A VISIT TO THE ORIENT

I—The Japanese in China

By Henry George, Jr.

OUR Pullman train drew into Mukden exactly on time. I had felt much at home on this Japanese-owned and operated, but American-equipped, South Manchurian Railway. But the moment I stepped off it to the Mukden platform I realized that I was in the heart of slothful, sleepy, dirty China.

It appeared to me that Chinese morals—private morals and business morals—are about the same as those of other people in like conditions: low grade—very low grade—in many respects to the Occidental view.

In our carriage we passed what looked to me like sentinel soldiers—uniformed and carrying guns. They stood in the middle of the roadway, with now and again a glisten from a bayonet as we passed a stray light.

They were Chinese policemen! "If these are Chinese policemen, what are Chinese soldiers?" I asked. The chief reliance just now is upon these police; the Chinese are growing restive over outside interference, and they are rousing to self-assertiveness with their police, who are in effect soldiers.

I fell asleep on a stone for a pillow thinking of the seventy-five-mile-long battlefield—one point only ten miles away from where I lay—where the Russians and Japanese, with 300,000 infantry on each side, the greatest number of contestants in one battle in recorded history, had so recently struggled over—what? South Manchuria. To Russia it meant, with Port Arthur and Dalny, seaports for the outlet of the stupendously vast Siberian country, and also a territory from which to dominate China and ultimately Japan. To Japan it meant, first and foremost, outer defense works for the Empire of the Rising Sun.

What did they mean—these military police, these soldiers, in slumbering old Manchuria? The question tormented me all day—from early morning when I visited the venerable Manchu palace (a small, tawdry affair to modern eyes, vivid in yellows, greens, reds, and blues) until late in the afternoon, when I rode out through the suburbs, past the grewsome, lonesome, unfenced, forgotten, grass-covered conical burial mounds of the common people, to the great, tree-topped, earth-mound tomb of the Manchu conqueror of Mongolia and founder of the present reigning dynasty at Pekin.

If Mukden is dirty and forbidding in dry weather, it is indescribable in wet. The unpaved, loam streets—if streets they may be called—turn to sticky, black mud, with pools of water innumerable, so that it is said horses drown at times. As for the footgear of these Manchurian people—alas, why try to say?

Nor were the buildings along the main business thoroughfares much better in appearance: old, ill-painted, dilapidated, most of them, open to the street at this time of year, and distinguished by dirt and disorder. In the winter there is a valuable fur trade here for all north China. At other seasons the trade seems to be in anything, and picayune at that. These buildings give no indication of the natural riches of the country or of the wealth in trading.

There are two distinct jurisdictions in Mukden—Chinese and Japanese. The Japanese jurisdiction comes through the South Manchurian Railway, a concession originally given to the Russians, and after the war formally transferred to the Japanese. By virtue of the right to protect the railroad, the Japanese have a distinct police system of their own, with the Consul-General as their commander; a military garrison, with the Consul-General at its head; an extraterritorial court, with the Consul-General as high judge. There is also a separate Japanese telephone and telegraph system.

But what impressed me most appeared when going with Consul-General Koike in his carriage, with its picturesquely uniformed Chinese driver and no less picturesque outrider, to call upon the American Consul, Mr. Cloud. We stopped to get some money changed at the Mukden branch of that world-wide and truly great financial institution, the Yokohama Specie Bank. To get quick service, the Consul-General took me in by a side door. In going through a short hall to the banking chamber proper, I passed an open doorway, through which I saw, in a small room, with cartridge belts slung and rifles in hand, as if ready for instant call, six or eight Japanese regulars. A file of such soldiers does garrison duty on the premises day and night. What is the reason? Mr. Koike said, as if in explanation, that the bank building was being reconstructed and new vaults being put in, and that the place therefore needed protection against robbers.

But why not watchmen and, if necessary, some policemen? Why soldiers? And will the soldiers cease garrison duty after the new building is finished? Probably not.

The Japanese in Mukden are few. The total population of the ancient city is perhaps 200,000—the Chinese themselves do not seem to know exactly. The Japanese keep a strict count of their own numbers—3,500. Of these, 300 are soldiers and 300 police. As to the country generally, it may give a clearer idea of the whole Manchurian situation to explain that there is far from the swarming population commonly supposed. Man-

The dividing point between Japanese Manchuria and Russian Manchuria is Changchun. It is a night's ride north of Mukden. I had been called at four by the polite little Pullman car boy. I can hardly call him porter, since he seemed about the age and stature of the bell boys in Tokyo. Even the conductor of this crack train on this American-equipped South Manchurian Railway—called "Train Master"—seemed to be in the early twenties. At Changchun our train had pulled up against a long platform. On the other side, and precisely parallel with it, was the Russian train to which we were to transfer.

This Russian train belonged to the Chinese Eastern Railway, which runs north to Harbin, and then east and west, connecting Vladivostok with the Trans-Siberian line proper. It forms a kind of widely branching capital letter T, and runs through the backbone of Central and North Manchuria. The right of way is only a limited concession to the Russians by the Chinese Government, but when will the Russians give it up? "Never," says pretty nearly everybody in the Far East. It means the shortest obtainable line east of Vladivostok, and it means the command of the great North Manchuria territory.

In the interior of the station it was evident that I was out of Japanese Manchuria. In all the throng there were not half a dozen of the Nipponese. All the rest were Chinese (mostly big Manchus) and Europeans, or, as the Russians would probably classify them, Chinese, Russians, and Europeans; for the Russians commonly consider and speak of Russia as not belonging to, but being apart from, the rest of Europe. A motley group of Chinese, in coarse, worn, and unclean clothing, struggled in front of a very small window—I concluded to buy fourth-class railroad tickets. There were a number of women in the place and some children. Except the tourists, they were Russians of the peasant class.

And yet not all of them were peasants. I felt sure that at least one was not, despite the make and material of her clothes, which were of the poorest. A shawl, which had been over her head, had fallen about her neck, setting off her remarkable head—hair, dark, silky, luxurious, glorious, parted in the middle and waving back into the folds of the shawl; the features marked with a curious, even fascinating, mixture of feminine softness and masculine strength; her nose too well-shaped for a peasant's, and also her mouth, which, if large, full, and strong, was sensitive; her chin, firm; and her eyes—the windows of the soul—dark, gray, or brownish, and fixed in gaze straight in front of her—gazing, but not seeing.

I first noticed her from the far end of the station, and I approached to get a better view. The face strengthened as I approached—strengthened, and softened, too; and lines crossed the white forehead. It was a face of natural tenderness and refinement, backed by an iron will.

Plainly this woman of about thirty had a history. What was it? I walked back across the station and sat down where I could still see her, and fell to musing; while she, her thoughts busy with something elsewhere, turned her head now and again or lifted her eyes to some passer-by—but saw not.

Who was she who could look at once a woman of the drawing-room and a woman of the frontier in this new-old country of Central Manchuria? Was she some aristocrat seeking to bury herself and her broken fortunes in this remote part of the world? Or was she a political exile who had thrown in her lot with the common mass and rebelled at the insufferable political and social conditions? If so, what was she doing in Manchuria?

Was she single or married? I got up and walked over to glance at her hands, but they were hidden in her shawl. Was she going to or leaving such a home as she might call hers? The shabby black bag leaning against her knees did not answer. Had tragedy of death or love come to her door, and was she by sheer force of will going forward in the predetermined way? Was she breaking her heart where she knew in her soul there never could be return—one of those great natures that tell not their griefs, that outwardly go forward with the business of life, while within struggle for mas- [illegible] and humility, strength and tenderness?

I had seen such a face before—seen it, and worshiped at its shrine and burned incense; so that now this face—but I was interrupted by the Japanese train master, who told me that if I did not get my baggage through at once I should miss my train for Harbin.

I pulled myself together, had my trunks weighed, found that I'd have to pay a round sum for excess baggage, made my first discovery of Russian official graft as I was leaving the cashier's window—that he had made a mistake in the change of two rubles in his own favor—got the mistake corrected, and running, caught the train as it was about to pull out.

I had cast one glance about for the woman whose face had so wrought upon me, but she had vanished. It is women like that that make revolutions, and as my train rushed toward Harbin this woman fixed herself in my mind as the spirit of North Manchuria and Siberia—the spirit of determination and grief.

As if in keeping with this feeling, the soil of the country seemed suddenly to have changed. Along the South Manchurian line it had been red. Along this Russian road it was dark; in some places black. Professor Chamberlain, holding the chair of geology in the Chicago University, who was a fellow passenger, told me, in respect to this, that, generally speaking, the soil is red in the lower latitudes and grows darker in the higher latitudes. He also pointed out that the Chinese of North Manchuria are larger and darker, have larger hands and feet, and stronger individuality marked in their features than those in southern China. For my own part, I found many Chinese along the Russian railroad line in Manchuria with features so marked and skin so dark as to bear striking resemblance to our Indians.

The Russians had built all the way down to Port Arthur, as if they had had no idea of ever leaving, and the Russian-built houses north of Changchun were of the same permanent nature as those I had found south of it. But the difference between those north and those south was that every house north was fortified, with a castellated and loopholed stone or brick tower and a surrounding wall. Each might stand a siege. The explanation given is that these are defenses against Chinese bandits that rove these parts and rob and kill. As if corroboration of this, soldier or police sentinels are met with at every station, and military guards are to be seen on every train—on the more important passenger trains, several guards. But notwithstanding all that is said, one gets the feeling immediately upon taking the Russian line—and it does not leave him—that most of this defense against bandits is a mere pretense to hide a defense against a much graver enemy—the one from Nippon. It gives excuse for a skeleton military occupation which could at short notice be swelled into immense offensive or defensive proportions.

Harbin proved to be quite a town, with a "Grand Hotel" and a number of pretentious buildings in the Russian quarter; but the Chinese part was nothing better than a huddle of huts with wooden and mud-daubed walls and tiled roofs.

The swarm of porters, swooping down upon the unsuspecting passengers, proved to be vultures; for when they had simply handed your hand stuff out of the train and into the weighing room, and then back into the new train, they demanded for the service two rubles—about a dollar. It was difficult to tell which kicked hardest against this among the pasengers—the Englishmen or the Americans. At last, however, I found myself on the new

churia consists of three provinces, together embracing an area approximating that of France; but the population is only 2,500,000, as against France's 50,000,000. The lowest or most southerly of these provinces—Shengking—contains 1,500,000 inhabitants.

The impression upon you as you travel through the length of Manchuria is that of a sparse agricultural population—very few farmers' houses—and large towns scattered here and there.

Land ownership is concentrated. Farm laborers flow in from the other provinces of China to work the land and then flow back again, getting such opportunity as may be to labor, but little or no opportunity to own or work land for themselves. This leads to the ill-working of the land or extensive cultivation. With a more intensive process—the application of more tools, fertilizers, and brains—the soil of Manchuria can be made to perform wonders.

This is especially true north of Mukden—that is, Cheng Chun and Harbin way—where experiments show that the highest grade of flour-making wheat can be raised from lands now largely given over to grass.

South of Mukden good wheat is grown, but more particularly millet and beans. The millet, maturing in the fall, grows as high as twelve feet and somewhat resembles our sorghum. In the disorganized condition of China, it offers a peculiarly favorable cover for the movements and raids of bandits, with which the country swarms; and during the recent war it hid military operations, so that often the belligerents came into accidental collision. It is the red millet, and in Burma, where it also grows well, it is called "Pyoung."

But the staple of the country—at least of lower Manchuria—is the white bean, most valuable not as a food, but for its fertilizing qualities, being shipped in large compressed cakes that resemble grindstones. The oil obtained during the compressing is used as an illuminant. These bean cakes are shipped to all the chief seaports of the East, and in immense quantities to Japan. The shipping season is during the spring months, when millions of them may be seen at Dairen under sheds and heaped up in the open, topped by tarpaulins, awaiting shipment.

The American Vice-Consul at Dairen, Mr. Williamson, told me that he had had many inquiries from the United States about this bean cake, and that he has sent many experimental quantities here.

The bean cake seems at present to form the chief article of traffic on the South Manchurian Railway, and next to that coal, which the railroad gets out of its own mines. This is the traffic coming south to Dairen, out of Manchuria. The freight north is miscellaneous, and largely the things that the Japanese excel in producing or in respect to which they have more quickly than their competitors adapted themselves, as, for instance, in combining to fill a car, and thus dividing the expense of carriage, rather than shipping separately, and each having to pay for a car when using only a part of a car.

The South Manchurian Road is not extensive as Americans are accustomed to view Railroads—about 700 miles long. It runs from Port Arthur on the south to Cheng Chun on the north, where it meets the Russian broad-gage system.

Built by the Russians originally, it was broad-gage until the Japanese took South Manchuria during the recent war, when the latter changed it to narrow gage, which is that used in Japan from which engines and cars were brought. After the war, when the road was to be reequipped, it was decided to change the gage to the American standard—four feet eight and a half inches—and to supply full American equipment. To do this, cost the company $100,000,000 in debenture bonds and stock. Besides five per cent on the debentures, it paid six per cent on the stock last year.

The term of this railroad concession from China runs for only a dozen or a few more years, at the expiration of which China is supposed to have the right of purchase; in which event the Japanese must clear out. But will they clear out?

It may be put down for a certainty that Japan will never willingly relinquish Port Arthur, over which she fought two wars. It is plain to the most superficial visitor that while the Imperial Government is carefully keeping up and guarding the fortifications at the harbor mouth at Port Arthur, it has abandoned North Fort and the other forts on the shoreward side facing north on the peninsula. The obvious reason is that Japan never expects to meet an enemy ashore that far south; that any such enemy will be many miles north—north even of Mukden; and that all the territory it took from the Russians during the late war it will hold under its domination, if not as an integral part of the Japanese Empire, as Korea has practically become. Japan regards South Manchuria as her defensive outpost, and she will fight to maintain that outpost in a country characterized at once by sloth, indifference, revolution, confusion, incoherency, and corruption; and which is surrounded by powers that have already carved out "concessions" and which impatiently await an excuse to enter upon the larger partitioning.