

On the Periphery of the Russo-Japanese War
Part II

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Japan at War: The Diary of a British observer, 1904

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Suematsu Kencho: International Envoy to Wartime Europe

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Abstracts

Steeds: David Davies, a young member of a prominent Welsh commercial/industrial family, spent the period between October 1904 and January 1905 in Japan, Korea and North China. His diary of the journey presents interesting background on conditions in Japan during what were crucial months in the Russo-Japanese war.

Nish: SUEMATSU Kencho, a senior Japanese politician, was sent to Europe at the start of the Russo-Japanese war in order to improve the image of Japan in European countries and dispel the idea of the Yellow Peril. He became the main publicist for the Japanese war effort, lecturing, writing articles and publishing books. He stayed on after the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, returning to Japan in February 1906.

Keywords: Davies; Russo-Japanese war; Korea; North China; Ainu; Dr Batchelor; Red Cross; Rendel; KOMURA Jutarō; Chefoo; Suematsu; Colonel Akashi; Yellow Peril; Kaneko; HAYASHI Tadasu; Japan Society of London; Takakusa; Tomoeda; TAKAHASHI Korekiyo; Prince Arisugawa, Stead.

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JAPAN AT WAR – THE DIARY OF A BRITISH OBSERVER, 1904

David Steeds

Introduction

The British observer I wish to speak about is David Davies. May I begin with a few words of introduction about the man.¹

David Davies was born at Llandinam in Montgomeryshire in May 1880. He was the only son of Edward Davies (1852 – 1898), and the grandson of another David Davies (1818 – 1890), the famous “Top Sawyer”.² He was educated at Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh, and then read History at Cambridge. He graduated with a Second Class Honours degree in 1903. After the early death of his father in 1898, he took over at the age of 18 the many varied commercial and industrial interests he had inherited, together with the management of the large country estate which the family had acquired in Mid-Wales. He decided to embark on a round-the-world trip in 1904-05, a Twentieth Century version of the Grand Tour or perhaps an early example of the “Gap Year”, now so popular among young people.

The part of his trip which is of interest in terms of the Russo-Japanese War was the time he spent in Japan, Korea and North China between October 1904 and January 1905. Before that, he had travelled across the Atlantic from Liverpool to New York, north to Toronto, across Canada to Vancouver, and then across the Pacific to Yokohama. He left North China in January 1905, travelling south to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Indochina. He then returned home via India and the Middle East.

David Davies landed at Yokohama on 18th October 1904, and proceeded north via Tokyo and Aomori to Hokkaido. He spent nearly three weeks in Hokkaido, visiting Hakodate, Otaru and Sapporo, and spending much time in the interior bear-hunting and observing the Ainu. He left Hokkaido on 13th November, and after spending a couple of days at Nikko, on his way south, arrived in Tokyo on 18th November. He remained in Tokyo for one month until 18th December. He stayed at the old pre-Frank Lloyd Wright Imperial Hotel.

He departed from Tokyo on 18th December, travelling via Kyoto, Nara, Kobe, and then by sea to Nagasaki. He left Nagasaki on Christmas Day, 25th December, for Korea. In his brief visit to Korea, he visited Fusan, Teiku, Seoul and Chemulpo. On 30th December he left by ship for Chefoo on the northern coast of Shantung. From Chefoo he went to Tientsin, via Taku, and spent three nights there in the Pacific Hotel, which prompted one of the most acid observations in his Diary. He described the Palace Hotel as “owned by a Chinaman and managed by an Austrian who is a swine of the first water.”³ He moved on to Peking on 9th January and stayed there for twelve days. He left Peking for the south on 21st January 1905.

The Diary

Davies kept a Diary, and we are fortunate that the sections dealing with his journey from the beginning of his travels at Liverpool in August 1904 until his stay in Hong Kong in February 1905 have survived. I am sure from odd references in his correspondence that he kept a Diary for the rest of his journey, but, unfortunately, to date I have been unable to find this. The Diary we have, while not always easy to read, is a very full and complete one. I have so far transcribed the entries for the Japanese section (18th October to 31st December 1904), and these amount to approximately 20,000 words.

Davies was young and inexperienced, but he was sharp and very observant. There are lengthy descriptions of buildings, the countryside, nature, agriculture and, above all, of people. He writes acutely of politicians, students, missionaries, soldiers, journalists, children, the Ainu. There is great detail, for example, on Nikko and Kyoto. He is occasionally naïve: he accepts rather too easily the Japanese version of their policy towards the Ainu and what they were doing in Korea.

It is important to keep in mind Davies’s perspective. He was an observant traveller; he was not a war correspondent. There is much on sight-seeing and the buying of curios. He has plans to have a Japanese tea house designed, constructed and transported back to Llandinam. This happened! He was fascinated by the tea ceremony and the wearing of kimonos.

There is very little on the war in the section of the Diary dealing with his time in Hokkaido. This section is more important for his observations on the countryside, farming, hunting and the position and culture of the Ainu. He spent a good deal of time with and learned a lot from John Batchelor, the famous evangelist to the Ainu. There are occasional references to reports of the movement of troops and torpedo boats to Port Arthur and Formosa.

From the perspective of the War, the most important part of the Diary is that relating to the time he spent in Tokyo, Korea and North China, particularly the month in the Japanese capital. When he arrived there on 18th November, Japan had been at war for nearly ten months, and many of his comments about people, places, events, topics of conversation, relate to the ongoing hostilities. There are numerous references to what was happening at Port Arthur, and news and rumours about the despatch by the Russians of the Baltic Fleet. The War seemed to be reaching something of a climax by December 1904.

Who did David Davies meet?

During the period from November 1904 to January 1905, and particularly during the month he was in Tokyo, he managed to meet an astonishing number and range of people, astonishing that is for one so young and unknown. He had not yet achieved fame as a politician or man of affairs. That was still in the future.

Some of the people he met casually, they were travelling on the same ship or staying at the same hotel. But he obviously had introductions to some important people, and what is not clear is how or from whom he obtained those introductions. The Diary does not say, and the papers that I have been able to find relating to this period are not helpful. In some cases it seems clear that one introduction led on to another: he met the head of an educational institution who gave him an introduction to a colleague in charge of another such institution.

One possibility may be the close friendship he had established with Stuart Rendel, later Lord Rendel. Rendel had been MP for Montgomeryshire until the mid-1890s, and, more important in terms of Far Eastern connections, he had been managing director of Armstrong-Whitworth, a firm with considerable interests in East Asia. If

there is a link through Rendel, it is not easy to explain the put-down that Davies received when he went to the British Legation on 22nd October:

‘.....to Embassy, to ask for introduction to Foreign Office, Mr. Barclay, chief secretary, asks for a letter of introduction, and is rather annoyed that I have none to offer him’.

Who did this young and comparatively unknown visitor meet? Here is a list of the more interesting and important people that he met and talked with, in some cases on more than one occasion. The list is selective; he met many other people. On the Japanese side, he met Mr. Hatoyama, President of Waseda University, Baron Kikuchi, President of the Peers School, Prince Tokugawa, Mr. Okura, a wealthy merchant and the owner of a private museum, Baron Mitsui, Count Matura (Matsuura?), and, perhaps most interesting of all in terms of the war, the Foreign Minister, Komura Jutaro. As far as non-Japanese are concerned, he talked with Captain Simpson of the Daily Telegraph, Bennet Burleigh, a Mr. Lloyd who was writing with the Japanese a history of the war, and in Peking he met Sir Robert Hart and Sir Robert Bredon.

It is perhaps a little odd, given the people he met, that he failed to meet either Sir Claude Macdonald in Tokyo or Sir Ernest Satow in Peking. On the 9th December he made his second visit to the Tokyo Legation:

‘To the Legation after breakfast. Wind is blowing clouds of dust. Sir Claude is too busy to see me, so Mr. Barclay spares me five minutes of his valuable time! So much for British courtesies!’

He did subsequently (15th December) meet Lady Macdonald at a lunch at the Women’s University:

‘Lady Macdonald is tall and handsome, but has a reddish tinge about her nose. This may be fancy on my part’.

During his time in Peking, on 17th January, he went round to the British Legation, and sent in his card to Satow, but the latter was too busy to see him. He sent out his secretary, Mr. Collier.

He made a serious attempt to meet with Yuan Shih-K’ai in Tientsin, but got no further than the great man’s interpreter. Yuan sent a message on 9th January saying that he was not well enough to see him.

Where did David Davies go? What institutions did he visit?

During his time in Tokyo he visited a number of institutions, often on an official or at least semi-official basis. His Diary includes long descriptions of the buildings he visited and the people he met. The institutions included Waseda University (two visits), the Imperial University, the Women's University (two visits, and he gave a lecture), the Nobles Club, the Diet (two visits), the Red Cross Hospital, the Peers School, and Mr. Kano's "jijitsu school", reckoned to be the best in Japan! Outside of Tokyo, he spent time at the Agricultural College at Sapporo, the Imperial Art School in Kyoto, and a school run by Japanese in Fusan, said to be one of thirty such schools set up in Korea.

Davies of course also did what today would be called "the touristy things". He went to the theatre to see the Forty-seven Ronin, he visited various parks, he spent time in tea houses, he was entertained by geishas. He was also invited to private houses for meetings and meals.

Interesting Issues raised by the Diary

I can only provide a brief sample:

1. On the 23rd November, Mr. Batchelor, with whom he had spent considerable time in Hokkaido, took him to meet a Mr. Lloyd and his wife:

'Mr. Lloyd, an erstwhile missionary, now devotes himself to writing a history of the war in collaboration with a Japanese officer, who supplies the facts and detail....Japan's success is awakening the East, and tremendous interest is being shown in India about the war. Thousands of copies of parts of the history Mr. Lloyd is writing are being sold and subscribed for in India.....Mr. Lloyd believes that Japan is driving China to reform in spite of herself, and that China will not allow Japan to rule her....'

I have been unable to find out the identity of Mr. Lloyd. There is an A. Lloyd who wrote a book about Admiral Togo, published in Tokyo in 1905. Davies went on to comment: 'his wife is a dreadful chatterbox but very entertaining'.

2. On the 26th November, he had a conversation in Tokyo with Captain Simpson, the Daily Telegraph correspondent:

'Back to hotel and beat Captain Simpson twice at pills. He has just returned from a most interesting trip to North China....He gives us in outline Russia's

ambitious designs in the East, and tells us how she intends to organise the armies of China....Russia not Japan is the Yellow Peril Europe has to fear.'

3. In the afternoon of the 7th December, he visited the Red Cross Hospital, where he was met and shown around by an American missionary, Mrs. Gardiner:

'She took us to see the foreign ladies making up bandages, and introduced us to several Japanese ladies of noble birth....All the legations have sent their ladies to represent them. In another room Japanese ladies, all of the noble class, were busily making up small bandages, with which wounded soldiers would be able to bandage their own wounds temporarily without assistance....These ladies have put in a great deal of work, and did not leave Tokyo in the hot weather. They work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and are all under strict discipline. The women are as keen about the war as the men, more so if anything, and are prepared to make personal sacrifices. They are going to fit out and buy a cruiser on their own account for the volunteer fleet. A young medical officer took us to see the operating room, and after some persuasion he ventured to show us some wounded soldiers in one of the wards, altho' this is supposed to be forbidden, unless one obtains a permit from the War Office....The hospital is a huge building....At present there are 3,000 patients and the hospital is still being enlarged.'

4. On the 17th December, he made the second of two visits to the Diet:

'The house is full of members....Some of the speakers prefer addressing the House from their seats, and it is quite optional whether they speak from the rostrum or not. Behind the Speaker's chair is the Sergeant-at-Arms, a big lively fellow who comes forward to the front of the platform, assuming a warlike threatening appearance, whenever there is the slightest disturbance in the House. Several of the speakers, who are tedious, are constantly greeted with shouts of 'Be brief' from the members....The Premier, Katsura, made a statement but he did not impress one at all. He had to refer constantly to copious notes, and evidently he is no orator....'

One suspects that nothing much has changed in the Diet. The House of Commons, in the early 1900s, was graced with a number of distinguished speakers such as Balfour, Lloyd George, Churchill, and later F. E. Smith. Things are different to-day.

5. On the 14th December, Davies had a meeting with Komura Jutaro, the Foreign Minister. He called on him first at the Foreign Office, but he was busy, and arranged to see Davies in the afternoon, at his private house:

'His appearance does not impress one very much. He has sharp features, and small bright eyes. We have a very interesting conversation. He gives us some details about the internal condition of Russia, and the movement for reform, which is becoming stronger as the war progresses....The reports of the industrial depression are true, tho' Russia largely depends upon the corn

harvest. This is the great factor in Russian prosperity, and hence the Japanese authorities are anxious, and intensely interested to know, what sort of crop of spring wheat there will be in Russia....Referring to the [Dogger Bank] affair, he thinks England was right not to go to war, but does not believe she will allow the Black Sea fleet to pass the Dardanelles....He declines to answer my question about the coaling of the Baltic Fleet and neutrality....At present it seems the two armies are confronting one another on the Shaho, each is afraid to take the initiative. Probably the army who first attacks will be defeated. The siege of Port Arthur will not be pushed for the present. The warships (blockading) have left to undergo cleaning and repairs, the troops are proceeding north. With regard to China, Baron Komura does not think that the war has exerted any influence. The Chinese are apathetic and little reform can be expected. For the sake of the rest of mankind! China must not be allowed to rest in her seclusion! This is Baron Komura's argument!! He cannot hold out any hope of allowing us to go to Dalny. He is extremely gracious, and we take our departure.'

Komura's views on the situation in Russia and on the future prospects for China are fascinating. In view of what was to happen in the near future, his comments on the situation at Port Arthur are intriguing. Was he deliberately misleading his visitor, or did Davies just misunderstand him?

6. On a completely different theme, I cannot ignore Davies's visit to the Peers School on the 9th December:

'There are about 900 boys in the school, two-thirds are of noble birth. Prince Tokugawa's son is head of the school at present. It is the Eton of Japan....The School is a court institution and is controlled by the Household Department. Mr. Tanaka (Ginnosuke), an old Leys and Cambridge man, comes to give the boys a lesson in Rugby, and they play very well for beginners. They have plenty of dash, but not enough weight. The ground is very hard....'

Almost a century later, Japan played Wales at Rugby in the Millennium Stadium at Cardiff.

7. During his time in Peking, Davies had a meeting with Sir Robert Hart on Monday, 16th January:

'After lunch I go and call on Sir Robert Hart, and meet him in his lovely drawing room, beautifully furnished. He is quite different from the man I expected to see....I ask him a great many questions about China, but his answers are extremely vague....He has no pronounced views about opium, and tells me two stories, one about a confirmed opium smoker who lived to be 74, and one about a boy who developed kleptomania from opium smoking and was consequently drowned by his father. He is very broad minded, but is

unable to make up his mind about things. He knows Lord Rendel very well, but does not know when he will return to England. He is exceedingly kind. He declines to say anything about the Tibet business.'

How useful is the Diary for the study of Russo-Japanese War?

I hope that some of the topics I have raised in the previous section will show the value of the Diary in providing contemporary opinions on the course of the War. In addition, there are a number of general points to make.

The overwhelming mass of the material in the Diary is not directly about the War. This in itself is an interesting point. The obvious conclusion to draw is that life was going on very much as normal in Japan, despite the War.

The references to the War in the Diary, particularly during the time that Davies spent in Tokyo – references to the despatch of troops, the numbers of wounded, the progress of the Baltic Fleet, what was happening at Port Arthur – are all very calm and measured. It confirms the impression that life was going on very much as normal. Of course the war was generally going well for Japan, both on land and at sea. On the other hand, the newly emerging Japan was at war with one of the great Imperialist powers of the day. One of the few notes of urgency or impending crisis in the Diary is struck on Sunday, 30th October, while Davies was still in Hokkaido. It was very personal:

'Russians have sunk an English fishing boat off Dover. Does it mean war? If so home as soon as possible. Waiting for more news anxiously.'⁴

The Diary gives a continuing impression of public loyalty, popular support, indeed of overwhelming enthusiasm for the war. There are numerous references to cheering crowds seeing troops off at railway stations (Davies found himself shouting 'Banzai' on one occasion!), children in processions waving flags, flags on houses and other buildings, the ladies at the Red Cross Hospital. Davies does not go out of his way to labour the point, but what comes across is the impression of a completely united country.

Davies never actually made it to the Front. While in Tokyo he tried on several occasions to obtain permission to travel to Dalny, before Port Arthur surrendered. He

had no joy either with the British Legation or at the Japanese Foreign Office. While in Chefoo in January 1905 he tried to get a permit to visit Port Arthur, which had just surrendered. Again he was unsuccessful.

The closest he actually came to hostilities was not in Japan or Korea or Manchuria, but during his brief stay in Chefoo on the north coast of Shantung province. The Diary entry for Monday, 2nd January begins:

'We woke up to find 4 Russian torpedo boats in the harbour which have apparently fled from Port Arthur. After breakfast we take photos of them with the big camera....They do not show any signs of being hit, but look as if they had seen service....The men do not look as if they were starving and apparently there is plenty of coal on board....The point is crowded with Chinese who have come to look on. Most of the shops and business houses are closed. The news of the surrender of Port Arthur arrives....After lunch I call on the English consul, on leaving and on coming round the point see three Japanese destroyers steaming into the harbour. The Russians had, some hours before, decided to disarm, and agreement had already been signed with the Chinese Customs authorities, who took possession of the boats, guns, etc. The sailors were quartered at a Chinese fort, while the officers registered at the hotel and we saw them all at dinner....The Manager was certain that the Japanese would make an attempt to cut out and run off with the Russian boats during the night as they had done on a previous occasion....We watched the harbour from the point until after 12 o'clock....Tuesday, 3rd January. The harbour is full of Japanese war vessels. Two cruisers and five smaller craft....'

But there was no fighting, and Davies left Chefoo that evening.

A Postscript. What happened to David Davies?

In 1906, Davies entered the House of Commons as the Liberal MP. for Montgomeryshire. He remained in the Commons until 1929. In 1932 he was made a peer and entered the House of Lords as Lord Davies of Llandinam.

During the early part of his political career, his interests were very much focused on Welsh affairs. He was active, for example, in helping to set up the National Library, in promoting the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, in trying to deal with the scourge of tuberculosis in Wales, and in ensuring the survival of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society. From 1914 onwards his interests became more national and international. He helped to raise a battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and took it

to the Western Front in 1915. In the summer of 1916 he was recalled to the House of Commons to become for a year Lloyd George's parliamentary private secretary. In 1917 he went on the Milner Mission to Russia. From 1918 he was a great supporter of the League of Nations.

In the early 1930s he became disillusioned with the League, and in 1932 he established the New Commonwealth Society, to promote the ideas of an International Equity Tribunal and an International Police Force.⁵ He received the support of, among others, Winston Churchill, and he became an ardent opponent of appeasement. He has little if any contact with Japan after 1905 until the late 1930s, and then his attitude was very different. In 1904-05 he was very enthusiastic about and strongly supportive of Japan in her struggle with Russia. In 1938, with reports of Japanese bombing of Chinese cities, he tried to organise a private air force to go to China and help defend those cities. He was unsuccessful.⁶

He died of cancer in 1944.

Endnotes

¹ The major source of information about David Davies's life, interests and travels, is the Lord Davies of Llandinam Papers deposited in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. There are some papers still in private hands, notably the two surviving volumes of the Diary of his round-the-world trip in 1904-05, and the political records of his time as Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire from 1906 to 1929. Also very useful is the entry by Wynn Wheldon in the Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950 (London, 1959) pp 199-200.

² See Ivor Thomas, Top Sawyer: A Biography of David Davies of Llandinam (London, 1938)

³ All quotations are taken from the Diary kept by David Davies.

⁴ The Russian Fleet left Libava on 2nd October 1904. The Dogger Bank incident took place in the early hours of 9th October. A recent study of the Baltic Fleet's journey is Constantine Pleshakov, The Tsar's Last Armada, The Epic Journey to the Battle of Tsushima (New York: Basic Books, 2002)

⁵ There is a very thorough study of the New Commonwealth in an unpublished thesis by Neil D. Bauernfeind, Lord Davies and the New Commonwealth Society, 1932-1944 (M.Phil thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1990)

⁶ See Gwyn Jenkins, 'Lord Davies, Howard Hughes and "The Quinine Proposition": The Plan to set up an International Air Force to Defend Chinese Cities from Japanese Air Raids, 1938' in The National Library of Wales Journal, Vol XXI (1980) pp 414-422.

SUEMATSU KENCHO : INTERNATIONAL ENVOY TO WARTIME EUROPE

Ian Nish

Understandably many Japanese were worried at the prospect of going to war in 1904 against Russia with its formidable military reputation. They had no way of assessing how their small army of 180,000 troops would cope with the vast tsarist army estimated at over a million men and took steps to create tensions in the Russian empire. There were also perceived dangers that other powers might rally to the cause of Russia as had happened in 1895. In this paper, we examine her advance planning in the political arena with particular reference to the activities of Baron Suematsu Kencho (1855-1920) in Europe.¹

These worries were felt in the army which took steps to undermine the Russian military effort. Those military leaders who were at the hub of Japanese decision-making in 1903, namely Tanaka Giichi, Murata Atsushi, Fukushima Yasumasa and Kodama Gentaro had had wide military experience in Europe and knew Russia's vulnerability on her periphery, notably in Poland and Finland. They took elaborate preparations to weaken Russia's ability to send troops out of Europe. The wartime exploits of Colonel Motojiro Akashi, who had been military attache in St Petersburg, in Berlin, Stockholm, London and Paris during the war are legendary and are recorded in his diary which, needless to say, plays up his own role. He arranged secret cooperation with revolutionary parties hostile to Russia and cultivated their leadership, encouraging them to go to Japan. Akashi was sanguine about the threat they posed to Russian internal security and made available funding to them. But the General Staff which was suspicious of the diversity of these parties, feared that Japan would become embroiled in the upsurge of minority nationalist movements in Europe which might well continue long after the war in Manchuria finished. For this reason it was less forthcoming with monetary aid than Akashi wanted. The really big money, asked for by Akashi and endorsed by Japanese diplomats around Europe, was not made available until the spring and summer of 1905; and by that time the fate of Russia's armies had been sealed. Nonetheless Akashi's activities were impressive and stand comparison in many

ways with those of the allied Special Operations Executive (SOE) during the second world war.²

On the political front Japan's objects were rather different. They were not so much aimed at doing down Russia as at improving Japan's image abroad. Japan was aware that she had been very unpopular with all the powers during her war with China in 1894-5 and felt that she should explain her case better this time. Suspicion of her had resulted in 1895 in the Triple Intervention of Russia, France and Germany which had deprived her of territories she had won in battle and negotiation. In 1904 she worried that at any moment France and Germany might in some way again intervene in favour of Russia. She had been trying to detach Germany from this unholy alliance over the intervening decade. But, if anything, the reactions there had seemed to become more hostile. The kaiser, William II, had emphasized in speeches the yellow peril, the danger that would come from over-powerful yellow nations.³

The cabinet addressed this problem at its strategic discussion on the possible outbreak of war with Russia on 30 December 1903. The resolution reads:

'The white man's fear of the Yellow Peril is not heard much these days, but it does persist still among Europeans; and there is the problem [for us] that it may return and cause them to join forces against this false illusion. If Japan and China were to join together in war against Russia, fears of the Yellow Peril might emerge again and lead to Germany, France and other countries wanting to interfere.'⁴

Outside government circles this danger was also widely accepted. Thus the eminent scholar, Okakura Tenshin, writes :

'The expression Yellow Peril was first coined in Germany... Naturally...we become suspicious when Russia takes up the cry at the very moment when she is tightening the grasp of her mailed hand on Manchuria and Korea.'⁵

In Japan's view it was vitally necessary to influence European public opinion in her

favour. She thought that there was a danger that neutrals would turn over to the enemy side as happened ten years earlier. Japan's leaders may have been inclined to exaggerate the influence of the kaiser's speeches; but there was every reason to take precautions as she embarked on a dangerous war. If European powers were gripped by yellow peril fever, a limited war with Russia might turn into a global war which would exhaust Japan.

The next stage was for Japan to choose envoys to send abroad in an unofficial capacity. Baron Kaneko Kentaro was asked by Genro Ito Hirobumi to go to the United States, while Baron Suematsu Kencho was asked by the cabinet to go to Europe. Suematsu had first gone to Britain as an attache of the Japanese legation in 1878 on the recommendation of Ito. But he gave up a diplomatic career to study at the University of Cambridge where he graduated BA, LLB and LLM(1888). He acquired great facility in English (like many of his generation in Japan) and embarked on a translation of the Japanese classic Genji Monogatari which was published by Trubner in 1882. In 1889 he married Ito's second daughter despite the gap in age, he being 35 and she 22. His first major official assignment was to preside over the tribunal of enquiry into the disaster of the sinking of the Kowshing, a British freighter which had been chartered by China in 1894 to carry her troops to the Korean battlefield and was sailing under the Red Ensign. It was sunk by the Japanese cruiser, Naniwa. It became a major international issue; and it was essential to defuse the situation in view of the brouhaha which had been caused abroad. In his capacity as President of the Imperial Board of Legislation, he conducted an investigation and was able to report to Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu on 10 August 1894 that : 'it is not within the sphere of my duty to discuss the merit of the action of the Naniwa from an international lawyer's point of view; it is beyond all doubt, from all the facts now in our possession, that no impartial critic will ever pronounce that her action was wrong'⁶

Suematsu, after further duties in Korea, was appointed baron in 1896 and entered the House of Peers. He became minister of communications in Ito's brief ministry in 1898 and home minister in Ito's fourth cabinet (1900-1). As the likelihood of war grew, he drew attention early in January 1904 to the need to counter any foreign hostility towards

Japan and present the case for making war most persuasively. The cabinet reacted favourably and gave him seven guidelines for his mission to Europe, the essence being to prevent any return of the far eastern Dreibund of 1895 and to minimize the effect of Yellow Peril propaganda. Among these guidelines which were broadly similar to those given to Kaneko the most important was:

'the tendency [netsu lit. fever] to fear the yellow race still exists in the hearts of European and American peoples [OBeijin]; since Russia is stirring up this said netsu, we must try to prevent it recurring.'⁷

Suematsu in London

Suematsu was ordered to use London as the base for his mission to Europe and to liaise with Hayashi Tadasu, the minister there, with whom he was to have an equivalent rank. He was to work under Hayashi who was also privy to the dealings of Colonel Akashi. Of course relations between the two were not always cordial since Suematsu was confident and outspoken. But he was dependent on the legation for funds. He set off on 10 February by the Iyo maru of NYK line. On the way he visited Washington where he met President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of State John Hay. He then proceeded to London where he carried a letter of introduction to Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne from his father-in-law. In other words this was no second-rate mission; Suematsu was a top-ranking politician, as was his opposite number in America, Kaneko.

Suematsu spent the war based in London but travelled much. It is of course not easy to trace all his activities. But he spent his time lecturing widely, publishing articles in journals and newspapers and writing letters to The Times. Professor Matsumura seems to draw a distinction between his two functions : koho katsudo (publicity) and koho bunka gaiko (cultural diplomacy by publicity). The breadth of his publications is illustrated by the categories of writing which he undertook :

War-oriented : 'Russland und Japan' trans. Franz Mueller, 1904, 32pp;

'How Russia brought on the war' and its French translation, 'Comment la Russie amena la guerre', Probstain, 1905, 62pp;

'Chinese expansion historically reviewed', lecture to the Central Asian Society, London;

'The strength and conduct of the Japanese army'

Writings of a general cultural nature:

'The Japanese Character', Journal of Ethological Society, 29 March 1905;

'The Ethics of Japan', Journal of Society of Arts, London, 10 March 1905 reprinted by Smithsonian

'Women's education in Japan' and '[Japanese] Art and Literature' in A. Stead (ed.), Japan by the Japanese, London, 1904

Because of the alliance, Britain was assumed to be favourable to Japan's cause. Indeed Suematsu reported that there was no sign of Yellow Peril thinking (Kokaron) by summer 1905. But continental Europe was assumed to be different (though the conclusion of the Anglo-French entente in April 1904 certainly simplified his task.) In general, he cultivated a relationship with the press throughout Europe, and wrote for publications like Le Temps, La Revue (Paris), Le Memorial Diplomatique, L'Echo de Paris, Courier International, and Courier Europeen; and in the German language the Deutsche Revue, Koelnische Zeitung and the Wiener Tageblatt. In placing these articles or having them copied, he must have been greatly helped by Japanese legations in the various European countries. Even Novoye Vremya reproduced one of his articles.

At the end of his stay he published two books, the main one being The Risen Sun. As he tells us in the Foreword, written in August 1905 in Queen Anne's Mansion, London,

his secretaries compiled his various articles and speeches into this book which was then edited by his publisher Constables. This book was also translated into European languages and published in USA.⁸ His second book, A Fantasy of Far Japan, a less substantial work, was also translated into French. It was a time when the Japanese government was encouraging publications in English by Japanese in order to educate the citizens of their ally, the British, so Suematsu's publications were not exceptional. But it is likely that they were subsidized.⁹

Suematsu kept close to the Japan Society of London. At the annual dinner of that body in May 1904 he proposed the main toast of the evening 'in most eloquent terms.' He was later called on, owing to the unexpected illness of one of the lecturers at its monthly meetings, to volunteer at a moment's notice to give an address to the society. The substance of his talk on 'Family Relations in Japan' is not of relevance here. But it shows that he was fluent and confident (as we should expect from one who had been active in the Cambridge union) and that some of his talks were not propagandist but general discussions of Japanese society and culture.¹⁰

From time to time Suematsu also reported home on the political situation. Thus he sent his personal opinion on aspects of Europeans' reaction to the events of the war : the battle of Mukden; the naval battle of Tsushima; and the Portsmouth treaty. He discussed the strength of the British alliance. Indeed he was thought to have played some part in promoting its revision and renewal in August 1905. Suematsu was also open to be interviewed by journalists. Of necessity there was the charge that he was duplicating the functions of the legation; and Minister Hayashi was often at odds with him. Coordination was difficult; but Suematsu who had the benefit of travel on the continent was able to report on attitudes there which were not in Hayashi's remit.¹¹

Suematsu's companions

In his mission, Suematsu was accompanied by associates drawn from academic backgrounds. The first was Dr Takakusu Junjiro (1866-1945), a prominent Buddhist

scholar who had studied in Oxford, France and Germany in the 1890s and had later become professor of Tokyo Imperial University. His instructions were, we are told, also to argue against the prevalent Yellow Peril doctrine in Europe. In his case, unlike that of Suematsu, it is hard to find any evidence of his activities. But the Japan Society of London did announce that Professor Takakusu, MA, LittD, PhD and member of the Society, would present a paper on 11 April 1906 on the topic 'Buddhism as we find it in Japan'. Since he had already left Britain by that date, the paper which he had prepared was read on his behalf. But summaries of his comparatively anodyne talk were carried in the press.¹² Another of Suematsu's companions was Professor Tomoeda Takahiko, also of the University of Tokyo. He too had studied in European universities and presumably hoped to renew contact with his former colleagues and establish good relations with them. This part of Suematsu's mission appears to have been an appeal to the intellectual community, a relatively sophisticated form of propaganda in which Japanese scholars were mobilized to use their good offices with acquaintances abroad to improve diplomatic relations.

Since Suematsu was based in London, it was not unexpected that he came in contact with Takahashi Korekiyo, deputy governor of the Yokohama Specie Bank, whom the government sent to Europe to arrange loans for the Japanese war effort. Takahashi spent most of the war years in Europe and was based in London, except for the brief period in January-February 1905 when he was recalled. He travelled widely to Europe and the United States to meet bankers. As it happened, Takahashi had been a teenage friend of Suematsu in Tokyo in 1871 and it was not unnatural that they should now work together in the City of London. British financiers were not particularly attracted by the idea of war bonds for Japan in spite of the alliance being in existence. Takahashi, therefore, needed all the help he could get from friends. Suematsu says that he saw it as one of his functions 'to make smooth the road to raising war loans.'¹³

Another line of approach by the Japanese government falls in the category of royal diplomacy. The royal couple, Prince and Princess Arisugawa, visited Europe in June 1905. The prince had trained with the Royal Navy and had attended Queen Victoria's jubilee celebrations. This was, therefore, a return visit to enable the couple to attend an

Exhibition of Japanese Arms and Armour in London and perform other functions. They were much feted by the king and the lord mayor of London because of the victories which the Japanese armies had won. The Japan Society especially arranged an elaborate garden party for 2000 guests in the Botanical Garden in Regents Park on 27 June. There could be no doubt about the splendid reception which the couple were given. It suggested that there was little need for Japan to win over public opinion in Britain which was solidly in favour of the Japanese cause. The additional purpose of their visit to Europe was to attend the wedding of the German Crown Prince. The couple were also most cordially treated in Germany, especially by the German emperor. It is odd that the Japanese should have sent a royal prince when the Yellow Peril which was so much in their thoughts was thought to be a creation of Emperor William II. The place of royal visits of this kind and their impact on the political process are the subject of scholarly disagreement; but in the days of monarchy and social elites they had some significance, even if only symbolically.¹⁴

Taken together, these steps which Japan took during the first critical month of the war were not panic measures but careful precautions. They were put into place at short notice and may have been uncoordinated; but there does seem to have been a basis of logic in them. And those who were drafted in at short notice accepted their lot as part of their patriotic duty in spite all the disruption it caused in their lives. There were of course other similar measures being taken elsewhere. Similar to Suematsu's writings was the well-informed book by Asakawa Kanichi, teacher at Yale, on The Russo-Japanese Conflict. Asakawa had access to a range of telegrams dealing with the run-up to the outbreak of war which was not readily available to the general public and presented a scholarly account of the historical origins of the war. Another scholar approached to lend his weight was Okakura Kakuzo (Tenshin) (1862-1913) who was urged by his university friend, Makino Nobuaki, then minister in Vienna, to 'write something in order to defend Japan from Western criticism during the Russo-Japanese war'. This was the origin of Okakura's book The Awakening of Japan.¹⁵

Suematsu had an office with secretaries for his public relations work. He seems to have been close to a number of journalists and writers on Japan such as Alfred Stead who

was quite influential and published in 1904 the informative Japan by the Japanese to which Suematsu was a notable contributor.¹⁶ Thus, a cluster of books on political themes from established British publishers appeared around the end of the war.

Suematsu did not return to Japan as soon as the Portsmouth treaty was signed in September 1905. He felt it was necessary to observe how the situation after the peace treaty was regarded in various European countries and to stay on longer. He made time to fit in a visit to eastern Europe, taking in Budapest and Constantinople. On 28 October he was thanked by the Foreign Ministry for his efforts during the war and asked through Minister Hayashi when it would suit him to return home. Would he telegraph the date of his departure? Because he was in the ambiguous position of being an independent politician rather than an employee, he was treated in a remarkably considerate way. He requested time to clear up his affairs and eventually left from Paris on New Years Day, 1906, along with Takakusa and Tomoeda. He reached Japan's shores on 12 February after an absence of two years. In recognition of his contribution to the war effort, he was made a Privy Councillor in 1906.¹⁷

Suematsu's report on his mission was addressed to Prime Minister Saionji Kimmochi and Foreign Minister Hayashi Tadasu. That gives a clue to the date of what was an undated document because Hayashi (lately returned from the London embassy) took office at the Foreign Ministry on 19 May. It recounted briefly the achievements of his unofficial mission without giving any special revelations. It was much shorter than the report of Baron Kaneko, his opposite number in New York.¹⁸

Suematsu has been the focus of this essay. He was the kingpin in Japan's publicity effort to win the hearts and minds of European people. The fact that he was an Anglophile through and through was central to his role. He was an admirer of the English language and literature. He was an enthusiast for the Anglo-Japanese alliance and had been asked in his instructions to galvanize support for it. Indeed he may have played some role in the revision of that treaty in August 1905. He saw the main object of the alliance (as of the Entente Cordiale) as being the worthy one of avoidance of international friction in the east. He continued to proclaim its merits in an article he wrote

in retirement in 1917.¹⁹ During the war years he had been the instrument for retaining the goodwill of the British people. British opinion at the opening of the war was broadly anti-Russian so his task there was less than on the continent. In Europe it was more of an uphill task. The chance that one of the neutral powers there would become an active belligerent was slight. But cordiality was generally maintained. How far this was achieved by the successes of the Japanese armies and the defeats inflicted on the Russians and how far it depended on Suematsu's arguments must remain unproven.

If one compares Suematsu's achievement with that of Kaneko in the United States, it must be said that Kaneko played an essential role throughout the war and especially as go-between between President Roosevelt and the Japanese plenipotentiaries at the critical stage in the Portsmouth negotiations. In contrast with that, Suematsu's sojourn was not politically spectacular and involved no particular crisis. He had a public relations role more than a diplomatic one. On the other hand, Professor Matsumura argues that Suematsu's contribution was the more enduring of the two because of his long-term contribution to an understanding of Japanese literature and history.²⁰ Certainly his writings - and probably his speeches - were as much cultural as political; and their appeal was wide-ranging and impressive.

Turning finally to Japan, Suematsu writing from Paris on 1 September 1905 gives an insight into how Japan's statesmen viewed his mission at its beginning :

'Time was when [Japan] was looked down upon by many as a petty, infantile, shallow, bellicose and aggressive nation. Our sincere hope is that misconceptions of that kind may now be totally dispelled'.²¹

This reflects Japan's desire to be recognized as one of the 'civilized countries'. Japanese were sensitive to accusations about the Yellow Peril, essentially a colour issue. But it was really part of racial suspicions of Japan, couched in terms of colour. Suematsu addressed these and the political consequences which flowed from them. On that point, Japan and Suematsu won the argument among the elites of Europe. Japan was shown to have real power and the Yellow Peril debate slowly lapsed.

Endnotes

- ¹ Suematsu is the form used in this essay, though he himself generally transliterated his name as 'Suyematsu'. The major study on Suematsu is Matsumura Masayoshi, Portsmouth e no michi : Kokaron to Yoroppa no Suematsu Kencho, Tokyo : Hara Shobo, 1987, pp. 25-6 (hereafter cited as 'Matsumura, Suematsu'). See also Matsumura, 'Introduction to Suematsu's Risen Sun' in Peter O'Connor (ed.), Japanese Propaganda : Selected Readings, series 1 : Books, vol.3, Folkestone : Global Oriental, 2004 (hereafter cited as 'O'Connor')
- ² Akashi Motojiro, Rakka Ruisui : Colonel Akashi's report on his secret cooperation with Russian revolutionary Parties during the Russo-Japanese war, Helsinki : SHS, 1988. With contributions by Inaba Chiharu, Olavi Falt and Antti Kujala; Inaba Chiharu, Akashi kosaku :Boryaku no NichiRo senso, Tokyo : Maruzen, 1995
- ³ Iikura Akira, Yellow Peril no shinwa [mythology]: Teikoku Nihon to koka no gyakusetsu, Tokyo : Sairyusha, 2004
- ⁴ Japanese Foreign Ministry, Nihon gaiko bunsho, Meiji 36, vol.I, doc. 50 (hereafter cited as 'NGB')
- ⁵ Okakura Tenshin (Kakuzo), The Awakening of Asia, New York : Century Co, 1904, p.219
- ⁶ K. Bourne and DC Watt (eds), British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Part I series E 'Asia' (Maryland : University Press of America, 1989) vol. 4, Sino-Japanese war, docs 490-3. The major study on Kaneko is Matsumura Masayoshi, NichiRo senso to Kaneko Kentaro : koho gaiko no kenkyu, Tokyo : Shinyudo, 1980
- ⁷ NGB NichiRo senso, vol V, doc. 441, appendix; Matsumura, Suematsu, pp. 25-6
- ⁸ The Risen Sun, London : Constable, 1905, viii ff. The American edition with the same name, New York : Dutton, 1905; the French edition, L'empire du soleil levant, Paris : Librairies Hachette, 1906, translated by Princess Ferdinand de Faucigny-Lucinge. A fantasy of Far Japan : Summer Dream Dialogues, London : Constable, 1905. A good account of Suematsu's books is given in Ian Ruxton, 'Suematsu Kencho : Statesman, Bureaucrat, Diplomat, Journalist, Poet and Scholar' in Hugh Cortazzi (ed.), Biographical Portraits, Folkestone : Global Oriental, vol. 5, 2004, pp. 69-71
- ⁹ See my article 'Introducing Japanese Studies in Britain' in John WM Chapman (ed),

'European Association for Japanese Studies, 1973-88', Brighton : Sussex U., 1988, pp. 52-3. Other British journals which carried Suematsu's articles were Nineteenth Century and After, The Independent Review, The Outlook and Journal of Central Asian Society. His letters to The Times as entered in its Index would not exceed ten.

¹⁰ Japan Society of London, Proceedings, 1904-6

¹¹ Matsumura, Suematsu, pp. 244-5. NGB, NichiRo senso, vol. V, docs 441, 453 and 455

¹² Japan Society of London, Proceedings, 1904-6

¹³ Toshio Suzuki, Japanese Government Loan Issues on the London Capital Market, 1870-1913, London : Athlone, 1994, chs 5 and 6;
Oshima Kiyoshi, Takahashi Korekiyo, Tokyo : Iwanami, 1969, shows that Takahashi was absent from Tokyo on two occasions (Feb. 1904-Jan. 1905; Feb. 1905-Feb. 1906); Tamaki Norio, 'London Money Market, 1881-1903' in Ian Nish (ed.), Biographical Portraits, vol. I, 1994, pp. 121-32

¹⁴ Hugh Cortazzi, Japan Society, 1891-2000, edited by Anne Kaneko, London, 2001, pp. 15-16. See my article, 'Inoue Katsunosuke' in Hugh Cortazzi (ed.), Biographical Portraits, vol. V, 2004, pp. 126-9. Inoue was later given a special decoration for his services during the war. Japan Weekly Mail, 8 July 1905

¹⁵ Asakawa Kanichi, The Russo-Japanese Conflict : its causes and issues, Boston : Houghton, Mifflin, 1904. The book was written in August and published in November 1904, summaries having appeared in Yale Review, May and August. See also Adrian Pinnington, 'Introduction' to Okakura's Awakening of Japan in O'Connor, vol. 2, p. 10 quoting Tsubouchi

¹⁶ Alfred Stead (ed.) Japan by the Japanese: A survey by its highest authorities, London : Heinemann, 1904. Also Japan Society of London cuttings

¹⁷ NGB, NichiRo senso, vol. 5, doc. 459

¹⁸ NGB, NichiRo senso, vol. 5, doc. 459, appendix

¹⁹ Su[y]ematsu, 'Powers of the Far East' in The New East, vol. I/2, July 1917, pp. 45-7. Ian Nish, Anglo-Japanese Alliance : the diplomacy of two island empires, 1894-1907, London : Athlone, 1966, p.304

²⁰ NGB, NichiRo senso, vol. 5, doc. 457, appendix, pp. 704-74. Matsumura, Suematsu, pp. 279-83

²¹ Suematsu, The Risen Sun, x-xi

Attention is drawn to two articles which have appeared since this paper was delivered : Noboru Koyama, 'Cultural exchange at the time of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance' in P.P. O'Brien (ed.), Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-22, London : RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, pp. 202-3; and Ian Ruxton, 'Suematsu Kencho : Statesman, Bureaucrat, Diplomat, Journalist, Poet and Scholar' in Hugh Cortazzi (ed.), Biographical Portraits, vol. 5, Folkestone : Global Oriental, 2005, ch. 6