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IS IT SENSE?

DELUSION IN EUROPE

THE CLINCH IN THE FAR EAST

WEAKNESS AND DANGER

AN INTOLERABLE SITUATION

HOW TO END THE MUDDLE

BY J. L. GARVIN

The grave circumstances in the Far East and the momentous truths forced at last upon the counsels of British statesmanship can be no surprise to anyone who has followed this systematic inquiry. It has shown the monotonous failure of our recent foreign policy at all points. It has shown the increasing dangers to which that confused experiment has exposed the Empire, while finally frustrating the League in its present broken shape. This drastic task we have had to carry out with serious regret as a matter of urgent duty brooking no delay. Someone had to do it, and it had to be done now.

The present summing-up brings the survey to a finish. We began the series nearly two months ago. Events since then have marched in the direction it was only too easy to foresee, but with unexpected rapidity. The indisputable conclusions have appeared in a more glaring light.

I

JAPANESE ATTACKS AND THEIR MEANING

At the very outset we showed that "muddle and no end" for the sake of a hopeless mirage on the European continent had involved the Empire in nothing less than a strategic impossibility. British policy courts and accumulates difficulties and potential dangers in three vital quarters at once—in the home area, the far-stretched Mediterranean waters, and the vaster scene of our interests in the Asiatic seas ten thousand miles away. To invite this unprecedented range of risks and dispersion of strength is the certain way towards weakness and loss in every quarter near and far. We could not be sufficiently strong at any point—or not without irreparable sacrifice elsewhere. The truth cannot be denied. It springs to

they are. They must get much better or will get much worse. Between these two peoples, so long united by ties that seemed almost unbreakable in their nature, it will have to come either to renewed comradeship or mortal enmity. When this is the choice, to omit or needlessly defer any practical or courteous means for averting the darker issue and ensuring the higher would be the criminal negligence of statesmanship. Sentimentalism will not do it. The flimsy shifts of temporary compromise without genuine reconciliation—these will not do it. We must first come to business and effect a solid readjustment of mutual interests before a happy revulsion of feeling can take place.

III

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN QUESTION.

Nothing is worse than going back to the beginnings of a quarrel if you want to make it up. You must take things as they are and see what can be done about them. The League attempted sanctions and committed suicide. Italy has left the League. Nothing on earth can make her, any more than Germany, subject to its control. That part of it is all over and finished. We are brought back to direct and simplified negotiation with Rome as with Berlin.

Italy has annexed Abyssinia. It is another accomplished fact. That fact could only be reversed, if at all, by a war which would not be the sort of duel between Britain and Italy that some tyros suppose. It would be a general war. Abyssinia would be a bagatelle by comparison. Everything would be in the melting-pot. Mere passive refusal to "recognise" what has happened has done no good either to Abyssinia, Geneva, or the British Empire. But it has strengthened the Berlin-Rome axis; it has helped to bring about the Triple Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan; and if we continue to look for

France against unprovoked aggression either. We do not put it in too drastic terms when we say that in this sense a substantial issue we have to confront Europe or Empire? That and nothing

We have on our hands world-wide responsibilities of our own. They extend every ocean and every shore. We cannot do everything. It is madness to court our purposes and fetter our liberty of action to the extent which has prevailed in these recent years of hopeless hallucination. We must banish it for ever, return to our sober selves—to the tradition whereon our greatness was founded, whereby alone it can endure. "Great things," says the ancient historian memorably, "are maintained by the same wherewith they were created."

V

THE WRONG END OF THE TELESCOPE

Let us look at it for a moment in an astonishing light of contrast. Far different in every way than the Italian annexation of Abyssinia was Japan's original conquest of Manchuria, though so much less was made about it. But what now? We are told that the world's balance would be upset if the reunion or closer union of the German race in Central Europe affected about ten millions to the population of Reich.

In fear of this we are to remain helpless while Japan prepares to annex, in effect whatever the disguise, wide provinces of Northern China with over 100,000,000 people. And even this gigantic prelude only the beginning of a policy. Japan's intention, long-cherished and now revealed is to break up China into different regions, governments so that its unity shall not be achieved; and to establish a political economic ascendancy over the whole of it with its vast resources and its total population of 400,000,000—one-fifth of the population of the globe. This plan is unfolding before our eyes.

While the immediate question is Shanghai, Hong Kong, and the rest, we to keep ourselves stultified and paralysed, by maintaining our abstract refusal to go to war for Austria or Czecho-Slovakia in the name of Geneva? In the war-annals of delusion there never was a moonstruck fantasy than this notion. It is merely our flag insulted as never before our subjects and our ships are bombarded, shelled, and machine-gunned. But cannot send an adequate fleet to the East. Why? Because we keep up the fiction with Germany for foolish reasons based on the obsolete ideas of 1919 Versailles. Because we incur financial liabilities and hazards without any decisive effort to settle with anyone.

VI

JAPAN'S "DIVIDE AND CONQUER"

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sufficiently strong at any point—or not
The truth cannot be denied. It springs to
the eyes. The one practical question is
how to mend it.

* * *

The worst consequence is the miserable
situation of self-made feebleness which
has been brought upon us in the Far East.
This, too, we saw at the very outset of the
inquiry. The estimate has been only too
well and too speedily confirmed. British
gunboats and merchant shipping have
been bombed, shelled and machine-
gunned with deliberate barbarity.
The United States gunboat Panay has
been destroyed in the same spirit by
Japanese aircraft. We must not count too
much on this. It may have been a mistake
of promiscuous zeal. It is certain that
Tokyo will try to do everything in its
power to prevent co-operation between
Britain and America—the one thing it
dreads—by offering profuse satisfaction to
the United States without giving equal
satisfaction to this country.

* * *

Neither the Japanese Army nor the Navy
is under normal political control. The
Navy is intensely anti-British, and would
rather strike at us than at anyone while
our temporary position is as weak as it is.
We can depend upon nothing but our own
right arm. The one overmastering neces-
sity of a sound and safe policy for the
whole Empire is to recover the accustomed
freedom of our right arm by revising our
European policy from top to bottom.

II

THE MEDITERRANEAN HIGHWAY

Take the chief thing first. This series
of articles has subjected the Anglo-German
question to the most methodical and ex-
haustive analysis that has been devoted to
it by any British newspaper since the War.
The alternative of settlement or conflict
with Germany we have seen to be without
doubt the all-fateful issue for our policy
and the world.

* * *

Next to this, and now inseparable from
it, comes the Anglo-Italian question. In
its bearing upon the Empire's strategical
and commercial communications through
the Mediterranean that question is vital in
a double sense well known and appreciated
by all our ablest statesmen before the War.
It is necessary to speak of it frankly, yet
inadvisable to speak much. The circum-
stances are both delicate and inflamed.
Wise goodwill is reduced to exceptional
silence, while miserable journalistic
polemics embitter opinion on both sides.
This is one of the cases where improve-
ment can only be effected, if at all, by the
decided initiative of Governments and by
confidential communication between
them.

* * *

What we can do here is to make quite
plain the fundamental conditions of the
problem. Things cannot go on merely as

But it has strengthened the Berlin-Rome
axis; it has helped to bring about the Triple
Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan;
and if we continue to look for figs and
grapes in the same manner we shall find
more thorns and thistles.

* * *

To maintain the official attitude of the
sand-blind ostrich in the name of principle
and dignity is neither useful nor impres-
sive. Much better to recognise Italian
sovereignty over Ethiopia, and to do this
not as an isolated measure but as part of
a constructive policy of common sense.

* * *

Such a policy would aim not only at the
restoration of friendship but at substantial
co-operation and security by the interlock-
ing of interests. The economic strain on
Italy, though not deadly, is very severe.
The financial power of this country is very
great. It could work wonders in this and
other connections if boldly employed. It is
inadvisable to speculate on details. The
three questions at issue concern the future
of military conditions both in Abyssinia
and Libya; special arrangements, territorial
and other, with regard to the headwaters
of the Nile; and the recognised freedom of
the Mediterranean route as an international
highway. It would be, of course, vital—
and hardly less so to the United States than
to the British Empire—that Italy's anti-
Komintern understanding with Japan
should not stand in the way of a satisfac-
tory agreement respecting the Mediter-
ranean and beyond.

* * *

Restored Anglo-Italian friendship and
co-operation for the purposes named—
without further vain notions of playing off
Rome and Berlin against each other—
would be one of the best guarantees of
Britain's central route to India and be-
yond as it was for so long before. Experts
are convinced that the three questions we
have stated could be amicably settled with
the Duce. He did not intend the feud.
Neither Britain nor Italy will ever find a
partnership less burthensome and more
useful than theirs was before the present
bitterness began.

IV

"EUROPE OR EMPIRE"?

Everything else is overshadowed by the
scale of the situation in the Far East. Its
gravity and unpleasantness cannot be ex-
ceeded. It diminishes, or even dwarfs, the
former relative importance of controver-
sies on this side of the world about which
a vast pothole has been made. It is un-
wise to shirk a jot of the truth however
disagreeable. We must face it to mend it.
The truth is that in China, where we have
built up vast interests and a famous repu-
tate by the continuous work of genera-
tions we are in a position more humiliating
and damaging than we have ever endured
since we won the name of a great people.

* * *

The remedy must be found and applied.
There is only one remedy. With discern-
ing and determined statesmanship while
there is time we must revise the whole of
our former sense of proportions and values
in world-policy; and especially on Euro-
pean questions; and above all, on the Ger-
man question. British policy should cut
loose from every commitment in that
direction, except the mutual alliance with

VI

JAPAN'S "DIVIDE AND CONQUER"

The unexampled distractions of white
civilisation in the twentieth century are
regarded by the Japanese as the height of
good fortune for themselves. They take
as ironic a view of Europeans as the
European can take of them, and for the
moment they have the best of the satire.
They no more love Germany and Italy now
except for the immediate uses, than they
loved Britain and America formerly, for
the same reason. MACHIAVELLI might
read to-day with more pungent relish
Tokyo than ever he was in Rome. About
all things in the world they dread Brit-
ish and American co-operation. They are
ready at any moment to placate America
at Britain's expense and to deride Britain
with a difference of apologies. Whether
dealing with China or Europe or Britain
and America, "Divide and Conquer" is the
simplicity of their method and for the
present it works.

* * *

It is essential to any conceivable future
of peace and confidence for mankind that
the sequel in the Far East should be con-
trolled by sufficient agreement amongst
the Great Powers. But unless Britain her-
self recovers more political and strategic
freedom to defend her own interests in the
Far East she never will hold them.

VII

"THINK THOU AND ACT"

We say again that the old diploma-
matic game derived from the Treaty of Versail-
les is up for ever and ever. It is no longer
reconcilable with the life and safety of
the Empire that we should seek to block
the Reich in mid-Europe; to oppose
closer union of the German race; or
meddle in any way with the future re-
lations of Berlin with Austria or Czech
Slovakia. That is not our proper business.
It is death to our proper business
trustees for a world-wide Empire.

* * *

It is egregious to say, in effect, that
shall suffer at the hands of Japan. The
extent of injury and outrage in the
East rather than revise the untenable
decrees of Versailles in the sense of color
concessions to Germany. It is no
absurd to keep up the senseless feud with
Italy, and protract our difficulties in the
Mediterranean because of a point
etiquette respecting the formal recognition
of Abyssinian facts.

* * *

There has been a huge transformation
we repeat, of all former proportions
values in world-affairs. A new epoch
opened. We must be guided by a new
sense of relativity; and let us see well
deed to it that we are so guided in the
Above all, the first word of these con-
cessions must be the last. An Anglo-Ger-
man settlement on the lines we have explained
in these articles is the only master-
stroke both to security and peace. Whether
PRIME MINISTER and the Cabinet grasp
with a vigorous hand as a speedy solution
to the mission of LORD HALIFAX will de-
pend all their own fortunes as well as
measurable issues for the Nation and
Empire.

