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A CRITICISM OF F. ROOSEVELT'S FAR EASTERN POLICY

by Masakuma Uchiyama

The problem of war responsibility seems to appear as a reaction of the defeated nations concerning the peace treaty, and in general comes up as a demand for revising judgement about war guilt. According to the history of the Versailles Treaty, the attribution of responsibility was apt to take the form of a punishment of, or revenge against, the opposite side. However, in my opinion, the substance of the problem lies not in refuting or shifting the responsibility, but in finding out the real cause of the war. It is our great task in the present study of diplomatic history to find the truth through objective documents, when the emotionalism caused by the war has disappeared. The remarkable feature of this problem after the Second World War is in its not being raised by the defeated nations, but by the victors as a self-criticism. We should not revive the war guilt problem in a similar way as was done after the Versailles Treaty.

Needless to say, so far as the results of the Military Tribunal for the Far East were concerned, too much responsibility was laid on defeated Japan. There were found many precious lessons which we should learn for our course of action and I humbly recognize many of them, and I think that Japan should atone for her past crimes. I do not want to shift the responsibility to other people's shoulders.

None the less, I cannot but find some grave errors in the behavior of the victor side which contributed towards causing the war; for example in America's Far Eastern policy during the Roosevelt Administration. Especially we should reconsider the roles of the victor statesmen in bringing about the war. The typical case is found in F. Roosevelt's foreign policy. President Roosevelt's historic performance was unreservedly great, but its significance seems to be in his leading the United States into the Second World War.

From this standpoint, it is necessary for us to revise the traditional view that war-guilt belonged merely to the Axis powers, Japan in the Far East and Germany in the West. Because I was deeply impressed by Professor Tansill's marvellous book "Back Door to War", I have followed what seems to me the truth from the point of view of American diplomatic history, by finding such factors as that Roosevelt instigated Japan to make war.

First of all, I should like to indicate that President Roosevelt kept too closely to Stimson Doctrine towards Japan and rejected Japan's intentions in her New Order in the East. The Roosevelt's administration refused to accept Japan's suggestion for peace agreement and compromise and looked askance at the Japanese insistence that the tragedy in North China was proceeding along Bolshevic lines, so Japan was fighting against the Red Aggression as a bulwark against the Russian expansion in Asia. Moreover, Secretary Hull's "Spurning of the Japanese Olive·Branch" was a very great factor in turning Japan from its early conciliatory pro-American attitude to the stiff anti-American one. As Professor C. Beard argued, the Roosevelt Administration did not exert their power for a peaceful settlement with Japan, but instead used its energy in plotting to "maneuver Japan into firing the first shot". Professor Tansill goes too far in saying that Japanese imperialism was nothing but a response to American ill-nature, and it might have been better for the Military Tribunal for the Far East to have held its sessions, not in Tokyo but in Washington. I do not want to plead for Japanese militaristic expansion; I do not deny the Japanese responsibility for the Pacific War and I do recognize that Japan committed great faults which threatened world peace at the critical stage. However, I should like to point out that American policy towards Japan since the Manchurian Incident was a policy of strong restraint and unsympathetic admonition, which did much towards the stirring up anti-Americanism in Japan.

In conclusion, I believe that the question of war responsibility is not only a reflection of Japanese faults, but also a reflection of American faults; it is a judgement in world history, which all nations, the victors as well as the defeated, should equally assume. We should bear in mind that the new revisionism is a symbol of impartial scholar's

conscience in the democratic countries. We should not justify Japan's war crimes by accepting the theory of revisionism. The real cause of war responsibility must be found in the court of world history.