

Japan's Powerful Place Among the Allies

Takuma Kuroda, Who Represented His Government at the Panama Exposition, Scoffs at Japanese Invasion of America.

By Richard Barry.

MR. TAKUMA KURODA has been lecturing on "The Spirit of Japan," after a service in San Francisco in charge of the art department of the Imperial Japanese exhibits at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. I had last known of him in his own country, twelve years ago, when he was placed in charge of the foreign war correspondents by Sambo Hombo, (the War Department,) and during the first few exciting weeks of the Japanese-Russian war performed the extremely delicate task of restraining a horde of determined American newspaper men.

Mr. Kuroda has always been a figure of peculiar potency in Japanese affairs. For many years he was an ex officio diplomatic agent in Korea, and after the Chinese war was the means of communication between the Japanese Emperor and the Korean dynasty. He comes of one of the oldest of Japanese families, and is the chief disciple of the celebrated Viscount General Torjo, one of the mightiest men of the Old Japan that preceded the Russian war. Having had the most intimate relations with the chiefs of the empire, the late Prince Ito, the late Prince Sanjo, General Terauchi, the Governor of Korea, Prince Yamogata, and the late Generals Kodama and Nogri, his vision of Japanese aims and policies is not that of the politician of the moment, but rather that of the little group of statesmen-seers who brought the island empire out of her old feudal conditions safely into the empire of present world affairs. At this moment his only title is that of Director of the Council of Connoisseurs of Objects of Art in Japan, and at present he is exhibiting in New York his own collection of Oriental antique objects of art. He speaks as Baron d'Estournelles de Constant might speak of France.

"Is it true," I asked Mr. Kuroda of THE SUNDAY TIMES, "that Japan has lost her head over her present profitable alliance with the principal powers of Europe and its consequent prosperity, and that, as is so often reported, she is indulging in vast dreams of world dominance?"

He laughed heartily. "It is always amusing," he said, "to observe the wild flutter that is occasioned periodically by newspapers which seem to have nothing better to do than imagine trouble which not only does not, but never could, exist. The latest, I believe, is that because Japan has taken over the German islands in Polynesia she is fortifying herself for an advance on the Philippines. Now, while it is true that we have taken over the German South Sea islands, in pursuance of an agreement with Great Britain, just as we took Tsing-tao, and while it is also true that we are going ahead, after our usual fashion, to govern them as well as we know how, installing postal, telegraph, and cable service, and even fortifying them in routine form, it is just as reasonable to conclude we are going to attack Alaska because we are properly governing Saghalien as it is to say we are preparing to encroach on the Philippines. Will you Americans never understand that Japan has all she can do with her own people on her own territories and in the continent of which she is an essential factor?"

"That may be true for the immediate future, but how about ten, fifteen years hence—or even five years hence?" I insisted.

"Not in a hundred years," replied Mr. Kuroda, "will the situation be any different. The genius of our people is too essentially that of an island population to lead us to continental conquest. We are wrongly suspected of designs on China. It is more natural to suspect that than that we have designs on America, but it is equally without foundation either in fact or in plausibility. We want our share of the trade of

China; that is all. Otherwise we want to keep China for the Chinese."

"But you have had your designs on Korea for more than twenty years, and you have succeeded. Japan now governs Korea."

"Japan has had designs on Korea for over a thousand years," Mr. Kuroda corrected me, "if you wish to call the peculiar racial and geographical interrelation of our peoples 'designs,' yet even now our true object in Korea is to teach Korea to govern herself. Japan claims one thing, at least, for which you must give her credit, and that is a thorough understanding of the most enlightened statesmanship of the modern age. Eng-

were fighting purely by book, solely in accordance with lessons learned chiefly from the Germans?"

"It is frequently said in Japan that in the present war we would have made more profit had we been on the side of the Germans. Of course that could not be thought of. I only speak of it to emphasize that we are not an ungrateful people. England had been our ally when we needed one, and now we are hers when she needs one. And here let me point out that Japan is a most essential factor in the present case of the Allies. Suppose we withdrew our support, a contingency that is not likely to happen. But suppose it did. India would instant-

are essentially a maritime nation. The demand for Japanese bottoms is tremendous, many times greater than it is possible to supply. A Japanese shipowner is very lucky these days. I have heard of ships clearing a quarter of a million dollars on one voyage, just for freight charges.

"Of course there is bound to be a reaction after the war with us, just as with you. That, however, does not seem to affect the high spirit of prosperity in certain circles in Japan. Many of the people I meet in America do not seem to realize that Japan is a country of diverse elements, like any other. We have our wild speculative spirits, our get-rich-quick operators, our jingoes, and our shrewd business men. The only radical difference is that our business men do not, as yet, control the country, or even faintly reflect its racial spirit. You must remember that for many centuries the business man in Japan was of the lowest stratum of society, far below the soldier, who was very close to the peer.

"When Americans hear that a fishing company has leased grounds in Magdalena Bay they are quick to conclude that the Japanese Government is behind the venture. If they only knew us better they would understand that with us there is very little relationship between business and statesmanship, and that our statesmen are constantly fearful that the Japanese business man will get them into trouble.

"Another thing in which you misunderstand us. I constantly hear that Japanese are 'astute.' If you will say 'sensitive' I will agree with you, but not so 'astute,' as you mean in your phrase. In fact, we are too sensitive for our own good, too responsive to fluctuating conditions, too mercurial, too quick. It is our national psychology. When you see us doing something that seems difficult to understand you immediately conclude it has a hidden purpose, when perhaps it is only what the Irish call "a temperamental spree."

"Whatever you call it," I observed, "it may be a serious matter if you sail over some dark night and land an army in California. That would be a "temperamental spree" that we hope would not be 'astute.'"

Mr. Kuroda laughed heartily at this. "The perennial bugbear!" he replied. "Your newspapers are constantly describing it; you lecture about it; your War College solemnly talks about it; you write books about it. And perhaps it does you no harm. It may do you good if it induces you to get a big navy, which every one needs nowadays. But there is no chance that we will ever do that—not the slightest."

"Why?"

"Many reasons; but let me restrict myself to the military reason, which, after all, is the final one. On my trip over here I traveled with a former American Naval Attaché at Tokio. Together we made figures to account for all the available ships that Japan might command in case of war. His information was as good as mine, or better, but, as it happened, we agreed on the figures. It appears that if Japan should requisition every ship in the empire capable of making a transoceanic voyage, and should start them all off at once, there would not be enough to transport to America more than one-tenth the army any well-informed General Staff would detail for the conquest of the United States at the present time.

"That is, all of our available ships might be able to bring over not above half an army, or, say, 30,000 men. As no one could think of coming to the United States with a smaller force than that with which we invaded Korea—five armies—it would be suicide for us to make the venture.

"So the Japanese invasion of America is absurd to think of, solely for the reason of transportation, if for none other. And there are many others. The great ocean that separates us is destined to remain as it is named for many centuries—Pacific!"



land, France, Holland are successful in their colonial efforts only in so far as they teach the colonies to govern themselves. We go further with Korea; we would go as far as you have gone with Cuba. In fact, I know intimately the definite designs of the present Governor of Korea, General Terauchi, and it is his hope and design that Korea may have its autonomous government within ten years. I know that there are many in Japan not sympathetic with his aims, yet he represents the ruling spirit."

"But if Japan has no designs on China, why does she concern herself so closely with Chinese politics? Why, for instance, be the chief factor in preventing Yuan Shih-kai from ascending the throne?"

"Because we knew Yuan Shih-kai only too well. He was purely an opportunist, thinking only of himself first, neither of China nor of Asia first. He was such a man as we have not had in the Orient in many centuries. Japan has never had such a man, I am proud to say. We have never had a man of eminence who thought of himself first and of his country second. Is that not a fine thing to say of one's country? Well, I believe it is true. The danger of Yuan Shih-kai was chiefly his pro-German tendencies, not so much because he loved the Germans as because he believed the Germans could the most help him. At the present time the Germans have an ammunition factory in Shanghai, run by the Chinese, which would deliver ammunition to the Germans were there any way to get it there. Yuan Shih-kai's army, such as it is, was made not in but by Germany."

"And was not Japan's?" I asked.

"Quite true," answered Mr. Kuroda, "and that is another point I wish to make. Japan owed her success in the Russian war to the German military system, not to the entity, but to the ideas of military art which she had learned in Germany. Don't you know that we

ly be exposed. England would be obliged to hasten there many thousands of the troops she has withdrawn."

"Isn't Japan growing rich out of the war?"

"The same as America, though not so much so. I read a statement in one of your papers yesterday that a thousand new millionaires had appeared since the war in Japan. At the same time I hold in my hand a Tokio paper, the Mancho, giving a list of the millionaires made so since the beginning of the present war. There are only six. No. We are not getting very rich. Stocks are booming in maritime commercial properties, due to the great demand for sea transportation. And we are selling canned goods, clothes, boots, ammunition, and rifles to Russia. But our resources are so limited we cannot fill one-tenth of the orders Russia would give us. And our profits are small. For instance, a rifle that is sold to France in America for \$62, we sell the Russians in Japan for 18 yen (\$9.) A shrapnel shell which costs the Allies in America \$26 is sold in Japan to Russia for 6 yen (\$3.) And so it goes. We get less than half as much for our boots, though all our leather must be imported. We make no steel. All must be imported, and it costs us 400 yen a ton where it costs you \$50 a ton. Yet we sell our ordnance and our ammunition cheaper, much cheaper, than you do. The profit is very small."

"Does the Government still control all the ordnance and explosive factories?"

"No. Since the outbreak of the present war I believe three private ordnance factories have been started, but in each case under Government supervision. Yet the profits from those are not enormous. The Government dictates prices. Of course there is in Japan a lot of artificial war prosperity, just as there is with you.

"Where Japan is making the most money at the present time is just where she should make it, on the sea, for we