
104 A JUSTIFICATION OF JAPANESE EXPANSIONISM

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Western powers began to strongly criticize Japan for its expansionist policies. This criticism reached its height in 1931, after Japan's unprovoked attack on Manchuria. Stung by what they considered Western interference in their internal affairs, the Japanese immediately issued a defense of their policies. In the excerpt below from Sources of the Japanese Tradition, compiled by Ryusaku Tsunoda, a Japanese government official offers the standard justification of expansionism. As you read the excerpt, note how the official defends his government's policies.

We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people packed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against her?

It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door.

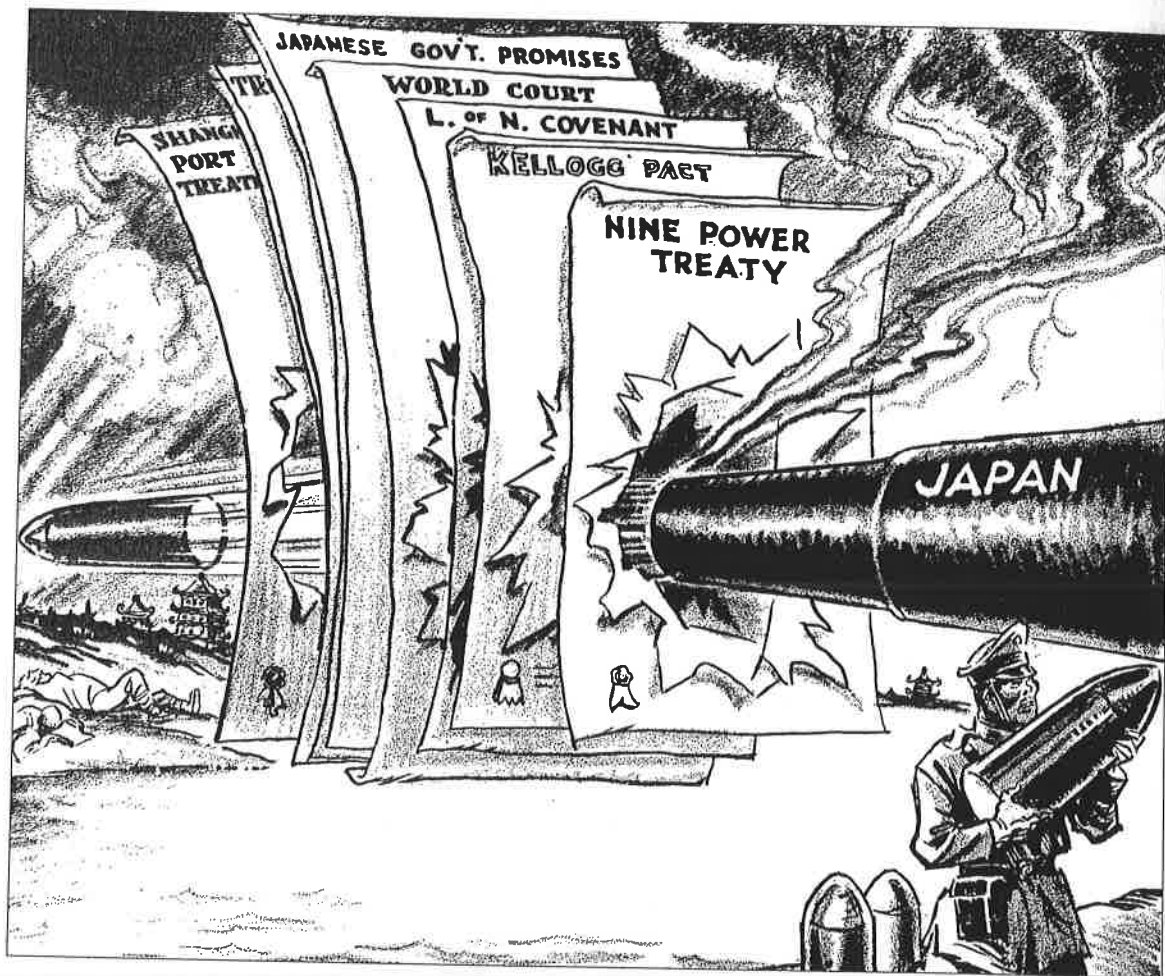
It may sound dangerous when we speak of territorial expansion, but the territorial expansion of which we speak does not in any sense of the word involve the occupation of the possessions of other countries, the planting of the Japanese flag thereon, and the declaration of their annexation to Japan. It is just that since the Powers [Western governments] have suppressed the circulation of Japanese materials and merchandise abroad, we are looking for some place overseas where Japanese capital, Japanese skills and Japanese labor can have free play, free from the oppression of the white race.

We would be satisfied with just this much. What moral right do the world powers who have themselves closed to us the two doors of emigration and advance into world markets have to criticize Japan's attempt to rush out of the third and last door?

If they do not approve of this, they should open the doors which they have closed against us and permit the free movement overseas of Japanese emigrants and merchandise. . . .

At the time of the Manchurian incident, the entire world joined in criticism of Japan. They said that Japan was an untrustworthy nation.

They said that she had recklessly brought cannon and machine guns into Manchuria, which was the territory of another country, flown air-



A cartoonist's view of Japanese aggressions

planes over it, and finally occupied it. But the military action taken by Japan was not in the least a selfish one. Moreover, we do not recall ever having taken so much as an inch of territory belonging to another nation. The result of this incident was the establishment of the splendid new nation of Manchuria. The Powers are still discussing whether or not to recognize this new nation, but regardless of whether or not other nations recognize her, the Manchurian empire has already been established, and now, seven years after its creation, the empire is further consolidating its foundations with the aid of its friend, Japan.

And if it is still protested that our actions in Manchuria were excessively violent, we may wish to ask the white race just which country it was that sent warships and troops to India, South Africa, and Australia and slaughtered innocent natives, bound their hands and feet with iron chains, lashed their backs with iron whips, proclaimed these territories as their own, and still continues to hold them to this very day?

They will invariably reply, these were all lands inhabited by untamed savages. These people did not know how to develop the abundant resources of their land for the benefit of mankind. Therefore it was

the wish of God, who created heaven and earth for mankind, for us to develop these underdeveloped lands and to promote the happiness of mankind in their stead. God wills it.

This is quite a convenient argument for them. Let us take it at face value. Then there is another question that we must ask them.

Suppose that there is still on this earth land endowed with abundant natural resources that have not been developed at all by the white race. Would it not then be God's will and the will of Providence that Japan go there and develop those resources for the benefit of mankind?

And there still remain many such lands on this earth.

READING REVIEW

1. What three "doors" were open to Japan to solve the problem of a surplus population?
2. How did the government official answer the charges that Japanese actions in Manchuria were too violent?
3. How did the government official turn the expansionist arguments of the West to support his country's case?

105 TWO POEMS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Many writers and artists served in the International Brigade in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Among these were English poets Laurie Lee and John Cornford. Lee survived the war and went on to become a widely-respected author, writing what many people consider to be one of the finest books on childhood, Cider With Rosie. Cornford, the youngest unit commander in the International Brigade, was killed in action in 1936, just one day after his twenty-first birthday. The excerpt below from Poetry of the Thirties, edited by Robin Skelton, contains poems by Lee and Cornford on their experiences in Spain. As you read the excerpt, compare the two poets' attitudes to war.

A Letter from Aragon

This is a quiet sector of a quiet front.
We buried Ruiz in a new pine coffin,
But the shroud was too small and his washed feet stuck out.
The stink of his corpse came through the clean pine boards
And some of the bearers wrapped handkerchiefs round their faces.
Death was not dignified.
We hacked a ragged grave in the unfriendly earth
And fired a ragged volley over the grave.
You could tell from our listlessness, no one much missed him.