁷ The United States was invited to join this conference also, but once again Stimson refused. He immediately sent word to the Consul General in Shanghai instructing him definitely not to participate.¹⁸ The United States was still smarting from the Japanese rejection of her good offices, and, as has already been stated, Secretary Stimson had completely lost faith in the intentions of the Japanese to seek a peaceful and just solution. This feeling was heightened by the fact that although Japan had requested

¹⁶ Takeuchi, op. cit., pp. 376-78

¹⁷ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 44

¹⁸ The Secretary of State to the Consul General in Shanghai, March 3, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 208

the February 29 proposal for a cessation of hostilities, she launched the heaviest attacks of the campaign on March 2 and March 3. This move was designed to leave the Japanese in a position of military advantage and convinced Stimson that the United States should have no part in the conference.¹⁹

The armistice, signed on March 5, provided for an end to the fighting, a return of all troops to the positions occupied before January 28, and the supervision of this withdrawal by the nations represented at the conference.²⁰ Thus, the conflict at Shanghai came to an end with few significant results. Losses in the fighting had been extremely heavy. The casualties numbered 5,000 Chinese and 1,500 Japanese military personnel as well as 8,000 civilians. Also, considerable damage had been inflicted upon the city, particularly in the district of Chapei. Japan's only gain was that the Chinese did lessen the boycott following the armistice. Unlike Manchuria, the Japanese had voluntarily given up their military gains because they did not have the public support at home in this incident as they had had in the Manchurian question. China, on the other hand, had gained much in a rebirth of national pride in her heroic resistance. In The Far Eastern Crisis Secretary Stimson maintains that the only really significant result of the conflict was that it made plain, even

¹⁹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, March 3, 1932 - Ibid., pp. 205-207

²⁰ Agreement - Concerning the Definitive Cessation of Hostilities at Shanghai, March 5, 1932 - Ibid., pp. 217-18

more than had Manchuria, the true extent and character of Japan's policies.²¹

While the Shanghai incident was being brought to a conclusion, the Japanese were busily solidifying their position in Manchuria. On March 1 the state of Manchukuo was officially formed. The following day the State Department received a communication from Mr. Hsieh-Chieh-shih, the Foreign Minister of the new state, explaining the reasons for the creation of this so-called republic. The Minister stated that this independent action of the Manchurian people was caused by the fact that Chang Hsueh-liang's military dictatorship had looked out for itself and not the welfare of the people. The people, the Minister continued, had suffered extremely under the corrupt discipline in official circles. Further, under the old regime factional strife had precluded any unified or stable government in Manchuria, and anti-foreign policies had greatly disrupted diplomatic relations.²²

On March 4 the pro-Japanese Henry Pu-yi was inaugurated president of Manchukuo. The Japanese had taken great pains to make the entire affair look like an independent movement, but few in the world were fooled by it and were unaware that this new republic would be anything but a puppet state of Japan.²³

²¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 183

²² Mr. Hsieh Chieh-shih to the Secretary of State, March 2, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 597

²³ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 385

In light of these events, and encouraged by the position of the United States in the letter to Senator Borah, the League of Nations took its most positive step in the dispute up to that time. On March 11 the Assembly, by a vote of forty-five to two, passed the following resolution:²⁴ "The Assembly . . . declares that it is incumbent upon members of the League of Nations not to recognize any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris."²⁵

The purpose of this resolution, whose two negative votes came from Japan at whom it was directed and China who considered it too weak, was not to adjudicate the merits of either side in the conflict but was to provide a standard which would guide the members of the Assembly when the result of the investigation was presented. The resolution further provided that a committee of nineteen nations would study the results of the Lytton Report when it was received and submit its recommendations to the Assembly.²⁶

The March 11 Resolution was widely denounced in Japan. The Japanese argued that Manchuria was of a special character, and the provisions of the League Covenant were not applicable to it. They contended that there was no justifica-

²⁴ The Consul General in Geneva to the Secretary of State, March 11, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, III, 573

²⁵ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 24

²⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 187

tion for the creation of a committee to study the case.²⁷

Thus, it was obvious that any recommendation the Committee of Nineteen might make, based upon the forthcoming Lytton Report, would meet with considerable opposition from the Japanese.

Although the League did not use the Nine Power Treaty as the basis for its pronouncement, as did Secretary Stimson in the letter to Senator Borah, its policy and that of the United States were almost identical. Neither had openly placed any blame upon Japan, but the moral pressure resulting from such an implication was present in both cases, nevertheless. Further, there now was a common agreement not to recognize any Japanese gains, such as the new state of Manchukuo, if the evidence proved that those gains were attained through aggression and a violation of existing international treaties.

The United States was particularly pleased with the League's action and indicated this pleasure by the following statement sent by the United States' Minister at Bern to the Secretary General on March 12:

I am instructed by my government to express to you its gratification at the action taken by the Assembly of the League of Nations. My government is especially gratified that the nations of the world are united on a policy not to recognize the validity of results attained in violation of the treaties in question. This is a distinct contribution to international law and offers a constructive basis for peace.²⁸

It now remained for the findings of the Lytton Commission to be presented to the League, and a final judgment

²⁷ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 379

²⁸ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 49

passed. The agreement of the League and the United States upon a common policy represented a significant step in international cooperation. The fact remains, however, it had taken seven months to achieve this common ground. In the meantime Japan had not been set back and had grown increasingly hostile and independent. It was obvious now that she was ready to oppose any course of action that might weaken her position or cause her to lose the gains she had already made.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The day following the adoption by the League of the resolution of March 11, officials of the new state of Manchukuo demanded recognition from the outside world. This was that puppet government's way of denouncing the resolution, and it met with no favorable reaction except in Japan. On March 18 the Japanese government expressed satisfaction at the formation of the new state and declared that recognition by Japan would be forthcoming as soon as the new regime was established upon a firm foundation.¹

Surprisingly, the Japanese public was extremely disappointed at this policy of the cabinet. The average citizen favored immediate recognition, but the government feared the diplomatic consequences of such a move at that time. Even though the Seiyakai government was much more sympathetic to the military's point of view than its predecessor has been, Japanese nationalism had become very extreme, and the people had begun to lose faith in the entire parliamentary system. This type of government was being blamed for the country's economic distress and the weak handling of the Manchurian and Shanghai questions. Also, it was accused of corruption and

¹ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 386

association with big business. Fanaticism was running rampant in Japan in 1932, and many outstanding liberals felt the slash of the assassin's blade. The most significant instance occurred on May 15 when a band of men dressed in military uniform attacked and killed Prime Minister Inukai in his home.²

Even before Inukai's death, nationalistic feeling had reached the point where it was evident that the Japanese government must defy the League and the United States in even stronger terms than it had already done. Consequently, on April 4 the Japanese Ambassador warned the United States and the League that if the latter body passed unfavorable judgment upon Japan there would be no alternative but to withdraw that nation's delegates from the Assembly.³ Four days later, in what was apparently another act of defiance, an army was created in Manchukuo with Japanese officers engaged as advisors.⁴

In June the Japanese Diet passed a resolution unanimously calling for the government to recognize Manchukuo. The resolution contended that such a move would be the only means of stabilizing the situation in Manchuria and restoring tranquility to the Far East.⁵ Fanaticism was so strong at

² Ibid., pp. 380-82

³ Memorandum of the Secretary of State, April 4, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931-1941, I, 87-89

⁴ The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 51

⁵ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 388

this point that the government had no choice but to accede. On September 15, eleven days after the Lytton Report had been completed and sent to Geneva, the Japanese government officially recognized Manchukuo. The United States was notified of this action on that same day. A statement signed by both the Prime Minister of Manchukuo, Chinghsiao-Hsii, and the Japanese Ambassador to that government, Nobuyoshi Muto, said: "Japan has recognized the fact that Manchukuo, in accordance with the free will of its inhabitants, has organized and established itself into an independent territory."⁶

Japan's recognition of Manchukuo at this time caused tremendous concern among the members of the League and the United States. League Council President Eamon De Valera of Ireland was deeply disturbed that such a move had come while the matter was still under League discussion. De Valera contended that in view of the fact that the League was about to receive the report of the Lytton Commission, the Japanese act was an irresponsible one and was calculated only to prejudice the settlement of the dispute.⁷ Thus, with the obvious knowledge that Japan would oppose and probably defy any strong action against her, the League of Nations prepared to view the Lytton Report and pass judgment upon the disputants.

⁶ Text of Protocol, September 15, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, IV (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1948), 253

⁷ The Consul at Geneva to the Secretary of State, September 24, 1932 - Ibid., pp. 275-76

The report of the Commission of Enquiry, commonly known as the Lytton Report, was made public on October 2, 1932. Due to several delays in getting the commission organized and into Manchuria, the investigation had not begun until six months after the Mukden incident had taken place. Over a year had passed since the beginning of the crisis before the report was published. Certainly this detracts from the accuracy of the report. Furthermore, it deals only briefly with the Shanghai question which, despite the Japanese contention, was a vital and integral part of the dispute. In fact, the report came after what it was intended to prevent became a fait accompli. Nevertheless, it represented the most complete analysis of the situation available at that time.

On Sunday, October 2, at 7:00 A.M., a date and time specified by the League, Dr. S. K. Hornbeck, the head of the State Department's Far Eastern Division, opened the packet containing a copy of the Lytton Report.⁸ The report is extremely lengthy, and for the purpose of summary in this study it may be divided into four sections. These divisions include the claims of Japan that were disregarded, the ultimate findings, some suggestions, and a proposed basis for a satisfactory solution.

The first claim of Japan rejected by the Commission was that China was an unorganized state. It was admitted that there were evils resulting from China's political and social unrest, but that country was in the best shape it had

⁸ Stimson, op. cit., p. 206

been since 1922, and it would be completely unjustifiable to disqualify her as a League member as Japan suggested.⁹

The second disregarded claim was that China had no sovereignty over Manchuria. The Commission proclaimed that the great immigration of farmers from China and the acknowledgments of legal treaties made Manchuria clearly Chinese.¹⁰

Third, Japan's argument that she was acting in self-defense was repudiated. The Commission, however, did not exclude the possibility that the officers in charge may have felt they were acting in that capacity.¹¹

Finally, the alleged independent and autonomous status of Manchukuo was not accepted. The Commission contended that the presence of Japanese troops and the activities of civil and military officials were responsible for the formation of the new state, and it could in no way be termed a genuinely spontaneous, independent movement.¹²

Thus repudiating Japan's position on Manchuria, the Commission presented its ultimate findings. It placed full responsibility upon Japan and stated:

Without declaration of war, a large area of what is indisputably Chinese territory has been forcibly seized and occupied by the armed forces of Japan and has, in consequence of this operation, been separated from and declared independent of the rest of China.¹³

⁹ Report of the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the League of Nations, Manchuria (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1932) p. 17

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 27

¹¹ Ibid., p. 71

¹² Ibid., p. 97

¹³ Ibid., p. 127

The report offered two basic suggestions. The first was that restoration of the status quo would be no solution. The second was that continuation of the present Japanese control in Manchuria would be equally unsatisfactory. It was asserted that the latter condition violated all existing international obligations, was opposed to the interests of China, and it was doubtful that in the long run it would serve the interests of Japan.¹⁴

The report concluded by listing several principles upon which a solution ought to be based. These principles included recognition of China's sovereignty and Japan's special interest in Manchuria, conformity with all existing multilateral peace treaties, maintenance of general order and security against further aggression, provisions for the settlement of future disputes, and economic rapprochement instead of economic warfare.¹⁵

The Lytton Report was unanimous and included no minority opinions or recommendations. Its content was extremely pleasing to Secretary Stimson. In The Far Eastern Crisis he praises the Commission for not flinching from drawing conclusions on ultimate facts and for leaving it to the League to judge what the facts meant. The Secretary also complimented the Commission for what he termed its excellent suggestions for a solution.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 127-28

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 130-31

¹⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 206

The Japanese reaction to the report, however, was a great deal different from that of Stimson. The Japanese press was unanimous in condemning it. The sections that met particular criticism were the denial of Japan's claim of self-defense, the imputation that Manchukuo was "Made in Japan", and the refusal to pass any judgment on the question of the Chinese boycott constituting a violation of international law.¹⁷ On this last point, however, it should be noted that the Commission did recommend the cessation of economic warfare, even though it did not mention the legality of the boycott.

The puppet government of Manchukuo also denounced the report vigorously and said in a statement issued to the American Consul General at Mukden: "Manchukuo officials are very incensed and excited. We are simply ignoring the report, Manchukuo has nothing to do with it or the League. The report has aggravated the world situation."¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Japanese government was determined to carry out its policy, and its delegate to the League, Yosuke Matsuoka, in a statement made to that body on November 19, warned that any attempt to do anything derogatory to the dignity of Japan would leave her no recourse but to withdraw from the League.¹⁹

¹⁷ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 399

¹⁸ The Consul General at Mukden to the Minister in China, October 6, 1932 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1932, IV, 290-91

¹⁹ The Minister in Switzerland to the Secretary of State, November 19, 1932 - Ibid., p. 349

The handwriting was on the wall when the League Council opened its debate on the contents of the Lytton Report on November 21. A week later the Council voted to put the issue before the Assembly. Following the provisions of the March 11 Resolution, the assembly referred the question to the committee of nineteen nations on December 9.²⁰ The Committee of Nineteen first attempted to perform it's duty by seeking conciliation. Both the United States and Russia were invited to participate in this effort. Secretary Stimson was reluctant to cooperate in this venture since he feared a delay to attempt conciliation might weaken the final League action. Nevertheless, he agreed to go along with it in order not to hinder the committee's work. Stimson's apprehensions proved unnecessary as Japan rejected both the United States and Russia as parties to conciliation and declared it would accept no solution which denied the existence of Manchukuo.²¹

In complete defiance of the Committee of Nineteen's efforts at conciliation, Japan then renewed her military operations. On January 1, 1933 Japanese troops attacked the city of Shanhsikwan, located just south of the Great Wall at its eastern extremity. Shanhaikwan was of extreme importance because it was the gateway to the Chinese province of Jehol which the Japanese considered to be rightfully part of Manchukuo. The operation proved to be a short one, and Shanhaikwan fell in two days. There seemed to be little doubt

²⁰ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 402

²¹ Stimson, op. cit., p. 225

now that an invasion of Jehol was imminent.²²

As soon as the news of the occupation of Shanhaikwan had been received, Secretary Stimson held another conference with the Japanese Ambassador. The latter's explanation of the affair was not unexpected. He stated that the Chinese had fired the first shot, and Japan was acting in self-defense. Again the assertion was made that Japan held no territorial ambitions. Stimson, obviously annoyed at this time-worn explanation, replied that Japan had said the same thing about Manchuria and was now adding the province of Jehol to her domain under the same pretense. The Ambassador's answer indicated just how far Japan's hostility had developed. He declared that no Japanese cabinet that compromised on the Manchurian situation could survive, and the incident must be considered closed.²³

As expected, the capture of Shanhaikwan paved the way for the invasion of Jehol. This new military operation, coupled with Japan's unyielding attitude, convinced the Committee of Nineteen that conciliation was impossible. The Committee then proceeded to draft its report which was presented to the Assembly on February 21, 1933. The Committee of Nineteen accepted completely the findings of the Lytton Commission. It recognized that both Japan and China had legitimate grievances before September 18, 1931 but declared that no responsibility could be placed upon China for the events which occurred after that date. The report further denied Japan's argument of self-defense,

²² The Report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 59

²³ Peace and War, op. cit., pp. 5-6

recognized China's sovereignty over Manchuria, denied the existence of Manchukuo as anything but a puppet state of Japan, and urged that no nation recognize it as an independent state. The report then concluded by recommending that negotiations be opened between Japan and China to seek a solution based upon the suggestions and principles presented by the Lytton Commission, including the recommendation that China give up the use of the commercial boycott.²⁴

The report of the Committee of Nineteen placing full blame upon Japan was adopted by the League Assembly on February 24 with only one negative vote, Japan, and one abstention, Siam. The Japanese delegate, Matsuoka, then declared that Japan and the other members of the League entertained different views on how to achieve peace in the Far East and that his government had reached the limit in its endeavor to cooperate with the League on the Sino-Japanese question. Upon issuing this statement, Matsuoka and his staff walked out of the Assembly.²⁵

Secretary Stimson was at this point faced with a problem due to the fact the Republican administration had been defeated in November of 1932. Stimson was determined to bring about some conclusion to the affair but was handicapped in that he had no assurance that the new Democratic administration would not reject his policy. This concern proved to be

²⁴ Stimson, op. cit., p. 227

²⁵ The Consul at Geneva to the Secretary of State, February 24, 1933 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1933, III (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 205-208

short lived, however. At the suggestion of the newly elected president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Stimson made a visit to Hyde Park. At this meeting Roosevelt assured the Secretary that his Far Eastern policy would be followed by the new administration.²⁶ Thus, without any fear that the Democrats might alter his policy, Stimson informed the League on February 25 that the views of the United States completely coincided with the League's findings. He also promised that the American government would endeavor to give full support to the League, while reserving the right of independent judgment.²⁷

The United States had chosen to cast its lot with the League in imposing what now constituted strong moral pressure upon Japan and in refusing to recognize Manchukuo, which was now adjudged to have been created in violation of the multi-nation peace treaties. But, despite its implications, this policy did not achieve its intended results. On March 25 the State Department received word that Japan would withdraw from the League of Nations. Two days later a statement to this effect was sent to Geneva, and the withdrawal was official.²⁸

The policy of the United States and the League had received nothing but defiance from Japan. Moral condemnation

²⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 225

²⁷ The report of the League Assembly, op. cit., p. 86

²⁸ Memorandum of Under Secretary of State Phillips, March 25, 1933 - The Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East, 1933, III, 253

had resulted in that nation's withdrawal from the League, and the policy of non-recognition of Manchukuo did not force the Japanese to dissolve that state. Furthermore, in an act of complete hostility, the Japanese had continued their aggression into Jehol and had successfully conquered that province by May of 1933.²⁹

In short, even though she had been condemned by world public opinion, Japan had gained a victory in its conflict with China. American policy and that of the League had not been effective in preventing this victory. Neither had this policy succeeded in gaining respect for the international peace treaties nor had it brought any satisfaction to China. Finally, the taste of victory was pleasant to the Japanese. They would now present to the world their "Monroe Doctrine" for Asia. They would continue to push forward in a fanatic drive to dominate the entire Far East at the risk of forcing the United States into complete and total war.

²⁹ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 359

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Sino-Japanese dispute during 1931 and 1932 was the first in the series of diplomatic crises leading to World War II. Further, it represented the first major defeat for the League of Nations. The inability of the League to bring about a successful solution to this question not only encouraged Japan to further aggression but probably encouraged the totalitarian powers of Europe as well.

Two definite results of American policy in this affair can be seen. First, it neither curbed Japan's ambitions nor provided any satisfaction to China. Second, it contributed to the weakening and collapse of the League.

Any policy that does not succeed is open to considerable criticism. It is much more difficult to make the decisions that affect history, however, than it is to pass judgment on those decisions over twenty-seven years later. Nevertheless, there were two basic errors in the American policy in this conflict that need to be pointed out.

The most fundamental mistake was to stay out of the dispute publicly for over two months in order to give the civilian element in the Japanese government every possible chance to work out a solution by itself. Idealistically, this policy was a good one. It would have been better for

all parties involved if the Japanese could have worked out the problem by themselves. Certainly the record of Baron Shidehara commanded confidence in his good intentions and willingness to seek a settlement satisfactory to all parties. The difficulty was that Shidehara and the liberal element had very little chance to overcome militarism in Japan. American policy was actually a gamble that this group would be able to gain control. It was a gamble with little hope of success.

The United States stayed out of the dispute initially in order to help Shidehara by not fanning the flames of nationalism. As it turned out, however, this policy had the reverse effect. Although American opposition might have contributed to Japanese nationalism, it probably would not have enhanced this feeling nearly as much as did the military successes in Manchuria.

Secretary Stimson took a chance which, if it had worked, would have constituted a great diplomatic victory. He did not, however, seem to take into consideration the consequences that would result if it failed. Furthermore, there is no evidence to indicate that he ever made an effort to seek the advice of his envoys close to the situation as to the possibility of the liberals regaining the dominant position in Japan from the military.

The military's advantage of direct access to the Emperor, the presence of General Minami in the cabinet, and the growing feeling among the Japanese people that Manchuria represented the answer to their economic problems were indications that Japan would not return to Shidehara's policy of

conciliation. Secretary Stimson did not heed these indications. Instead, he followed a policy that led to failure and gave Japan the opportunity to gain complete domination over Manchuria.

The second error in the American policy was the failure to cooperate fully with the League. There can be no doubt that part of the blame for the ineffectiveness of the League in handling this dispute belongs to the United States.

From its beginning, the League was hampered by the fact that it did not include the United States among its members. The success of collective action depends upon the cooperation of all the great powers. The League never had any assurance that the United States, certainly one of the world's greatest powers, would provide that cooperation. Even though the State Department had declared its willingness to support the League in its handling of the Manchurian question, the members of that organization still remembered the rejection of Woodrow Wilson's dream by the Senate and later by the American electorate. With good reason, there was considerable doubt as to the extent to which the League could count on the United States.

Instead of showing its willingness to cooperate at every possible opportunity, in order to build confidence in the intentions of the United States among the League members, the State Department adopted a hesitant approach. The withdrawal of Prentiss Gilbert from the League meetings just prior to the passage of the resolution of October 24, 1931 was a definite indication that the United States would back the

League only if it took action that met with complete American favor. The several referrals to the right of independent judgment, and the later aloofness of Charles G. Dawes were further indications of this same view. One reason the League moved cautiously was to avoid a rejection of its action by the United States, and this caution contributed to its failure in the affair and eventual collapse. It took the League seventeen months to condemn Japan. By that time the Japanese had achieved their objective; also public opinion in their country would not have approved of any attempt to relinquish what had already been gained.

The question now arises as to the possibility of a successful settlement of this dispute, despite the two basic errors of the State Department. This would have required stronger action against Japan in early 1933 than moral pressure and non-recognition of Manchukuo.

One possibility would have been the use of armed force. The Korean incident of 1950 to 1953 proved that armed intervention on a limited scale can be effective in halting aggression. The Korean conflict, however, was not the result of the aggression of a major power as was the Manchurian incident. The use of armed force against Japan would have meant a full scale war, and that was what everyone was trying to prevent. Furthermore, although the world is able to accept the idea of armed intervention in the nineteen fifties, it was not ready for such a course of action in the thirties. Dr. S. K. Hornbeck states that "at no time was there in con-

nection with this incident serious suggestion or consideration of possible resort . . . by the United States to armed force."¹

The other alternative, then, would have been economic sanctions. There is no question that such a move would have had a tremendous effect upon Japan. That nation's shortage of raw materials had made foreign trade vital to her welfare. To cut off this trade would have been an economic disaster and would have necessitated drastic action. If faced with economic sanctions Japan would be confronted with two alternatives, to back down or to fight.

The very nature of the Japanese people, who will go to great lengths to avoid humiliation, indicates they would not have backed down. Further evidence of this is found in a letter from the newly appointed Ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, to Secretary Stimson written in August of 1932. The Ambassador stated of the Japanese military machine: "It has been built for war, feels prepared for war and would welcome war. It has never yet been beaten and possesses unlimited self confidence."²

There was some support for sanctions in the United States. The American Boycott Association was created to support such a course.³ In general, however, the vast majority

¹ Stanley K. Hornbeck, The United States and the Far East (Boston: The World Peace Foundation, 1942) p. 30

² Peace and War, op. cit., p. 6

³ Tupper and McReynolds, op. cit., p. 336

of American public opinion, particularly the press, was vehemently opposed to sanctions.⁴ Most of the leading congressional figures were also opposed to them. Senator Borah was quoted just before the passage of the League's December 10 resolution as saying:

When the United States employs its good offices in every reasonable way to bring about peace, it has done all it can do or should do. No treaty and no duty devolving upon peace-loving nations requires or permits the United States to go further.⁵

Finally, both President Hoover and Secretary Stimson left no doubt that they too opposed economic sanctions strongly. Stimson openly stated that he would "do nothing that in anyway would commit the United States to such a course."⁶

Thus, the use of economic sanctions would not have been supported by the United States. Any policy that met with such strong opposition, both from the leading figures in the administration and the public, would not have been possible. Further, there is little doubt that such a policy, if it had been attempted, would have led the United States into a war it definitely did not want.

It is the conclusion of this thesis, therefore, that the mistakes of the State Department, the initial delay and the failure to cooperate fully with the League, were fatal.

⁴ Ibid., p. 337

⁵ Smith, op. cit., p. 180

⁶ Stimson, op. cit., p. 99

The only possible peaceful solution to the problem depended upon immediate moral pressure, close cooperation between the United States and the League, and a definite effort by the nations of the world to assist Japan to overcome her economic problems. Despite the obvious guilt of Japan in this dispute, one must recognize that her economic situation-caused by her overpopulation, shortage of raw materials, and unfavorable balance of trade-was partly responsible for her aggressive attitude. Any peaceful settlement would have to be sympathetic to this situation. The Lytton Report suggested economic rapprochement instead of economic warfare.⁷ Such a move would require more than a lifting of the Chinese boycott which was the purpose of the Commission's suggestion. It would require a conscientious effort on the part of all nations to establish free trade with Japan and decrease immigration restrictions. It is encouraging to note that as this thesis is being written, in 1958, the wealthier powers of the world are beginning to recognize the need to combine economic aid with political agreements in solving diplomatic problems. It is unfortunate that this awareness was not as prominent in the nineteen thirties.

There is absolutely no guarantee that this approach to the question would have been successful. It is entirely possible that economic assistance to Japan would not have curbed militarism and extreme nationalism in that country. Also, there is no assurance that moral pressure against Japan,

⁷ Stimson, op. cit., p. 216

which failed in early 1933, would have succeeded in the fall of 1931. Finally, there is also no guarantee that the League of Nations would have been willing to take prompt action even if it were assured of full American cooperation. The failure of the leading nations of Europe to support the Stimson Doctrine in January of 1932 indicates that the League might have been cautious regardless of the attitude of the United States. The people who claim that war with Japan was inevitable may be correct.

One can draw conclusions on the mistakes made in history, but one can only speculate on what might have happened had those mistakes not been made. There is no assurance that the history of the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties would have been any different had immediate moral pressure been inflicted upon Japan jointly by the United States and the League and had this condemnation been coupled with a sincere effort to seek a solution to Japan's economic difficulties. As a result of the evidence presented earlier, however, it is the firm belief of this writer that such an approach represented the only possibility of a peaceful and permanent settlement.

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