CHAPTER 8

AMERICAN RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE FAR EAST

In regard to the Far East, the United States was interested in seeing that no one nation achieved superiority over the others so as to upset the balance of power in that area. This was because such a development could constitute a danger to America's trade in the Far East as well as to the security of her western shores.

The Soviet Union also regarded peace and security in the Far East to be a matter of paramount importance. But Japan's ambitions in the Far East and her growing power constituted a constant menace to the Soviet Union. Under the circumstances, the United States assumed the role of a disinterested partisan of the rights and interests of the Asian states against any potential aggressor that threatened the balance of power in the Far East.

Impasse in the Far East

Japan appeared to upset the balance of power in the Far East when, in the beginning of 1920, she extended her occupation deeper into Siberia after the American troops had been withdrawn from that area. The United States held that there was no justification for the continued Japanese occupation of territories in the Russian Far East and hence demanded
their immediate withdrawal. A diplomatic struggle ensued over this issue in which the United States sought to uphold the integrity and independence of Russia.

Japan's Policy in Siberia

In an official Japanese communication to the State Department on April 3, 1920, the close geographical proximity between Japan and Siberia and the danger to the Japanese residents on the Russian mainland arising from the Bolshevik menace, were put forth as reasons for the continued presence of Japanese forces in Siberia. At the same time, it was pointed out that Japan did not entertain any political ambition towards Russia and would withdraw her forces from Siberia as soon as political conditions settled down there and the safety of the lives and property of the Japanese residents were assured. (1)

Japan, however, did not live up to her promise. Using as a pretext an alleged massacre of seven hundred Japanese subjects by Bolshevik guerrillas in Nikolaievsk, Japan occupied northern Sakhalin of which Nikolaievsk was the capital city. At this, Bainbridge Colby, then United States Secretary of State, dispatched a note to the Japanese Government in which he stressed upon "the right of the Russian people to

(1) 3 For. Rel. 1920 (Washington, GPO, 1936) 505-506.
work out their destiny," protested against any "encroachment upon Russian territory in the time of Russia's helplessness" and stated in conclusion that the United States Government could not "recognize the occupation of Sakhalin by any non-Russian authority." (2)

This note, however, did not bring about any modification in the Japanese decision to retain control of Sakhalin. In a memorandum to the State Department, the Japanese Ambassador, Shidehara, made it clear that the Japanese Government felt it necessary to take suitable measures in Sakhalin for upholding the dignity of the nation. (3) The Japanese Government, in fact, intended to retain northern Sakhalin as a guaranty for the payment of an indemnity for the Nikolaievsk massacre.

America's Reaction to Japan's Policy in Siberia

The United States looked upon the establishment of the Soviet Government in Russia as a deplorable calamity. She was, however, opposed to Japan's acquisition of Russian territory, even if it was intended to check the Bolshevik contagion. The basic dictates of America's Far Eastern policy demanded that Japan's move towards the acquisition of new territories be halted whenever possible. Hence, the United States sought to uphold Russian rights in Siberia despite its

(2) Ibid., 518-519.

(3) Ibid., 516.
persistent refusal to recognize the existence of the Soviet Government. In other words, Washington's antipathy towards communism was made subservient, at least for the time being, to its policy in the Far East.

The Far Eastern Republic

The Soviet Government was aware that because of its military weakness, it could not wage a war against Japan. The eastern region of Siberia was under the occupation of the Japanese army which was also in a position to expand its occupation further to the west. With its weak army, the Soviet Government could not have fought against the Japanese forces successfully and hence it avoided direct contact. Instead, it resolved upon creating in Siberia a buffer state which would serve as a means of separating the Japanese forces from Soviet Russia. The buffer state was sought to be made formally independent with a democratic constitution. It was hoped that its democratic constitution would serve to attract the sympathy of the United States, and Tokyo, too, would support it out of the belief that "Japan could control and direct the infant state as a bulwark against Bolshevism." (4) In May 1920, the United States was informed of the organization of the Far Eastern Government at Chita with Alexander M. Krasnosshchekov as premier. On May 14, 1920,

(4) Ibid., 548.
the Soviet Government officially recognized the Far Eastern Republic and appointed a diplomatic envoy. The Far Eastern Republic also opened a legation in Moscow. The United States, however, did not recognize the Far Eastern Republic.

The absence of mutual representation in Russia and America served to hinder the solution of problems in the Far East in which both states professed a direct interest. One such problem which illustrated the disadvantages arising from the absence of diplomatic relations was the Chinese Eastern Railroad.

**The Chinese Eastern Railroad**

Built on Chinese soil, contiguous to the Japanese sphere of influence in Manchuria, the Chinese Eastern Railroad had a strategic importance. It was the only direct and speedy means of transportation between Russia's center and the great port of Vladivostok on the eastern seaboard of Russia. Taking advantage of the collapse of Russian strength in the Far East in 1919 and 1920, on October 2, 1920, China notified its decision to "assume provisionally . . . supreme control" over the railroad pending agreement with a "Russian Government that may be recognized by China". (5) The Soviet Government also issued a statement declaring its willingness

to negotiate a special treaty in regard to the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Washington tried to counteract this by trying to impress upon Chinese officialdom "the questionable validity of any agreement" concluded between the Soviet Government and China as to the Chinese Eastern Railway. (6) This attitude received added emphasis because the Washington Conference, then in session, had on its agenda for discussion the status of Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railway.

The Soviet Government had already voiced its displeasure at being omitted from the Washington Conference. (7) On December 8, 1921, Chicherin sent a formal protest "against the examination by the Washington Conference of the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway" which concerned China and Russia exclusively. The two nations were then negotiating the conditions for the return of the railroad by Moscow to Peking, the note averred and, as soon as the latter had "furnished certain guarantees", the transfer would take place. For these reasons the Soviet Government felt compelled "to protest against any decision which may be taken by the Washington Conference in violation of Russian rights." (8)

(6) Secretary of State Hughes to American Minister in China Schurman, December 24, 1921, NA, RG 59, file 793.94/1194.
(7) 1 For. Rel. 1921 (Washington, GPO, 1936) 41-43.
Notwithstanding the protest, the Washington Conference adopted a resolution on February 3, 1922, that "better protection be given to the Chinese Eastern Railway and the persons engaged in its operation and use", and also adopted a reservation by which the Powers "reserved the right to insist . . . upon the responsibility of China for performance or non-performance of the obligations towards the foreign stock holders, bond holders, and creditors of the Chinese Eastern Railway."(9)

On October 31, 1922, the State Department presented a note to the Chinese Government reserving "to itself all rights . . . with respect to advances in money and material made by it in aid of the Chinese Eastern Railway", and also expressed its "continued interest in the efficient operation of the railway and its maintenance as a free avenue of commerce open to the citizens of all countries without favour or discrimination." (10)

The Soviet Government at once repudiated the American claim by insisting that Moscow alone had the right to interfere with the Chinese Eastern Railway, on the ground that Russian funds had built it and it comprised Russian property. It was also claimed that even if Russia should vest her title

(9) 1 For. Rel. 1922 (Washington, GPO, 1933) 883.
(10) Ibid., 926.
in the Chinese people, her interests in the Chinese Eastern Railway would still continue as it was a portion of the Great Siberian Railway and joined different parts of the Soviet territory.

The United States Government, understandably, was apprehensive for the future of the Chinese Eastern Railway. This fear was aggravated by the signing of a treaty on May 31, 1924, between the Soviet Union and China to the effect that the future of the Chinese Eastern Railway would be determined by themselves to the exclusion of "any third party or parties". (11) The new treaty assured the Soviet Government of substantial influence in the affairs of the Chinese Eastern Railway. On September 20, 1924, the Soviet Government signed an agreement with the Manchurian Government of Chang Tso lin which included terms of settlement similar to those embodied in May 31, 1924, treaty with China. (12)

Infuriated over the Sino-Soviet agreement, Secretary Hughes on July 11, 1924, made a direct financial claim on the Chinese Eastern of $4,177,820.06, being the sum advanced "for the purpose of saving the Railway from breakdown and deterioration at a time when its operations were . . . conducted at a loss". "That debt", wrote Hughes, "was among the


(12) 1 For. Relg. 1924 (Washington, GO, 1939) 509.
obligations" of the Chinese Government which it could not
divest itself by devolving its trusteeship for the Railway
"upon another party". (13)

Washington's displeasure over the Sino-Soviet agreements
brought forth sharp comments from the Soviet envoy in China.
He stated that Washington's non-recognition policy toward
the Soviet Government was directly traceable to the alleged
evil influence of the U.S. over the Chinese Government.
He was, however, convinced that no "honest and reasonable"
American supported the "short sighted Russian policy" pur-
sued by Secretary of State Hughes. In conclusion he stated
that the Soviet Government had "outlived many governments"
and would "without injury to itself" outlive Hughes and
other American leaders who were then responsible for the
shaping of the American policy. (14)

Washington and the Dairen Conferences

In July 1921, President Harding invited the Great
Powers to take part in the Washington Conference for the
discussion of controversial problems affecting the Pacific
area, including Japanese occupation of Russian and Chinese
territories. Soon after, the Japanese Government hastened
to invite the Far Eastern Republic, which it had recognized
on July 15, 1920, to a special conference at Dairen for the

(13) Ibid., 505.
(14) Ibid., 502.
settlement of all questions outstanding between them. Japan hoped by this means to exclude the discussion of its Siberian policy at the impending Washington Conference. (15)

Ignatius Yourin, the President of a special Far Eastern Republic Mission to Peking met the American Charge d'Affaires at Peking before the beginning of the Dairen Conference. In course of conversations, Yourin informed the American Charge that the "form of negotiations" between Tokyo and Chita was "dependent upon American interest in them", and that the Far Eastern Republic would have to concede more if the United States did not take "such interest." (16)

The evacuation of Japanese troops from the territory of the Russian Far East was a major issue at the Dairen Conference. The Japanese delegates endeavoured to evade a definite pledge concerning the issue and insisted that a general treaty be signed prior to any discussion of the problem regarding the evacuation. They also advanced claims of great importance which, were they to be accepted, would have given Japan a privileged position in the Russian Far East. (17)


(16) 2 For. Relns. 1921 (Washington, GPO, 1936) 713.

(17) The claims advanced by Japan included the right of navigation upon the Sungari and Amur rivers. She also demanded the destruction of all Pacific coast fortifications by the Far Eastern Republic and assurances that the latter will not allow a communistic form of government within its borders. Cf. 2 For. Relns. 1922 (Washington, GPO, 1938) 843.
The delegates of the Far Eastern Republic refused to accept the Japanese claims and, in this stand, they expected help from the Washington Conference. Mr. Skvirsky, acting chairman of a commercial delegation of the Far Eastern Republic to the United States stated in this connection that "his government . . . would appreciate very highly any pressure" which the United States might find it possible to bring "to bear upon Japan in order to induce her to relinquish Sakhalin." (18)

The Far Eastern Republic contended that both Nikolaevsk and Sakhalin were part of its territory which the Japanese were unlawfully occupying. It was willing to discuss the question of an indemnity. It, however, refused to comply with the Japanese demand that it accept full responsibility for the Nikolaevsk massacre as a basis of negotiations, since it was perpetrated by irregular partisans and was not without strong provocation. It regarded the entire Japanese policy as motivated by a desire for territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Russia. (19)

In regard to Asia, the decision of the United States to hold the Washington Conference represented an endeavour to implement its Far Eastern policy of maintaining the balance of power. The American Government, through its sponsorship

(18) Ibid., 857.

of this conference, hoped to gain a moral advantage by posing as the upholder of the rights and interests of Asiatic states against any potential aggressor. The outcome of this policy was that the United States emerged as the defender of Russian sovereignty in the Far East. The motivating factor behind the policy, however, was not the concern for Russia, but for the Open-Door and the balance of power which were threatened by Japan's aggressive policy.

Publicly, the United States proclaimed its intention to protect Russian interests. Despite this fact, Moscow did not refrain from expressing its displeasure at its omission from the Washington Conference. Perhaps the major source of Russia's indignation was that the Conferees were still anticipating the forcible overthrow of the Communist regime. Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, referred to the declaration of the powers that they will "reserve the matter of inviting eventually a new Russian Government, which should replace the present one", and made it clear that the Russian Government could in no case agree to other powers taking upon themselves the right to speak for it. Chicherin also challenged the legal power of the conference to discuss questions which affected the rights of Russia without consulting its government and for that reason
reserved "freedom of action in all circumstances." (20)

Although Soviet Russia was not invited to participate, the Far Eastern Republic hoped that its representatives might be officially received at Washington and given an opportunity to press for a solution of the Siberian question. The United States had already, in April 1921, sent an investigating commission to Chita, headed by Major W.J. Davis and James F. Abbott, Commercial Attaché, which returned with a favourable report on the new state. (21)

Besides, Tokyo's efforts in the meantime to force China to accept Japanese predominance in Siberia prior to the date set for the conference made Secretary of State Hughes worried. Repeated warnings from American representatives in the Far East convinced him that the only way to counter Japanese pressure on China was by strengthening ties with the Far Eastern Republic. Hence, although recognition was not given, the Far Eastern Republic was permitted to send unofficial trade representatives to Washington.

The Washington Conference did not prove fruitful for Japan. On many issues she lost the support even of her ally, Great Britain, and was forced to yield on the limitation of naval armaments and the evacuation of Chinese territory. She

(20) Chicherin to the Governments of the United States, China, France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan, July 1921. Cf. For. Rela. (n. 7) 41-43.

was also compelled to give a pledge to evacuate the Russian soil.

As a result, when Japan and the Far Eastern Republic resumed negotiations at Dairen after the conclusion of the Washington Conference, the Russian delegates felt stronger than before and were much less inclined to make concessions than they had been at the outset. As a matter of fact, they refused to agree to the terms proposed by Japan and the conference was dissolved on April 15, 1922. (22) Following this unsuccessful conference, the Far Eastern Republic appealed to the United States Government and Washington once more pressed Tokyo for final action. This brought forth prompt result.

The Withdrawal of Japanese Troops from Siberia

On June 24, 1922, the Japanese Charge d'Affaires at Washington acting under instructions from the Japanese Government, informed the Secretary of State that "the Japanese Government have decided to withdraw all Japanese troops from the Maritime Province of Siberia by the end of October 1922". (23) This pledge, however, did not apply to Sakhalin island. The State Department followed up the Japanese announcement of its intended withdrawal from Siberia with a note. It not only approved Tokyo's contemplated action but empha-

(22) For. Rel. (n. 17) 852.
(23) Ibid., 853.
niced the continuing concern with which Washington regarded Japanese occupation of Sakhalin. "By no inference", Ambassador Warren was told "should there be any surrender of the position of our Government in this regard." (24)

A conference was summoned in September 1922, at Chang Chung, Manchuria to settle the outstanding issue, but without any fruitful result. Count Uchida, the Japanese Foreign Minister, however, stated clearly that the failure of the conference meant "no change in our policy of withdrawing our troops from Siberia. . . . As for Sakhalin, our retirement from the northern or Russian half of the island will take place . . . as soon as the Nikolaievsk affair has been settled. The Japanese Government has no territorial design whatever in this or any other connection." (25)

True to their word, the Japanese evacuated from the mainland without delay. On October 25, the last Japanese troops departed from Vladivostock and the forces of the Far Eastern Republic entered the city. A few days later, the National Assembly of the Far East decided that the Far Eastern Republic, having served its major purpose should be dissolved. The fiction of "real independence" was discarded. By a decree of the Soviet regime dated November 15, 1922, the territories of

(24) Ibid., 854.

(25) Ibid., 858-859.
the Far Eastern Republic was annexed to the R.S. F.S.R. (26)

Two and a half years later, on May 1, 1925, following
Japanese recognition of the Soviet Government and the nego-
tiation of agreements settling outstanding difficulties, the
Japanese army finally evacuated northern Sakhalin. It there-
by gave up its last foothold on Siberian territory. (27)
Russian territorial integrity in the Far East was thus restor-
ed.

With the final termination of all foreign intervention
and occupation of Russian territory, the principle of main-
taining Russian territorial integrity became obsolete. Thereo-
after, relations between Moscow and Washington took a turn
for the worse. America's antipathy towards communism, coupled
with the recurrent friction of Washington and Moscow in China,
removed any possibility of American-Soviet cooperation in the
Far East for another decade.

Rupture in Sino-Soviet Relations

The signing of an agreement between the Soviet
Government and the Manchurian Government of Cheng Tso-
lin on September 24, 1924, (28) on matters connected

(26) NA, RG 59, file 361.00/11256 A.

(27) Fadin, Yemla J. and North, Robert C., Soviet
Russia and the East, 1920-1927, A Documentary Survey

with the Chinese Eastern Railway, was regarded by the Peking Government as a "great affront". The latter contended that "it was against international practice to enter into an agreement with a local regime without the previous consent of the central authorities." (29) This contention was ignored by the Soviets who believed that the Peking Government was not likely to last long.

The presumption seemed to be correct for, the Peking Government was soon overthrown by one Feng Yu-hsiang who, "with the support of Chang Tso-lin set up a new provisional government" which was "sympathetically disposed toward Soviet Russia". (30) With the establishment of the Nationalist Government in China in 1927, however, relations with the Soviet Government deteriorated, ending with the closing of the Soviet embassy at Peking on April 17, 1927. (31)

(30) Ibid.
(31) Soviet influence in China rapidly waned in course of the intense civil war in the country in the first half of 1927. The activities and intentions of the Soviets came to be suspected and on April 6, 1927, the Chinese authorities made a thorough search of the Soviet Military Attache's office in Peking. This action provoked a sharp protest from the Soviet Government which demanded the return of all documents seized from the Soviet Military Attache's office. The Chinese Government rejected the demand which was followed by the withdrawal of the Soviet chargé d'affaires and his entire staff from Peking. "The firm attitude" of the Chinese Government "was caused by the nature of the seizures made during the search which included "many Russian documents of a highly subversive character . . . calling for the establishment of a Communist regime in China." Cf. Ibid., 67-69.
This resulted partly from the overplaying of the Soviet hand in China and partly from the desire of the Nationalists to rid China of all foreign limitations on its sovereignty, including those exacted by Russia.

The severance of relations between Moscow and Peking had a strong reaction in Manchuria. Its governor Cheng-Tso-lin, realizing the strategic and vulnerable position of the country, was eager to co-operate with the newly established Nationalist regime in China. This augmented the resistance of both the governments to alleged Russian efforts to dominate the Chinese Eastern Railway. The two events that formally led to the Sino-Soviet dispute were the raid on the Soviet consulate in Harbin on May 27, 1929, by Chinese representatives; and the seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway on July 10, 1929, by the Manchurian Government.

American Attitude toward the Sino-Soviet Dispute

The policy of the American Government toward the Sino-Soviet dispute was determined by two main considerations. First, the Chinese raid on the Soviet consulate was looked upon by the State Department as an indication of China's desire to shake off every treaty fetter imposed by the West. It was feared that China might attempt to overthrow forcibly all foreign interests in the country and thereby threaten the
extra-territorial rights which the United States enjoyed there. The prospect was disquieting and hence, the United States was deeply concerned in the outcome of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The second consideration that determined American policy was the possible effect of the dispute on the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 to which both the Soviet Union and China were signatories.

The first reaction of the American Government to the Sino-Soviet dispute was one of aloofness. The seriousness of the situation, however, soon compelled the State Department to change its attitude. On July 18, 1929, Secretary of State Stimson urged peace on the Soviet and Chinese Governments, reminding them of their obligations under the Kellogg Pact. In response, both the governments indicated their willingness to abide by the stipulations of the Kellogg Pact provided no verifiable acts were committed by the other. (32)

Despite peaceful assurances, however, war clouds began to gather over Manchuria. Stimson, therefore, made another attempt to solve the dispute on July 25, 1929, by suggesting that Russia and China "in the exercise of their own sovereign action" create conciliation machinery through which "a full and impartial investigation of facts" could be undertaken. Pending such an investigation, Stimson proposed that the

(32) 2 For. Relts, 1929 (Washington, GPO, 1943) 228-231.
Chinese Eastern Railway be operated under the direction of neutrals. (33)

Stimson's efforts, however, ended in a failure primarily because of the Soviet distrust of American motives. The Soviets believed that Stimson's plan constituted an attempt at internationalization of the Chinese Eastern Railway under the neutral chairmanship of an American national. (34) Besides, both China and Russia wished to reach a settlement by direct negotiations without the interference of a third power. Unfortunately, they were unable to find a common ground even for exploratory conversations, and the situation on the Soviet-Chinese frontier rapidly worsened. Fighting soon began, and on August 19, the Soviet Government protested through Germany, which was protecting Russian interests in China, against eight armed raids undertaken by Chinese troops on Soviet territory between July 18 and August 18. The Soviet Government warned China that its patience would be exhausted if Chinese forces continued its intrusion into Soviet territory.

The admonitions, however, remained unheeded. As a result, tension along the Sino-Soviet border continued to mount and soon led to armed clashes. This led to efforts by the Big Powers to freeze the status quo pending further negotiations. But the efforts were without any effect due to China's evasion.

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(33) Ibid., 243.

(34) Schuman to Stimson, August 10, 1929, WA, RG 59, file 861.01/1502.
of her obligations under the terms of the 1924 treaty with the Soviet Union in regard to the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Stimson was disappointed and unwilling to take further action. He advised the Chinese Government to this effect when it enquired on November 21 whether Washington was going to do anything about conditions in Eastern Asia. Yet within a short time after so advising, Stimson became very active in finding a solution to the Sino-Soviet Dispute.

The reason for this abrupt change in attitude was because of a report that Japan was exerting its influence to effect a settlement of the Sino-Soviet dispute, thereby assuming the role of mediator. The American attitude in this respect was motivated perhaps not solely by an abstract concern for peace, but at least partially by a desire to forestall the Japanese efforts. Perhaps, it also desired, at the same time, to gain whatever prestige that might accrue from a solution of the controversy.

Stimson's Note to China and the Soviet Union. Stimson first advised Tokyo that a new appeal seemed necessary and then, on December 2, 1929, he sent a note direct to the Chinese Government and, by way of France, to the Soviet Union. This communication expressed American concern over the Manchurian crisis. It also recalled the initial American effort

(35) For. Rel. (n. 32) 355-356.
to draw Sino-Soviet attention to the obligations of the
Kollogg-Briand Pact signatories, and voiced the hope that
they would "refrain or desist from measures of hostility" and
find a peaceful solution to their conflict. (36)

Moscow regarded the Stimson note as unwarranted and
hostile. The Red Army had acted in self defence in order to
repel Chineso raids. Litvinov declared in an angry reply to
Stimson that Washington had acted just when Mukden had agreed
to several conditions which foreshadowed a prompt and final
adjustment. The Stimson note, therefore, according to
Litvinov, could not but considered an unjustifiable pressu-
re on the negotiation and could not be taken as a "friendly
act". Further, he asserted that the Paris Pact did not give
any single state or group of states the function of protec-
tor of the Pact. In conclusion, he stated that the Soviet
Government could not help expressing its "astonishment" that
the Government of the United States, which at its own desire
had no official relations with the Soviet, found it possible
to approach the Soviet Government with "advice and instruc-
tions." (37)

(36) Ibid., 366-368.

(37) Degras, J., ed., Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy
(London, Oxford University Press, 1952) II, 407-408;
also see Memoranda on Problems Pertaining to Russian-American
Relations, No. 8, November 3, 1933, NA, RG 59, file 861.44
Litvinov/15.
But Stimson expressed the view that between co-signatories of the Pact of Paris, it could never be thought unfriendly if one nation called to the attention of another, its obligations under the Pact when there was a danger to peace. This view was immediately attacked by the Soviet press as an "attempt by means of overt interference to frustrate the beginning of a settlement of the Soviet-Chinese conflict", (33) since Moscow and Peking were then engaged in direct negotiations. In an editorial on December 4, 1929, Izvestia charged that the action of the United States was not prompted by any desire to prevent the violation of the obligations of the Kellogg Pact but for the purpose "in conjunction with the Nanking Government ... of exercising pressure upon the negotiations between the USSR and Peking at a moment when these negotiations were already presenting the possibility of a genuine and speedy settlement of the conflict." (39)

One effect of Russian resentment over what it considered as uncalled for American encroachment, and American displeasure over what it regarded as unwarranted Russian language was that it deepened the mutual antagonism of both countries and neutralized for a time the desire of each to exchange representatives. The Far Eastern situation, however, soon took a

(38) Quoted in Far. Rel. (n. 32) 402.
(39) Izvestia (December 4, 1929), quoted in Ibid., 403.
turn that brought about a change in the attitude of both the United States and the Soviet Union. The event that brought about this change was Japan's attack on Manchuria.

**The Manchurian Crisis**

On September 18, 1931, the Japanese army taking advantage of an explosion on the South Manchurian Railway caused by the Chinese nationalists, invaded Manchuria, occupied Mukden and, in course of a few months, extended their control over a large area. With the knowledge that the powers were preoccupied with domestic troubles due to world wide depression and that Soviet Russia was in no position to take action, the higher military authorities of Japan concluded that "it was their opportunity to act in Manchuria and push Japan's strategic boundary further west in preparation for the clash with Soviet Russia which they considered inevitable". (40) This was because Japan was afraid of Bolshevism and felt that "it must drive Bolshevism out of Asia." (41)

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(40) Johnson (China) to Stimson, January 13, 1932, NA, RG 59, file 793.94/3473.

(41) Grew, Joseph C., *Ten Years in Japan* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1944) 63. Karl Redek, however, appeared to think that Japanese seizure of Manchuria was aimed at preventing "the spread of American economic power there", as well as to restore the "economic balance" in the Far East which, according to him, was upset by the industrialization of the Siberian region by the Soviet Union. Cf. Redek, Karl, "The War in the Far East -- A Soviet View", *Foreign Affairs* (July, 1932) 549.
In fact, the Mukden incident was intended to serve as a pretext for the Japanese aggressive designs and in the light of subsequent Japanese actions, the incident itself "diminished to such small proportions as strongly to suggest its actual non-existence". (42) When the news became known in Washington that Japanese and Chinese troops had clashed along the line of the South Manchurian Railway a few miles north of Mukden, there was some initial worry and concern but no alarm. It was only after the American Minister in China, Johnson, had telegraphed his conviction that "the steps taken by Japan must fall within any definition of war, and that the signatories of the Kellogg Pact (43) stood at the bar of the nations of the east to answer for their sincerity", (44) that the United States became aware of the gravity of the problem.

There was no doubt left as to Japanese aggressive intent when, in course of a few weeks after the Mukden incident, they occupied territories all along the line of the South Manchurian Railway. They also spread out into Chinese areas far beyond the borders of the railway zone.


Soviet Concern at Japan's Aggressive Action

Japan's aggressive action gave the Soviet Government every reason to be concerned about the security of its Far Eastern provinces contiguous to Manchuria. Being reluctant, however, to engage itself in war, it followed a policy of cautious restraint in its relations with Japan to avoid offering the latter any excuse for an attack on Siberia. (45) This policy of the Soviet Government was also dictated by its deep distrust of America's attitude toward Japan, which it felt, afforded no hope for support if it became involved in a struggle with Japan. The Soviet Government's fear was, perhaps, not without any basis, particularly at the initial stages of the Manchurian conflict, in view of the fact that President Hoover was in sympathy with Japan. He candidly revealed the degree to which he sympathized when he advised the cabinet of his views:

There is something on Japan. Suppose Japan had come out boldly and said: 'Half her [China's] area is Bolshevist and co-operating with Russia. . . . Manchuria . . . is in a state of anarchy . . . with Bolshevist Russia to the north and a possible Bolshevist China on our flank, our independence is in jeopardy. Either the signatories of the Nine-Power Pact (46) must join with us to restore order in China or we must do it as an act of self-preservation. . . .

(45) Wilson (Switzerland) to Stimson, October 12, 1932, NA, RG 59, file 761.93/1473.

America certainly would not join in such a proposal and we could not raise much objection. (47)

The United States and the League's Action in Regard to Manchuria

The United States cooperated with the League of Nations in an effort to investigate the Manchurian affairs. (48) Later, she even moved unilaterally to declare the Japanese action an infraction of the Nine Power Agreement. Nevertheless, at no time did she show any intention of engaging in hostilities or of taking any material measures against Japan. In fact, a few days after the outbreak of the Manchurian conflict, when Norman Davis (49) telephoned Secretary Stimson from Geneva on September 23, 1931, telling him "never in my entire life have I seen a situation... the Manchurian hostilities... so loaded with dynamite", (50) Stimson preferred to overlook the danger and to pursue a policy of caution and watchful waiting.


(49) Norman Davis was the American member of the organizing commission for the World Economic Conference held in 1933.

(50) 3 For. Relg. 1931 (Washington, GPO, 1946) 43.
It appears that Stimson's policy of caution was dictated by his desire "not to inflame the passions of the Japanese people". (51) The American Government at that time was completely preoccupied in trying to improve the rapidly deteriorating economic situation at home, and was in no mood to undertake upon itself the task of preserving peace in the Far East.

American Participation in League Council Meetings to Discuss the Manchurian Crisis. Stimson sent an American delegate in the person of Prentiss Gilbert, the American Consul-General at Geneva, to attend the Council of the League of Nations when it met in mid-October 1931 to discuss the Manchurian crisis. The object was to have an American delegate at the Council meetings in case there arose any discussion of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. (52)

But Gilbert's presence at the Council sessions led to rumours that the United States had joined the League of Nations and that any action taken by the Council would receive the complete support of the United States. This led Stimson to ponder over the usefulness of American representation at the Council and although he did not recall Gilbert, the latter was advised to keep quiet at the Council meetings.

(52) Stimson (n. 42) 37.

(53) Pr. Belg. (N. 50) 154.
The presence of the American representative at the Council meetings had been little more than a gesture, abandoned as soon as it began to appear inconvenient and embarrassing. The Council then went on, under its own power, to pass a resolution, calling for withdrawal of Japanese from the Chinese territory. Later, when the League found that the Japanese had no intention of withdrawing, it decided on December 10, 1931, to send out to the Far East a commission of investigation. The result was the appointment of the Lytton Commission.

While Stimson was glad at the decision of the League to send a commission of enquiry, he was doubtful if the Japanese army would remain stationary while the investigation went on. His fears soon proved to be true for, on December 23, 1931, the Japanese army marched into South Manchuria and occupied the important town of Chinchow, thereby revealing its expansionist designs. Stimson then realized that the three and half months of past American policy had proved futile and he sought some effective measures against Japan without having recourse to war. He thought that formal refusal to recognize aggression in Manchuria might prove effective. (53)

(53) In his book *Far Eastern Crisis*, Stimson says that he suggested something along this line to his assistants as far back as November 9, 1931. Cf. Stimson (n. 42) 93.
Stimson's Note to China and Japan. On January 7, 1932, Stimson sent identical notes to both China and Japan which stated in part,

... in view of the present situation and of its own rights and obligations therein, the American Government deems it to be its duty to notify both the Imperial Japanese Government and the Government of the Chinese Republic that it cannot admit the legality of any situation de facto nor does it intend to recognize any treaty or agreement entered into between those Governments, or agents thereof, which may impair the treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China, including those which relate to the sovereignty, the independence or the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic of China, nor to the international policy relative to China, commonly known as the open door policy; and that it does not intend to recognize any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the conventions and obligations of the Pact of Paris of August 27, 1928, to which Treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States are parties. (54)

Soviet Reaction to Stimson's Note. The Soviet Government did not consider Stimson's note of January 7, 1932, as an effective measure against Japan. It had expected that the United States as the originator of the Kellogg Pact would adopt firm measures to force Japan to comply with her obligations under the Pact. But when events proved otherwise, the Soviet Government found cause for resentment against the United States. The former had not forgotten the promptness with which the latter had reminded both itself and China of their obligations as signatories to the Kellogg Pact during

(54) For. Rds. (n. 44) 76.
the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1929.

Moscow believed that the "surprising forbearance shown by the United States towards Japan" was due to the former's hostility towards the Soviet Union. (55) The Soviet press expressed the opinion that "the advance of Japanese troops into Manchuria" was looked upon with favour by the United States as it helped to "encircle Soviet Union and provoke it into an armed conflict ...". (56) In fact, the Soviet leaders feared that an actual attack upon them might take the form of an anti-communist movement and be condoned if not joined by the western powers, including the United States. (57)

This was, however, pure fanciful thinking on the part of the Soviet leaders. The United States was unwilling either to be drawn into a war with Japan or to undertake the financial burden of economic sanctions at a time when she was hard hit by the depression.

Stimson's Stand. All that Stimson was prepared to do was to invoke the Kellogg Pact as a warning against a future act of war, but not in such a way as to indicate that war had already taken place. As he explained to Prentiss Gilbert in a trans-Atlantic telephone conversation on October 13, 1931,

(55) Brodie (Helsingfors) to Stimson, November 28, 1931, NA, RG 59, file 711.61/234.

(56) Enclosure in Ibid.

(57) Pravda (August 1, 1932), translation enclosed in Colo (Riga) to Stimson, August 8, 1932, NA, RG 59, file 861.01/1744.
"You see if those people (i.e. members of the League Council) say that an act of war has already taken place it would open the whole question of sanctions, with which we have nothing to do." (58) Later in another trans-Atlantic telephone conversation with Ambassador Dawes (59) on November 19, 1931, Stimson said "we do not intend to get into war with Japan". (60)

Though Stimson never contemplated the use of sanctions against Japan he wanted to "rely on the unconscious effect of American military and economic strength, letting the Japanese fear this because they would not be told we [Americans] would not use it against them." (61)

But Stimson was mistaken in this for there was a realization in the diplomatic circles in Washington that "both Japan and China had made up their minds that neither [the United States] nor the nations of Europe would fight". (62)

This view seems to have been confirmed by Ambassador Griggs's

(58) Dor. Rela. (n. 50) 179.

(59) The American Ambassador in London, Dawes, was ordered on November 10, 1931, to proceed to Paris to keep in touch with the League leaders when the League Council met for the second time on November 16, 1931, to discuss the Manchurian issue. Dawes was, however, instructed not to take part in the meetings of the Council. Cf. Ibid. (n.44) 41-44.

(60) Ibid (n.50) 497.

(61) Stimson, H.L. and Bundy, McGeorge, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York, Hutchinson, 1948) 245.

report on June 13, 1932, that Japan was aware of "the practical impossibility . . . of compelling [her] by force of arms to relinquish its grip in Manchuria". (63) This awareness perhaps encouraged the Japanese in their aggressive designs and thereby contributed to the Soviet conviction of American duplicity.

**Soviet Desires for a Rapprochement with the United States to Counteract Japan**

Despite its scorn for the United States, the Soviet Union, however, could not ignore the former's potential strength as a Pacific power. With ambitious Japan lying at her next door, the Soviet Union realized that American recognition would substantially contribute to her security in the Far East. Hence she began to display a heightened interest in a rapprochement with the United States.

An evidence of this desire could be found in the accounts of interviews toward the end of 1931 between the Soviet envoy to Lithuania, and the American Charge there. The former intimated the latter of Russian disappointment that the absence of relations between the two countries prevented cooperation in denouncing Japan for her aggressive act. The Soviet envoy also expressed the view that Japan would not be content only with Manchuria, but would endeavour to bring the whole of East under her control and the first step in this direction

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(63) 4 Ibid., 76.
was likely to be the seizure of the Philippines. If this
eventuality took place, he pointed out that Japan was likely
to be successful as America was handicapped by the lack of
any bases from which to prosecute a war against Japan effec-
tively. The only way for America to avoid war with Japan,
according to the Soviet envoy, was for the former to form a
protective alliance with the Soviet Union. He gave express-
ion to this view when in February 1932, he stated that "the
most salutary thing that could happen in the Far East right
now was for Russia and the United States to join in a common
pressure upon Japan." (64)

Moscow believed that if normal relations had existed
between the U.S.S.R. and the United States, the Japanese
would not have dared to attack Manchuria. In the words of
Litvinov, there was little doubt but that the "commencement
of the troubles in the Far East" was due to the fact that
"not all states situated on the shores of the Pacific Ocean
have been maintaining diplomatic relations with one another.
Only when all states maintain relations with one another will
it be possible to speak seriously of international co-operation
in the cause of peace." (65)

Being next door to Japan, the Soviet Union was suscep-
tible to an attack from her. It was believed that "having not

(64) Fullerton to Stimson, February 26, 1932, NA, RG 59,
file 760 M.00/23.

(65) Dogras (n. 37) 551.
a firm foothold in Manchuria, Japan was likely to turn toward setting foot in Siberia and providing itself with a practically unlimited outlet for its surplus population.\(^{(66)}\) The Soviet Union was acutely aware of this possibility, and this awareness propelled Moscow in making strenuous efforts for seeking the United States' guarantee against further Japanese expansion.

The Attitude of the United States toward the Soviet Union in the light of the events in the Far East

The United States was eager to maintain the balance of power in Asia and hence could not completely overlook the menace to Russia in the spread of aggression. On February 23, 1932, Secretary of State Stimson in a letter \(^{(66)}\) to Senator Borah referred to the Nine Power Treaty of 1922. By this treaty the signatories, that included Japan, agreed to respect the sovereignty and territorial independence of China. Stimson expressed the view that if one of the signatories implying Japan] chose to break down one of the Washington Treaties other nations might feel themselves released from some of those treaties which were as important to her as the Nine Power Treaty was to the United States. Stimson seems to have implied a threat that further Japanese conquests in the Far East might compromise the American promise at the

\(^{(66)}\) Memorandum by Dr. B. Akzin, HA, RG 59, filed E/DII 841.01/1923.

\(^{(67)}\) For the text of Stimson's letter to Borah, see \textit{Far. Rels.} (n. 44) 83-87.
Washington Conference in 1922. (68)

This letter was really intended for five unnamed addresses. Stimson hoped it would give encouragement to China, enlighten the American public, suggest to the League the line of action it might take in the future, remind the British that they were co-signatory to the Nine-Power Treaty, and finally warn Japan to the danger of violating the Nine-Power Treaty. (69)

But Japan was then strongly entrenched in Manchuria and nothing short of a war could dislodge her. The only choice left to Washington and Moscow was, therefore, to arrange "to

(68) At the Washington Conference in 1922, the United States, Great Britain and Japan had agreed upon the ratio of 5:5:3 respectively in regard to their naval forces; further, the first two powers had agreed not to erect additional fortifications in their Far Eastern possessions. In his book Far Eastern Crisis, Stimson wrote: "The willingness of the American Government to surrender its commanding lead in battleship construction and to leave its position at Guam and in the Philippines without further fortifications was predicated, among other things, the self denying covenants contained in the Nine Power Treaty which assured the nations of the world not only of equal opportunity for their Far Eastern trade, but also against the military aggrandizement of any other power at the expense of China. One cannot discuss the possibility of modifying or abrogating those provisions of the Nine-Power Treaty without considering at the same time other promises upon which they are really dependent". Cf. Stimson (n. 42) 171.

Early in 1932, Senators Joseph Robinson and Key Pittman argued for the resumption of relations with the Soviet Union. They believed that it would pave the way for fruitful cooperation in stemming Japanese aggressive designs in the Far East. Similarly Senator Hiram Johnson stated that "some move in the direction of normal relationships with Russia . . . would do far more to remove perils from the Far East . . . than any other single act." (71)

By July 1932, Ambassador Grew noted that relations between Russia and Japan were none too happy. If the latter "foresee an eventual clash as inevitable", Grew cabled Stimson, "it is quite possible that they may intend to strike before Soviet Russia gets stronger -- and the time element is all in favour of [Russia] . . . Therefore, while I do not consider war imminent, I do believe that the situation is potentially dangerous and bears careful watching." (72)

In a dispatch of August 13, 1932, Grew again stated that the Japanese "military machine . . . has been built for war, feels prepared for war, and would welcome war". (73) Later,


(71) "These Senators Say Yes", 134 Nation (May 18, 1932) 566.

(72) Grew (n. 41) 95.

(73) Ibid., 64-5.
in February 1933, he warned the Department of State "we must bear in mind that a considerable section of the public and the army [in Japan], influenced by military propaganda, believes that eventual war between either the United States or Russia, or both, and Japan is inevitable". (74) From the above reports it appears that the American Government perceived in the Manchurian conflict and in the possible danger to the Soviet Union of Japanese military invasion, a threat to American interests in the Far East.

The Soviet Government had repeatedly stressed on this danger, being aware of its own vulnerable position and eager to obtain American recognition. It had entertained the belief that the United States would not be a mere spectator while Japan gained more territory and influence in China since she had vital interests in Eastern markets and raw materials. (75) At some quarters it was even believed that "the United States was considering the recognition of Russia because of its fear at Japan's growing importance." (76)

Actually, however, the United States was not contemplating any modification in her policy. In a letter to Senator Borah, Secretary Stimson explained that this was because of the fact that in regard to the Far East, the United States was

(74) Ibid., 77.

(75) Bolshovik (March 31, 1932) 42-55.

(76) Conversation between Polish and American Ambassadors in Turkey, enclosed in Sherill to Stimson, July 19, 1932, NA, RG 59, file 711.61/256.
making a fight for the "integrity of international obligations", and this was sought to be achieved by "pacific means". Stimson then pointed out that,

if under these circumstances ... we recognized Russia in disregard of her very bad reputation respecting international obligations and in disregard of our previous emphasis upon that aspect of her history, the whole world, and particularly Japan, would jump to the conclusion that our action had been dictated solely by political expediency and as a manoeuver to bring forceful pressure upon Japan. ... I felt that the loss of moral standing would be so important that we could not afford to take the risk of it. However innocent our motives might be, they would certainly be misunderstood by the world at large and particularly by Japan and that misunderstanding would destroy much of the influence of moral pressure which we have been endeavouring to exert. (77)

The Department of State in a memorandum in July 1932 had also stated that "Japan would regard recognition of Russia by the United States [at this time] as evidence that America's efforts spring from a selfish motive, namely, American intention to keep Japan comparatively weak power . . ." It was also pointed out that this might precipitate the Japanese military into "further warlike activities to anticipate cooperative action on the part of Soviet Russia and the United States, which they would assume to be the natural consequence of recognition". (78)


(78) Memorandum of the Department of State, July 11, 1932, NA, RG 59, file 861.01/1783\.
The Hoover Administration, in fact, remained firmly opposed to a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. However, in the general election in November 1932, the American people voted against the Republican party and swept into the Presidential office the Democratic Governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt's pronouncements on American-Russian relations had been rather limited, but there was reason to believe that he did not rule out the possibility of the establishment of normal relations with the Soviet Union.

While the Japanese were "somewhat worried" (79) over this possibility, the Soviet Government eagerly awaited developments under the new Administration.

(79) Grow to Hull, March 6, 1933, NA, RG 59, file 861.01/1869.