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China: Spheres of Influence

At the beginning of the present century, so-called spheres of influence had been pretty effectively staked out by foreign powers in various parts of China. Russia held a dominant position in Manchuria and Mongolia, and Japan acquired a similar status in South Manchuria as a fruit of victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Tsingtao, with its hinterland of Shantung Province, was a German preserve. Great Britain possessed an inside track in the trade of Central and South China, thanks to its possession of Hong Kong and its predominant position in Shanghai. France had its slice of preferred stock in Chinese trade in Yunnan Province, adjacent to the French colony of Indo-China.

The World War and the subsequent upsurge of Chinese Nationalism profoundly modified this state of affairs. German and Russian spheres of influence disappeared Nationalist China gained control of its own tariff, extended the jurisdiction of its courts and was looking forward to the gradual abolition of all special privileges for foreigners.

But the Japanese offensive on the Asiatic mainland, which began with the seizure of Manchuria in 1931, has turned the clock back, from the standpoint of Chinese nationalism. Whatever Japan holds in a military way, tends to become a Japanese political and economic protectorate. The "open door" is held ajar just so far as, and no farther than, Japanese military and commercial interests dictate.

At the same time China, faced with a struggle against Japanese domination, tends to become more dependent upon other powers. The Soviet Union has long entrenched itself in Outer Mongolia, which should not appear on maps any longer as part of China. And the scanty news that filters out of that vast, sparsely populated Chinese Northwest indicates a further growth of Soviet power.

At the same time such developments as the $25,000,000 American credit to China, the reported British advance of 10 million pounds for the construction of a railway from Burma to Yunnan (a motor road is already in existence), the French loan for the construction of a railway in Kwangsi, tend to give these powers a paramount economic position in the bloc of extensive undeveloped provinces of the Chinese West and Southwest — Szechuen, Yunnan, Kwangsi, Kweichow.

Almost every Chinese intellectual believes that China as a culture, as a way of life, is indestructible, that Japan will pass, as other conquerors have passed, while China will remain. But, as China is a continent, rather than a nation, so its intellectuals sometimes think in terms not of years, but of centuries. If one accepts the premises (1) that China cannot drive Japan from its present conquests, (2) that Japan cannot extend these conquests to the whole of China, (3) that Japan avoids war with any power stronger than China, the new spheres of influence may remain for a considerable length of time.

All The Same Price

Uncle Sam has begun to think that the more competitive bids he asks on automobile tires the more he gets the same prices. Or at least it was that way until October, 1937, when the Government decided to negotiate directly with one dealer for lower quotations. Similarly the practice of identical bidding is said to have grown up quite generally in cement, iron and steel, petroleum products, electrical supplies, wire, paper lumber, cordage, plumbing supplies, nails, fire extinguishers, matches, salt and many other items the Government purchases. Hence the decision of the Department of Justice, as announced by Thurman Arnold, Assistant Attorney General, to sue eighteen leading rubber tire manufacturers for alleged violation of the anti-trust acts.

Industrialists argue very plausibly that the tendency toward a single prevailing price in the market for any such staple and standardized article as tires, iron bars, paper or cement is a very natural one. If one supplier quotes a firm price, or if market reports indicate sales at a certain price, producers generally are inclined to figure that their product is worth as much as the next fellow's. Consequently, they say, it may not be so remarkable, if all calculated from the same price' per pound, that ten structural iron dealers should each ask exactly $253,633.80 for a specified amount of reinforcement bars for Fort Peck Dam.

But even in an openly quoted market, if it is at the same time a free market, common experience equally would indicate that prices tend to rise and fall from day to day or from place to place, and there is usually some producer who is willing to take a shade less for his goods, or some purchaser who wants them badly enough to pay a fraction of a cent more than the last quotation. Witness the movements of the New York stock market or the Chicago grain exchange—and nothing could be much more standardized than a share of A. T. & T. or a bushel of corn.

Consequently, when fifty-nine companies each bid $16,001.883 on an order of steel pipe or when tire companies submit four sets of bids all asking the same prices to a penny on eighty-two different sizes of tires, it does seem that the Department of Justice has at least prima facie evidence of concerted price fixing.

Centenarian Wisdom

In 1922 the late Senator Cornelius Cole was 100 years old, and Los Angeles gave him a banquet, at which, his mind as alert as ever, he spoke.

He said, according to the Saturday Evening Post, that he had only one message for those present, and that it had been impressed on him through long experience: namely, that human liberties were won in this country at heavy sacrifice of blood and fortune; that liberty is easily lost; that we must be ready to fight again if necessary to keep it; that we must never suffer any man to arrogate to himself the powers of a king, emperor or dictator.

At that banquet was Paul G. Hoffman, now head of the Studebaker company. Speaking in New York recently, Mr. Hoffman recalled Senator Cole's statement, and said:

"We listened tolerantly because he was an old man, but privately most of us thought he was living in a world of ideas belonging wholly to the past—What did an old man's warning have to do with us? We had just finished making the world safe for democracy.

"I have thought of that address a thousand times. The old senator was not in his dot-age. it was we who were blind. Do I need to ask you to think of the countries where in recent years civil and religious liberty has vanished? Do I need to ask you to think of how seriously at this moment those liberties are in jeopardy in democratic countries?

"Why are they in jeopardy? Because of pressures operating against free enterprise. The pressures come from two sourcees: First, those who are wrongly called economic planners, but who have something in mind quite different from planning—namely, government control of the processes of production and distribution: secondly, from minority groups.

"Special privilege is an invitation to government control, and no business can long survive bureaucratic domination."

Politics Vs. Policy

Calculated or inadvertent indiscretions by President Roosevelt started it; partisan politics in Congress have continued the confusion over the sale of American planes to France. Out of all the publicity, the American people have so far touched only the fringe of the most vital question involved: Will the United States lessen or increase its chances of getting into a war by selling war materials?

Publication of the testimony of officers and officials shows how sensationalized and f the incident has been. It is not clear how m secrecy there was or could be about such a business. No military secrets were involved. The planes shown the French had no Government secrets in them; they did embody new features developed by the aviation companies. And there was the likelihood that the new arms program would lead to purchase of some of them for the American Army. Also there was a difference of opinion as to whether sale to the French would slow up army procurement or would give the company business, possibly facilitating and cheapening production, before the American buying was authorized and started. This was a question of judgment, not material for a scandal.

But the larger issue is as to how sale of such material draws America into the European ture. Undoubtedly it forms some links. But then the question must be whether such support lent now to France and England will lessen the chances of war or whether it merely increases the probability that the United States would be drawn in later. Much opinion now seems to be inclining to the former view. And the sales are widely supported as being only a mild evidence of the unneutral opinion already crystalizing in the United States.

Let The Censor Beware

Mr. Bernard Shaw is building up to greater conquests. Fifty years ago he disposed of Shakespeare. Then he tilted at the star actor in the august person of Sir Henry Irving. After that he snapped his fingers at the critics by writing plays which they protested were not plays at all, and then, just to show how little he was afraid of them, included their leaders in the cast of one of his most successful productions. But, alas, along his triumphant pathway there was an obstacle that he could not circumvent. Alone of all the great figures of the literary and dramatic world, the censor would not give way before Mr. Shaw's impetuous charge.

In fact, on two occasions the censor actually unhorsed him. For many years a license was refused to two of Mr. Shaw's plays. But now after nearly half a century, Mr. Shaw appears to be slowly, subtly, but irresistibly mining the defenses of his last unconquered opponent.

One of the longest-standing of all the rules of censorship is that no public character shall be represented on the stage, but Mr. Shaw boldly announces from various London hoarding that Chamberlain, Hitler, and Mussolini....are heckling each other in Geneva, his latest play, at the St. James's Theatre. He still preserves a single line of retreat, however, for the posters do not say under what names these gentlemen appear in Geneva. But before long Mr. Shaw will doubtless throw aside all subterfuge: evidently he is working up to something; let the censor beware.

Kiel, Then and Now

Word of the proposed widening of Kiel Canal recalls the completion of a similar undertaking just twenty-five years ago when all Germany jubilant in the pride of empire, proclaimed a national holiday to celebrate the event. It was June, 1914. The quays were bright with bunting In the roadstead the grim armadas of the world's two mightiest sea powers rode serenely at their moorings. Launches shuttled back and forth between the gangways of German and British dreadnoughts in a friendly interchange of formal visits, while farther out in the bay, the American millionaire Morton F. Plant's schooner yacht Ingomar—with an Englishman at the helm—fought for the weather gauge in a series of spectacular sailing duels with Kaiser Wilhelm's giant schooner Meteor.

Trends *and* Tides

In spite of the fact that this winter has been an unusually wet one, land owners and others are warned against lighting fires during the months of March, April and May, as the greatest fire hazards are presented these months, according to C. F. Winslow, specialist in forestry for the University of Maryland. Mr. Winslow points out that even though the earth is full of moisture at this time the high winds of spring will make it soon dry and offer ideal conditions for fires.

Residents of the State are asked to cooperate with the State Forest Wardens and others in helping to reduce the number of these destructive fires which occur at this season of the year.

Forest fires are destructive enough at any time of the year but they are particularly so in the spring just before the buds burst into leaf. At this time the sap is flowing freely and the trees are less able to withstand the effects of fire. The trees are usually badly damaged or killed outright. One of the most destructive features of fire is the fact that scorched bark dies and cracks open exposing the living cambium layer to wood rotting spores and boring insects. These spores and insects usually end in ruining the butt log, the most valuable portion of the tree.

Land owners and others should not light fires during the spring months. If a fire must be lighted, it should be done when it is calm or the wind is very light, and when it is not too dry. When a field is to be burned over, a ten or fifteen foot strip should first be ploughed around the field, the field should be burned after three o'clock in the afternoon, and against the wind. In addition, there should be enough water, buckets, shovels, rakes and "hands" present to cope with any emergency that may arise.

It is a wise precaution to get in touch with the nearest forest warden before starting a fire and the fire warden, fire towerman or fire department should be notified at once if the fire gets beyond control. Last, but by no means least, never leave a fire until you are absolutely sure that it has been entirely extinguished.

UNIVERSITY AUTHORITY HEADS CENSUS GROUP

Dr. S. H. DeVault, head of the department of agricultural economics at the University of Maryland, was named by the Secretary of Commerce as chairman of an advisory committee on the coming 1940 census of agriculture, according to recent announcement.

The committee will review all of the suggested questions which have been submitted to the Census Bureau. Hearings will be held to enable interested persons or organizations to present their needs. After all the points have been weighed and discusssed, the committee will draft tentative agricultural schedules, draw up instructions for field enumeration, recommend forms of tabulation and the methods for presentation of the results.

Serving on the advisory committee with Dr. DeVault will be William F. Callander, chairman of the crop reporting board of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, who is chairman of the census advisory committee of the U. S. Department of Agriculture; Fred Brenckman, Washington representative of the National Grange; Harold Jeunet, representing the Agricultural Publishers' Association; H. G. Keeny of Omaha, Nebraska, vice-president of the Farmers Educational and Co-operative Union of America; W. R. Ogg, director of research, American Farm Bureau Federation; and Ole A. Negaard, special consultant, Central Statistical Board.

Representatives of the farm organizations and Government agencies met in Washington recently to make preliminary studies of the questions to be asked in the 1940 census of agriculture.

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MANY SPECIES OF TREES

There are 157 different species of trees which are native to Maryalnd. it is pointed out by C. F. Winslow, specialist in forestry for the University of Maryland extension service.

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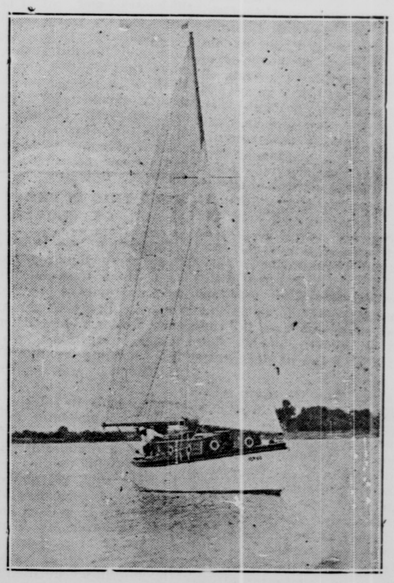

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