

The Western Man's Arrogance

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THROUGHOUT the United States, and to some degree in Canada and Great Britain drawn as they have been for longer time and in greater rigor to the European struggle, there is surging interest in the peoples of the Far East. What manner of men are these Japs, who for a season smashed into an empire a month? "How can they do it? They're not white. Come to think, the Chinese must have what it takes, for they've been standing up to the Japs five years now without any equipment. The Japs went into Indo-China and Thailand, Guam and Alaska, slick as anybody could, without sayin' anything about that time at Pearl Harbor when all the admirals and generals were off to Sunday School. They swung through Manila and Singapore and the East Indies and Burma as if they knew what they were doin', and we 'n' the British 'n' the Dutch were just kids with popguns. But they haven't got the Chinese down and out, and it doesn't look as if they could. That's luck for us, isn't it?"

So runs a common mouth, revealing a sound process of education within. The analog from Washington is the legend of an enthusiastic member of the cabinet who warmly slapped the Chinese ambassador on the back, saying, "We'll beat those yellow devils yet!" In fact, our people are fumbling, bungling, muddling

toward a reality that is high ethics compared with their traditional attitudes. We are plunged into comradeship with the Chinese, men of a different culture and hue, whom we scarcely knew before. Thanks to statesmanship that recognized reality, the Chinese are rightly placed as one of the four major peoples among the United Nations, upon whose cooperative effort the chance for a livable world depends. We are also about ready to rate the Japanese as major opponents, as murderously totalitarian as if they were white.

What happens now, and from now on, in the valleys of China and the jungles of New Guinea and the rice-fields of Korea, in the shattered offices of Chungking and the shiny ones of Washington, destroys or saves the lives of the young men from our own homes, crushes or develops the pattern of a generation's living for us all. Distance still means something in the straining of convoys for the course of the world, but it never meant less in the relations of man to man. Color also has been brought to proper insignificance in human affairs—in mighty drama by the partnerships of Armageddon, in trifling farce by the costly efforts of sun and lamp and paint to make the white folks dark.

But the full truth is far better and far worse than what has just been said. Some humane liberals,

through education and friendly contact, a host of Christians, through doctrine, become flesh in missionary enterprise and all its fruitful relationships and have been prepared for this crisis-opportunity. They have long known that Chinese and Japanese are of one blood with ourselves, viewed alike as children of God or as donors to the plasma bank. They know that Chinese and Japanese, like us, have demonstrated in history and in the life of our time great capacity for evil and for good, responding here to the temptations of the devil and there to the grace of God. Such Christians of reality are able to use to the full the new chance given even in the depths of world crime, to redeem the gross indifference, the foul contempt, the accursed condescension (insidious when it poses as benevolent) of our common attitudes toward people of other colors. Such men are also grounded on eternal truth, able to stand firm against silly backwash if the Chinese requirements for secure and productive peace do not coincide with the mood or the national interest or the political aims of the successful political party in the United States during critical months at the close of the war. Can't you hear the grumbling slump into sinful "normalcy"? "I always knew you couldn't trust Orientals. We've had enough. We can't afford to get snagged in any international trap where those fellows will decide what we have to do." The fine appreciation among most church people of the Chinese character, and their frequently decent attitude toward the Japanese as individuals, will have stiff work in making good those positions among the cries for isolation and punitive revenge.

Racial Superiority Defeats True Cooperation

Moreover, the color bogey isn't dead. Recently a superior Christian layman, proud of his kindness and sense of wise fairness toward the Negroes, said what too many others would rush to approve: "Where two different races live together, one of them has to be master and the other servant." That's uncomfortably near to the Nazi doctrine for the Czechs, the Poles and all the rest of us intended slaves; near also to the Japanese placing of the Koreans, the Chinese and all whom they expect to subordinate under their semi-divine sway. If we hold, in principle or in practice, a doctrine of race superiority, there is no valid basis for true cooperation among the United Nations, nor for a successful international order. Further, we cannot compartmentalize our virtues, professing fair deals abroad and denying equal opportunity to Negroes or to Jews in America. The world has eyes and ears for lynchings, for discrimination in employment and education and voting and travel. The vision and the hearing of the world,

friendly and neutral, are relentlessly enlarged by newsreel and radio. In war, every national sin is magnified by hostile propaganda, which has enormous force in prepared and controlled areas. Specifically, many Chinese and Japanese, including influential statesmen and Christian leaders, have discovered America—they have learned in their own persons what it means to be considered "colored" in a land where the Constitution solemnly forbids discrimination on the basis of color. In order to make good internationally, we must become decent within the nation.

In the great instance of Asia, which holds half the people of the world, the color issue is widely combined with the issue of imperialism. Here Americans (British friends may skip if they dare) require to stretch their minds and feelings in disciplined imagination. We have been comfortably strong and rich and free, surprised that now and then the weak and poor and subjected have complained of the *status quo*; displeased when they do not join us with full trust and enthusiasm as we raise the cry of freedom against aggression—freedom for us but not for them. For four hundred years the ambitious Western whites, seeking wealth and power, have taken and held what they wanted from India to Kamchatka. Every land was put completely under the sway of foreign imperialism, or was forced to grant ports, freedom from restrictive tariffs, extra-territoriality. In the privileges and advantages of this situation we Americans have fully shared—with the respectable slogans of "equality" (with the empires) and "the open door" (no one should have an advantage that we do not enjoy, too). Making fair allowance for genuine virtues only too well known among us, it is largely true that we developed our nation late, economically as well as politically, and were profitably able to escape much of the opprobrium which others stored up for themselves in these later generations of awakening Asiatic nationalisms. We showed our guns frequently, used them occasionally, benefited by the acts of others whom we denounced, and plundered the Spanish Empire when it suited us to do so.

Not one country among all the brown and yellow peoples of Asia was permitted to remain fully independent. Japan was first to retort by organizing herself to use the white imperialists' weapons against them. In doing so she strengthened the dangerous elements of her own tradition, and has been ready to use compulsion against Chinese and Koreans in her rise to power. But resentment against the prevailing imperialism of the distant West has been so great that Japanese have been able to feel that in Korea and Manchuria and all of China they have fought to drive out the white usurpers of the resources and power that rightly belong to Asiatics: a

battle for freedom, in which Chinese and Koreans ought to support them! Moreover, the victory over Russia, at that time the most successful and most feared of advancing empires in the East, brought to Japan enormous prestige, even among injured neighbors. Ten thousand Chinese students hurried to Tokyo to learn the secrets of modernization as mastered by Asiatics of color, the means which alone could bring independence and just opportunity to China. That magic is advertised again today in the Japanese propaganda against white imperialism which wants to continue an Atlantic-centered world.

The poisons of the past are not overcome by sudden fraternizing under the appalling threat of the Axis. The commendable pledge of independence to the Philippine Islands (darkened, like all imperialisms, by our economic exploitation of the Islands and our accompanying failure to provide for sound development in their own interest); the continual advance toward self-government in Burma, India and the Netherlands East Indies (equivalent in Burma to the stage we had reached in the Philippines, and far along in India); the tedious relinquishment of tariff control and of extra-territoriality in Thailand and China (in the latter country, major ports are still legally subject to foreign administration): all of these are gains in the building of world society. The liquidation of imperialism cannot be one-sided, as of Japanese imperialism only. Complete liquidation is a moral necessity if cooperation of Chinese, Filipinos, Indonesians and Indians is desired, in war or in peace. Unless those peoples are free agents, able to develop leadership, to take responsibility, to make mistakes and profit by the experience, they cannot be useful partners in international relationships. It is desirable that the dissolution of old servitudes be orderly, and that transitions should not imperil the combined struggle for the freedom of us all.

But let us be critically honest. If we had grown up under the regime of special foreign rights and tariff control in China or in Japan, if we had seen with Filipino eyes the economic possibilities of the Islands made the shuttlecock of American commercial and agricultural and labor politics, if we were Indians finding out for the twentieth time that British and Americans are more concerned for orderly conformity to their interests than for our chance to hold up our heads as free men, would we have whole-hearted confidence in the honesty of the white imperialists? Most of us under those conditions would feel that we must take any opportunity whatsoever to advance toward freedom, that we must combine with others in like plight, against the age-long foreign domination of Asiatic life. It is only the violent and cruel cross-imperialism of Japan that saves us Western peoples from being the target of much more

serious resentments than we have thus far experienced. At this time the British responsibility in such matters is heavy. Let Americans be sure that well-meaning expressions of concern are adequately informed (which would postpone many of them indefinitely); and that attacks upon British Toryism in India are not used as convenient escape from our own problems of dealing on terms of fairness and equality with people of color, whether in this country or at the immigration barriers or in social and economic relationships throughout Asia and Africa. It has been well said that Britain's prime dragon is imperialism and America's is race discrimination; if we really get to work on our dragon, we'll be better able to show St. George how he ought to make way with his. All of which should not discourage warm and studious interest in India, or its proper expression among British friends. Liberals and moderates alike in India and in Britain need encouragement to persist in seeking helpful adjustment; extremists in both lands require neither encouragement nor useless provocation.

Western Arrogance Enemy of Brotherhood

One other potent enemy of brotherhood with the East is Western arrogance, often perfumed as "responsibility for the American century" or "planning for the post-war era," or "finishing the job we've started." If such decisions and plans, no matter how well intended, are made in Washington or London, they have for freedom-seeking Asia something of the taint of a "new order" springing from Tokyo or Berlin. Unilateral plans are mental imperialism, projecting the Western mind, Utopian or bureaucratic or capitalist, to manage the East. Thinking of the objectives and the outcome of the war there must be more and not less. But in so far as it concerns Asia and global relationships of which Asia is a part, the thinking must be done collaboratively with Asiatics, or in continued friendly interchange with Asiatics, if its results are to be workable. Chinese expending lives by the million to maintain freedom against Japan; Indians, Burmese, Indonesians, Filipinos, if active enough to hold off the Japanese and to rise against them upon opportunity, are by the same token able to give plenty of trouble to any one who tries to control their affairs against their will, and likewise are capable of doing their part to support general freedom in international cooperation entered into freely. The kind of people we want as friends and allies are the kind of people who will not allow themselves to be kicked around or exploited or deceived —by the Japanese or by us. Early and constant consultation is the price of cooperation. The mutuality of respect, the interchange of equal spirits, is the only

hope of decent relationships between masses of men unequal in power and wealth. Christian men should be able to meet others for the common good. Paternalism is only a softened or perhaps an astute imperialism. It is not brotherhood. The confident,

impatient, benevolent Anglo-Saxon makes the charter and exhorts the rest to sign. Rather, the friend first, and soon the enemy, must be consulted as another and full shareholder in this earth upon which we all live in sufferance under God.