

Washington Views a Troubled World

Disquieting, But Not Intrinsicly and Imminently Dangerous, Is the Capital's Composite Official Attitude on the Situation

By EDWARD PRICE BELL

[The following article by Mr. Bell was written after his return from the Far East, and a series of interviews in Washington with those most responsible for our foreign policies. It is the interpretation by a distinguished journalist of the Washington view-point.]

DISQUIETING, but not intrinsicly and imminently dangerous.

These words would seem to express, with precision, the composite official Washington view, at the moment, of the highly-complex international situation. It is hardly too much to say that this opinion represents all the really reliable information, and all the trained experience in forming judgments respecting such matters, which are at present available in this country. It represents all the facts known to our Government. It represents the consultations, the study, the reasoned conclusions, of the most expert American thinkers relative to world affairs.

Why is the international situation, as seen from Washington, *disquieting*? Why is it *not*, as so seen, *intrinsicly and imminently dangerous*?

It is disquieting because both Europe and East Asia are looked upon as gigantic powder-magazines, the one an area of immortal feuds and passions, and of fiery current resentments, the other a theater in which two great ambitious Powers grimly face each other, mutually suspicious, continually hickering, restrained from striking, perhaps, by only momentary considerations of prudence.

In these conditions, Washington sees the possibility, tho not the probability, of an accident, some tragic happening, some frontier or local embroilment, which suddenly might light an inextinguishable international fire.

What are the favorable factors in world



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Cordell Hull,
Secretary of State

relations just now? Why do competent observers speak of the outlook as "not intrinsicly and imminently dangerous"?

Take Europe, first. It is on its back. It has not been able to get up since it was knocked flat by the Great War. It has troubles innumerable, troubles of morale and of mind, political, social, economic, and financial troubles. Its center of gravity of power is uncertain.

Scarcely any nation feels sure, in the event of war, who *necessarily* would be its friend, who *might* be its enemy. Russia is incalculable. Poland's attachment to France is not so undoubted as it was. Alignments in the Danubian region are not predictable. Cautious critics avoid finality of statement with reference to even the possible line-up of Western and Southern Europe if a war should break out to-morrow.

All these conditions, as Washington estimates them, are a drag upon belligerency, make for peace. And others are noted. In 1914 *everything* was different. We just have remarked how highly fluid are European relationships to-day. Twenty years ago, they were relatively solid, the chief opposing forces definitely known, and firmly integrated. Europe was organically ready for war. *And her peoples did not know what war meant. They know now, and about 500,000,000 of them do not like it.*

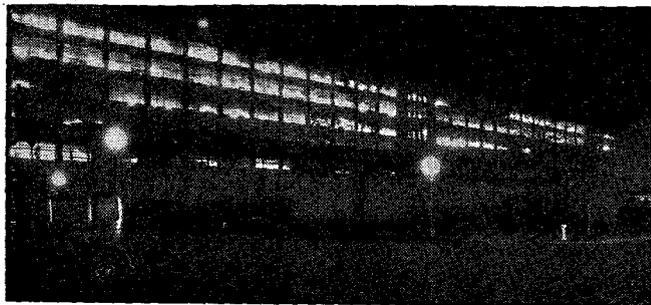
Consciousness of this popular feeling is not absent from the minds of statesmen, and statesmen are aware of the difficulty of war, even when their peoples' hearts are passionately in it. Aggression, in these circumstances, leaving entirely aside the antiwar treaties, is deemed almost out of the question, since the one recognized fundamental condition of successful war is the impregnability of the home front.

The Change Since 1914

And there is the tremendous fact of the complete change, since 1914, in the pragmatic size-up of war—the change in what hard-boiled men *think* of war. Before it was tried out thoroughly, many of these men—ready enough to encourage in others patriotism *à outrance*—saw profit in it. German industrialists, for example—a very powerful element—saw profit in it. That element sees that profit no longer. It may be doubted whether it now sees profit in even a successful war. With European business men, German and other, surveying a stricken world, and concluding that war is an uncommonly bad horse to back, Washington surmises that peace is less insecure.

This capital witnessed what it expected when the peace-structure of Europe stood up under the shocks of the Dollfuss, Alexander, and Barthou assassinations. Europe was psychologically and technically ready for those shocks. Its peoples wanted peace; its governments were organized to move swiftly for peace; and, so, peace was just a little more secure after the assassinations.

One further peace-factor in Europe strikes the Washington imagination forcibly, and, sometimes, evokes a wry smile: no leader, nor any nation, over there describes the slightest likelihood, at this time, that aggression could win. After all, the despised peace-treaties *do* exist. And they are awkward things for anyone dallying

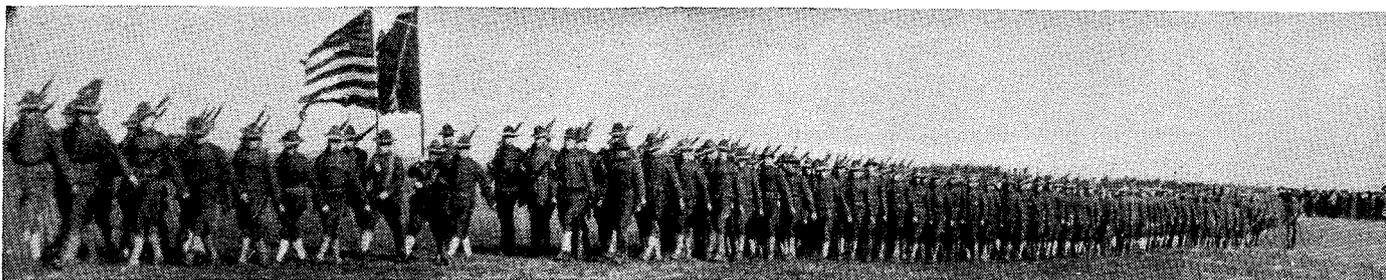


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Wide World

Many industrialists no longer believe there is any profit in war—even from a successful war



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with the thought of aggression. They mean, either actual machinery, or its moral equivalent. They mean, in other words, the certainty of rapidly-arrayed opposition, intangible undoubtedly, tangible possibly.

If the cynics say, "Anything done would be done out of fear, not out of respect for the treaties," Washington's reply is: "Just so peace is maintained, we need not worry overmuch about interpretations of motive."

Now as to Washington's way of thinking, on the basis of the facts it has, concerning the probabilities in East Asia, that vast testing-ground of the multitudinous non-aggressive Chinese, the restless, warm-water-seeking Slavs, and the short, sturdy, dour, death-scorning, expanding Japanese. There, too, barring the chapter of accidents, Washington regards peace as at least temporarily more likely than war. The Nanking Government is considered to be giving evidence of statesmanlike endowment—sagacity, patience, good temper, political realism.

War is not expected to be provoked from that quarter of the great Far Eastern theater. Russia, for the time being, is believed to be non-aggressive; the guess is that her preoccupation with domestic development and consolidation—not to mention possible ethical, legal, and rationalistic restraints—holds her heavy hand. Japan, at present, is conceived to be in a purely standpat posture, jealous of every foot of territory she has gained, bent upon a Manchukuo and Jehol of her own choice, steadfast for the dictum of the primacy of her responsibility for the peace of East Asia.

Well, if the short view of the world outlook, as it appears through Washington lenses, is not too disturbing, how about the long? It is called a hopeless riddle, laughing alike at our knowledge, our philosophy, and our prophecy. Future conditions, racial, national, moral, ratiocinative, are wholly indeterminable: we do not know

what races or nations will flourish or fail, what sort of morality and thinking will carry the day.

Conclusion? That each national sovereignty, America particularly, from our point of view, must do the best it can to promote its own well-being, and to be prepared to strike down any alien assailant.

If you are looking for international neighborliness, go to Washington. If you are



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National Defense Expenditures

	1914	1935 (Estimated)
Great Britain	\$368,220,000	\$585,990,000
France	117,455,000	726,149,500
Italy	78,871,500	385,483,000
Japan	57,770,160	282,324,760
Russia	757,561,875	1,563,893,750
Germany	771,745,980	355,394,820
United States	244,600,000	711,500,000
Total	\$2,396,224,515	\$4,610,735,830

[Note: The above was compiled from material contained in Foreign Policy Reports.—Editor.]

looking for international day-dreaming, for international ideology, it were well if you sought it elsewhere. Washington, in an international sense, is genuinely friendly, but emphatically realistic.

It suspects that to arm certain Powers in the world to-day is to arm the possibility of aggression, while it thinks it knows that to arm America is to arm the certainty of non-aggression. It looks with utter disfavor

upon the idea of allowing a reduction in America's relative fighting strength. As for President Roosevelt himself, it is permissible to say that he is in the mood of the mariner who loads his cargo with the hope of a fine voyage, but with the vivid realization of the possibility of rough seas.

Breakers in plenty are conjecturable, if not visible, ahead. For one thing, many influences are operative to diminish American prestige, and weaken American diplomacy. It has become a fixed idea in some quarters abroad that the American people have become immutably pacifistic, apathetic as to their rights and interests in the big world, too lazy, if not too proud, to fight. That hardly augurs well for tranquillity.

Then there are the depression, the economic and monetary confusion, 20,000,000 American citizens on the relief-rolls, an impression in some foreign countries that the United States is on the verge of a violent upheaval: these weigh upon America's good name overseas. And there are the vulgar and vacuous moving-pictures (condemned by every knowing man of decency), the exaggerated reports of crime, scandal, and corruption in this country, deliberate anti-American propaganda in both hemispheres, all conducing to a state of foreign opinion underlining the wisdom of seeing to it that the Republic has ample defensive fighting strength. None of these things escapes the notice, or fails to excite the concern, of responsible men in Washington.

Japanese policy is unmistakably one of the principal objects of American official attention. Its further unfolding is awaited with great interest. The practical implications of the Japanese "Hands-Off Asia" pronouncement stir deep curiosity.

Signs of large Japanese ambitions seem to emerge in her naval representations, so far as they are understood. Combative naval parity for Japan with Great Britain

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Wide World



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To foreigners, America's industrial warfare and relief-rolls are significant tokens of the nation's unpreparedness

President Preparing for Next Session of Congress

Tackles the Long Task of Drawing Up the Budget, and Working Out Elaborate Program Covering Many Subjects; Appoints Donald R. Richberg as His Special Assistant

LESS than two months hence, the Seventy-Fourth Congress will meet in regular session and the President will submit his budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1935.

Last week he tackled the long, elaborate task of drawing the budget up, a task he probably will not complete until it is time for him to send his budget message to the Capitol. A long series of questions promptly demanded his attention as he started this formidable job of estimating government income and outgo. Among them were unemployment insurance, relief payments, taxation, business activity, low-cost housing, Federal salaries, and the price-level.

These subjects, brought up for consideration in a single week, again indicated the magnitude of a Chief Executive's job. They also suggested that there was sound sense in President Roosevelt's selection of a sort of special assistant, in the person of Donald R. Richberg, to relieve him of some of his back-breaking duties.

Last week, too, the President extended the code for the automobile manufacturing industry until February 1, 1935, and planned to investigate the possibilities of overcoming seasonal lay-offs and stabilizing employment in this industry. He likewise fixed at 5 per cent. the basic interest rate on home mortgages insured under the new Housing Act.

Among the many callers at the White House during the week was Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. Senator Harrison announced that his committee would meet late this month or early next month to consider unemployment-insurance proposals before the convening of Congress.

The Relief Situation

Relief requirements, Chairman Harrison intimated, will determine whether or not Congress will impose additional taxes in its next session. He recommended a change in methods of administering relief in rural areas, placing the emphasis on rehabilitation of the individual. "I would much prefer to give a fellow a mule and a piece of land and loan him money for implements and then let him pay it back with the proceeds of his labor than to give him direct relief," he said.

Something of the same sort is in the mind of the Administration. Last week, dispatches from Washington teemed with figures, often conflicting, on the plan to con-



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—And Is His Face Red!

—Hutton in the Philadelphia Inquirer

tinue the Federal public-works program, which the President is preparing for submission to Congress. At best, the figures quoted were hardly better than guesses; it is not yet known how large the new public-works program will be. In all probability, however, it will feature low-cost housing. Stress will be laid both on slum-clearance and on establishing needy families on subsistence homesteads supplying much of their food and, if possible, grouped near industrial plants in which they can secure employment. Such homesteads, by making the needy self-supporting, eventually would tend to cut down the cost of direct relief.

Harry L. Hopkins, Emergency Relief Administrator, does not believe that the need for direct relief will be as great this winter as last winter, but does believe that it will rise from its present level as cold weather sets in. In the month of September, he reveals, about 16,650,000 persons were being supported wholly or partly by relief funds. It is chiefly the enormous cost of caring for these needy persons that is destroying hope of a balanced budget in the fiscal year 1935-36.

The activity of business is, of course, the key to the amount the Government can expect to raise through taxes and to the amount it must spend to alleviate the effects of unemployment. The Administration has been concentrating lately on methods of

encouraging private business, and it hails with delight every sign that the business machine is gaining speed.

"Whoopee!" exclaimed Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau at the news that Henry Ford had raised his production schedule for 1935 to at least a million cars, a level which has not been reached since 1930.

"So far as the Ford Motor Company is concerned the depression is over," Mr. Ford said, and added: "Our experience during the last six months and what we see in the future tells us a year of improved business is ahead."

While most of the details of the new budget are necessarily uncertain, the President has made at least one of them clear. On July 1, 1935, the salaries of Federal officeholders will be restored to the levels of 1932.

Early in 1933, these salaries were slashed by 15 per cent., but Congress restored two-thirds of the cut in its last session and empowered the President to restore the other third when living costs had risen sufficiently to warrant it.

The President believes living costs are certain to increase in the first six months of 1935, and, indeed, has indicated his determination to drive prices higher and so make debt-paying less difficult. As a sign of his price policy, therefore, his announcement regarding Federal salaries is given an importance greater than it would seem to warrant on the face of it.

Richberg's Job

One Federal salary, that of Mr. Richberg, came in for wide-spread notice during the week. He has been receiving, and will continue to receive, \$15,000 a year.

Hereafter his principal job will be that of Executive Director of the National Emergency Council, which absorbed the essentially similar Executive Council last week by order of the President and which includes both Cabinet officers and the heads of the principal recovery agencies.

"Donald Richberg is Number Two Man in the Government of the United States to-day," declared David Lawrence, Washington correspondent, commenting, in his syndicated column, on these changes.

Some other newspaper commentators took Mr. Richberg's promotion less seriously. "This event can hardly be considered of great importance," said the *Baltimore Sun*, "for the transfers of Mr. Richberg and the changes in the Emergency Councils have become almost weekly occurrences."