

An American woman in Japan sees  
our statesmen as obstreperous boys

# Diplomats Are Infants

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**D**IPLOMATS and Congressmen and members of Parliament are warned not to read this article. It will be bad for their blood pressure and self-esteem. But I am sick to death of the way diplomats and legislators have messed up foreign affairs. The more I study history and current events, the madder I get about the infantile system they have evolved.

I am using 'infantile' in the psychotherapeutic and maternal connotation, and I don't suppose a diplomat or duly elected representative could see the application. However, for the past twenty years I have had three boys and all their friends under my eyes in my home and I can see a distinct parallel between the internal affairs of small boys and the foreign affairs of countries as conducted by the gentlemen whose names make history and newspaper headlines.

Small boys are forever forming new cliques. This week they don't like Jimmy and first they whisper to-

gether about it. Then Jimmy becomes suspicious of their whisperings and his truculent inquiries lead to exchange of insults. Eventually war is declared between Jimmy and the gang, ending in volleys of stones or hand-to-hand conflict. But next week, Jimmy having proved stronger than supposed, he emerges as an influential member of the gang and it is Harry's turn to be the focus of hostility.

Again, small boys love mystery and secret societies. They are forever drafting out badly spelled and smudged constitutions and agreements characterized by lovely big words which they do not in the least comprehend. They retire to the playroom to compose these documents behind closed doors, and hide them transparently under their pillows. But in a month or two, the documents have become scraps of paper.

Boys are evidently like that naturally and perhaps adult male society is also like that inevitably.

It is too soon yet to have much

data on women in diplomacy. I only know one lady ambassador, Ruth Bryan Owen, daughter of the American statesman William Jennings Bryan. She was appointed Minister to Denmark by President Roosevelt. Her brand of diplomacy was certainly original. I regard it as an inspiration in the field of foreign relations. She married the handsomest Dane in Denmark! What is more, she married a military Dane and he promptly gave up professional saber-rattling and betook himself to the peaceful pursuits of founding a home and making a living. The lady ambassador thus retired from circulation one unit of possible war between the United States and Denmark.

On the strength of a single example, I suppose I can hardly expect Japan and America to try out immediately the effect of exchanging lady ambassadors in Tokyo and Washington. And possibly accumulation of sufficient data and experience would demonstrate that women can be as infantile as men in foreign relations.

**I** HAVE been interested personally for some twenty years in the foreign relations between Japan and America specifically. I have a personal stake in the matter. I have lived in Japan for years enough to have a liking for the country and many friendships among the Japanese. I was born in America and live there and love my own country.

I have three American boys of my own of military age and personal acquaintance with a number of Japanese youths of the same age. I can't bear the idea that a lot of old men around a green-table or whispering behind closed doors in marble

buildings can set those American and Japanese boys to killing each other one day.

I have read (until my head aches) learned articles on the economic basis of American or Japanese actions. I can recite dates and trends and treaties and legislation as glibly as any historian. But I'm tired of history written in retrospect to make a logical interpretation of current events.

As long as the average American considers Japan a country of odd little people, surrounded by cherry blossoms, busy at producing silk stockings and canned crab at cut-throat prices to take the bread out of American mouths, there will be trouble. Just as long as Japanese people in the mass look on Americans as uncouth barbarians who sit gloating atop a pile of gold trying to starve Japan, there will be suspicion and hostility.

As a mere female, it seems to me that we Americans ought to repent of a fifteen-year old emotion and repeal the 1924 Exclusion Act. Now that our emotions have cooled down a bit, I think the large majority of Americans recognize in cold common sense that the few hundred Japanese who would be admitted annually to the United States under the immigration quota in force for other countries could not affect materially either our economic or national system.

If I were a lady Senator, I'd like to get up on the floor of the chamber in Washington and rise to remark that before we negotiated a new treaty with Japan, we purge our own conscience and put the Japanese in a friendly emotional state by removing an invidious and unnecessary barrier to mutual relations.

Likewise, if I were a Japanese

Minister of power and perception, I would get an appropriation to hire Emily Post as instructor in foreign etiquette to the Japanese Army. It is time someone explained to the Japanese military that the surest way to make an American mad is to strip women down to a hip-girdle to search her, or to slap an American woman in the face.

If I were a Japanese Cabinet Minister, I would take the money wasted in 'inviting' American school teachers and Chambers of Commerce to Japan for a man-killing tour of Nikko, Miyanoshita, Kyoto and Nara, and I would use that same money to print schoolbooks. The books should have chapters in Japanese describing America adequately for the instruction of Japanese pupils, and chapters in English describing Japan for American pupils.

Twaddle about cherry blossoms and tea ceremony is not going to inspire an emotion of friendship in Americans for Japan. As an American who has lived in Japan, I love the cherry blossoms and I sense in the tea ceremony an expression of culture that is of the highest degree in refinement and serenity of character. But as an American I know very well that most of my countrymen never look at cherry blossoms and generally prefer coffee to tea.

The average American would rather read, and would read with a keener emotional reaction, pamphlets and books about the economic situation in Japan. Frank figures on Japan's financial resources for foreign trade, accurate statistics about how many tons of steel, bales of cotton, gallons of oil Japan could absorb from American producers would make

a bigger hit as literature than poems about cherry blossoms.

**I**F I WERE the Japanese Home Minister, I would issue an order that all Customs Inspectors and Waterfront Police must be qualified as experts in foreign languages. Much of the unfavorable publicity about Japan starts from the hostile impression made on some foreigner at the dock on arrival in Japan.

On the other hand, if I were American ambassador to Japan I would set my secretaries to preparing a small leaflet of instructions for Americans visiting Japan on how not to wound the sensibilities of the Japanese. I would explain in the booklet about taking shoes off before entering houses or temples; about taking hats off in shrine precincts; about Japanese disgust for tourists who put their dirty shoes up on velvet cushions in trains.

My little books would explain to Americans that Japanese like to conduct passport examinations and business negotiations with interminable ceremony, punctuated by tea-drinking and food-serving. They would explain to Japanese that Americans like to get business over slap bang in a hurry.

I'm tired of hearing folks back home talk as if Japanese went without all the amenities of life in order to undersell the American workman, because after living in both countries I can see for myself that it is not the standards of the two that differ but the yardsticks. A yen today is quoted as worth 23 cents in American money; but on the other hand my American dollar in America buys no more for my own household than a yen buys

in Japan. I'm fed up with having my Japanese friends charge me for commodities as a foreigner in Japan on the supposition that I am a millionaire, when the truth is my salary in America just barely stretches over the costs of living.

I want, too, to see Japanese and Americans come to a better general understanding of each other's system of government. The average American has still a hazy idea that the Japanese are primitive heathens who worship idols and think their Emperor is a living god. To an average American 'a living god' is translated roughly as saying that the Emperor means the same to a Japanese as Jesus Christ does to a Christian. Such a conception subconsciously outrages an American's prejudices.

Yet it is a false conception. I know that, although I find it hard to define in terms an American would understand. When I am in Japan I can feel, emotionally, intuitively, the symbolism with which the Japanese invest their conception of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor. It seems just as natural to me, when I am in Japan, to see a business man in Marunouchi take off his hat and bow as he passes the gate to the Imperial Palace, as it seems natural in America to see a business man take off his hat when the American flag is carried past at the head of a procession.

On the other hand, when I am in Japan I have a lot of trouble trying

to explain to the Japanese that Franklin D. Roosevelt is not all America. They tend to exalt his position as head of the American Government, and they fail to grasp that our democratic system gives us a new President every four years and that the next President may be the antithesis of Mr. Roosevelt in looks, beliefs and actions.

The Japanese make too much of our officials and administrations. We Americans make too little of Japanese authorities. The Japanese judge our institutions by their own tradition of continuity; we disparage theirs in the light of our tradition of change and flux.

We have been for nearly a century, ever since Commodore Perry sailed into Uraga in 1853, conducting our foreign affairs between Japan and America like two camps of small boys, whiffing in and out of friendly relations, drawing up elaborate papers and tearing them up again, hurling taunts at each other from behind our own fences. As a woman, and an American, and an acquaintance of Japan, I want to see more emotion and less diplomacy of the old school in our foreign relations. I don't know the right formula myself. But at least I can state the problem and invite my Japanese and American friends alike to consider it as a personal problem, affecting all of us, requiring an emotional reaction from each of us.

# LETTERS AND THE ARTS

By CHARLES ANGOFF

THE plight of artists is coming in for serious attention in London, Paris, and other allied capitals. English journals are publishing numerous pleas not to let the concerns of the spirit wither away during a war ostensibly fought to make the world safe for the greatest possible freedom in all realms. The London *Spectator* points out that architects, musicians, dramatists, scientific research workers, painters, novelists, and poets had their earnings almost entirely stopped at the beginning of hostilities, with 'depressing and in some cases disastrous results. Literature will no doubt contrive to hold up its head, though it is likely that the best imaginative and critical work will be severely handicapped, and the book-selling trade is threatened with the loss of all its profits.'

The country, continues the *Spectator*, 'must not resign itself to a negative attitude to all that is not war,' or it will find itself 'losing many of the advantages which it is fighting to preserve.'

The Contemporary Art Society has made arrangements to exhibit the work of younger artists, and the National Gallery has provided facilities for concerts. The Government, however, could well take a hand in encouraging and even sponsoring many cultural activities, and a strong movement has been started to further that object. Londoners are saying that a people burdened with various kinds of war work and long hours should be able to find recreational outlets through pictures, plays and music.

R. A. Scott-James voiced a similar plea in a recent radio broadcast from London. He said the war fever had done much damage to literature a whole year before September last, 'but now that the war is on, it doesn't follow that the coming year—

from the literary point of view—need be worse or even as bad. Much depends on whether we mean all we have said about democracy and about fighting for the freedom of the mind.'

To those who might say that war time is no time for escapism, he says that turning to literature 'is not a turning of one's back upon realities but, on the contrary, an enlargement of the field of reality, a widening of the interests, a sharpening of the sensibility and of the capacity for pleasure. . . . We have to keep a tight hold on literature, the arts, and all the amenities of life in these days, because they are the first among the things which the Nazis want to take from us.'

The Columbia Broadcasting System recently asked its representatives in England, France, and Germany to report upon precisely what the warring nations are doing in the way of aesthetics these days. Their findings make interesting reading.

Mr. Morrow, in London, points out that, while during the first weeks after September the radio offered only transcriptions from records and pipe organ music, it is now offering serious orchestral and solo music, 'comedy, descriptions of football games and dramatic programs,' though the most popular item still remains news. There are a few, but not many, Hitler jokes on the air. A few war songs, but it's pretty clear that the listeners do not want a lot of warlike programs. As for television, after two years of operation, it closed down completely on the outbreak of war. That would have been an ideal medium for this blackout time. But it would also have provided an ideal guide beam for German bombers to ride.

In the field of books, the fiction best-sellers, in England, seem to be Sir Hugh