

Arms Race in Asia

● By WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLAIN

The Far East is arming competitively to the limit of its financial and economic resources. This was the strongest single impression I gained from a recent trip which took me from Tokyo to Singapore and back. In the course of the journey I visited Central and South China, the Philippines, Malaya, Siam, French Indo-China and Formosa.

For several reasons the oriental arms race has made less impression on public consciousness than the more obvious and spectacular race for military supremacy in Europe. For one thing, the countries affected are much poorer and are hence less able to approach perfection in equipment with weapons of destruction than are the leading European powers. Only the frontier between the Soviet Union and Manchoukuo has bristled with fortifications in the European style. Distances are greater in the Far East than in Europe, and sea power, which is less demonstrative than are land armaments, is relatively more important.

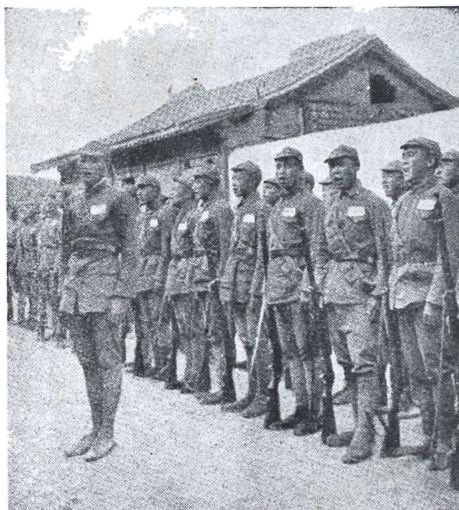
So the casual wanderer in the Orient has been less impressed by visible war preparations than he would have been in Europe. But the Far Eastern arms race has been none the less a reality. Every East Asian country is panting and staggering under a burden of armament that has been growing heavier from year to year, and that shows no sign of abating.

Consider first the position of Japan. Appropriations for the army and the navy have approximately trebled since the seizure of Manchuria. (In the fiscal year 1931-1932 the army received 227,480,000 yen, the navy 227,120,000 yen. The corresponding figures in 1937-1938 are 704,900,000 yen and 658,600,000 yen.) The fighting services absorb almost half of the record budget expenditures, of which one quarter will be covered by floating new bonds. If one adds the interest charges on the national debt that has grown by more than fifty per cent since 1931, very little is left for ordinary government expenses.

Many of the features of the controlled economy which is so characteristic of the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy today are being forced on Japan piecemeal because of the exigencies of a military preparedness program which is out of proportion to the country's resources and real economic strength. Steel at the present time, for instance, is practically reserved

for the needs of the army and navy. Because of the acute shortage and the bounding world price of this most necessary industrial raw material, new public buildings are obliged to get along with substitutes for steel.

Control over imports is constantly tightening; and a rationing system, which would place the demands of the fighting services first and those of the ordinary consumer last, is in course of preparation. What is even more discouraging to thoughtful Japanese than the sacrifices which have already been made in the name of national



Red Soldiers in North China

security is the fact that there seems to be no end to the process. The increased monetary outlay has not been wasted; Japan's forces on land and sea are much stronger than they were six years ago. But from the relative point of view Japan's intensive armament has been a Sisyphus affair; its strength vis-à-vis its principal rivals has diminished rather than increased.

Japan is now maintaining in Manchoukuo the largest military establishment it has ever possessed on the mainland. The wide rolling plains and wooded hills of Manchuria have represented both an arsenal and a training-ground for the Japanese army. Military control is much more sweeping in Manchoukuo than it is in Japan proper. The whole economy of the new state, the railway, road and harbor construction, the preeminent attention bestowed on such industries as chemical, cement, iron and steel, oil refining, all are dictated by

strategic considerations. And Japanese peasant conscripts are receiving a realistic training in warfare, at least of the guerilla type, when they hunt down the men whom the Chinese call insurgent "patriots" and the Japanese "bandits."

But, swiftly as Japan's strength has grown, Russia's military preparations have gone forward at a still more rapid tempo. Japan can scarcely feel much sense of security when it knows that at Vladivostok is a large concentration of Soviet bombing airplanes, capable of raiding Tokyo within three and a half hours. The Soviet Far Eastern army is immensely more formidable, as a fighting force, than the masses of troops, badly led and poorly supplied, which the czarist régime poured into Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

The Soviet and Japanese armies are among the most secretive in the world. Accurate official figures about the forces which face each other along the far-flung curved frontier of Northern Manchoukuo are impossible to obtain. But there is general agreement that the Soviet forces in the Far East are in the neighborhood of 250,000; few observers are inclined to estimate the Japanese forces in Manchoukuo at more than half of that figure. There can be little doubt that the Soviet Far Eastern army is also definitely superior to the Kwantung army, the Japanese force of occupation in Manchoukuo, in airplanes, tanks and armored cars. Indeed the Japanese army has just entered on a special arms replenishment program, calling for an expenditure of 2,000,000 yen, spread over several years, for the purpose of increasing the quantity and enhancing the quality of its aviation, mechanized and motorized units. But there is certainly no guaranty that the Soviet Union, which has almost two and a half times Japan's man power and is vastly richer in coal, iron, oil, gold and other natural resources, will not move ahead with at least equal speed during these years.

Japan's comparative armament status seems equally bleak in the naval field. Great Britain has launched out on an arms expansion program which calls for the annual expenditure, over the next five years, of approximately £300,000,000—a sum which is almost double the entire Japanese annual budget. Much of this expenditure will be for warships; and hitherto America has adhered to the principle of naval parity

with Great Britain. Japan's military and naval leaders have not yet found the answer to the challenge implied in the following passage in the speech which Mr. Yukio Ozaki, veteran liberal parliamentarian, delivered before the last session of the Diet: "The army says it needs money, but the essential need is men. Japan has a population of only 70,000,000; the Soviet Union and China have hundreds of millions. The essential factor of the navy is money. But Great Britain and the United States outstrip Japan in wealth by the difference between clouds and mud."

Japan's present position in the armaments race is that of a runner who is beginning to lose his wind. One ominous symptom is that steep price increases are beginning to nullify the effectiveness of the larger military and naval appropriations. Japan must face the full brunt of the world-wide rise in the price of base metals, because much the greater part of its important raw materials, with the exception of coal and copper, must be imported. Moreover the steady increase in budget appropriations and the diversion of large sums to war production are producing inflationary effects. The cost of living, which had been creeping upward steadily but very slowly after the devaluation of the yen in 1932, took a sharp jump during the first months of 1937. Japanese labor, docile and weakly organized as it is, began to show signs of restlessness. Strikes multiplied, and all-around wage increases which will raise the costs of production and make the army and navy building programs more expensive seem unavoidable.

Japan at the present time is in the peculiar position of being faced with many

of the economic problems of the modern-style militarized dictatorship without having gone over to full-blooded dictatorial rule. This discrepancy, as much as any other single factor, accounts for the chronic uncertainty of Japanese political life, for the frequent changes of Cabinet and the strained relations between the Cabinets and the Diet.

The Soviet Union has made great military and economic efforts to keep ahead of Japan in the armaments race. According to an estimate of the Foreign Policy Association, the Soviet Union led the world in military appropriations in 1936, with an expenditure of \$3,000,000,000. Japan's combined military and naval outlay in the same year was approximately \$300,000,000. Even if one allows for some exaggeration of the real value of the Soviet expenditure, because of the uncertain purchasing power of the ruble, there can be little doubt that the actual military preparedness effort of the Soviet Union was considerably in excess of Japan's. The Soviet Union is much richer than Japan in natural resources and has been placing at least an equal strain on the endurance of its population.

While no foreign observer has been permitted to make any detailed investigation of the Soviet military zone in Eastern Siberia, it is generally recognized, by Japanese military experts as well as by other observers, that the Soviet position has greatly strengthened during the past few years. There is now not the slightest chance of overrunning this vast but sparsely populated territory by means of the sudden raid that might have been successful in 1931 or 1932. Steel and concrete fortifications have been erected at the

more accessible points along the Amur and Ussuri rivers; a flotilla of submarines at Vladivostok threatens the security of Japan's sea communications with Korea in the event of war; the Soviet air concentrations have been noted. The double-tracking of the Trans-Siberian Railway, now almost completed, promises a swifter flow of reinforcements and supplies.

Fully realizing that distance is still Russia's greatest handicap in a war with Japan, the Soviet military leaders have gone to great pains to make their Far Eastern army as nearly self-sufficient as possible. Vast quantities of provisions, supplies of all kinds and oil, so necessary for the mechanized units, have been stored with a view to making the army independent of the supplies from Russia which might be cut off or interrupted.

Russians, like Japanese, have been obliged to make considerable sacrifices in order to promote a national preparedness effort which has been projected on a two-power scale, since Soviet leaders have frequently expressed the conviction that their country will ultimately be compelled to fight Germany in the West and Japan in the East. Food conditions, while they have undoubtedly improved from the incredibly low level of the hardest years of the first Five-Year Plan, 1931, 1932 and 1933, are still unsatisfactory, if one may judge from the prices of foodstuffs (as compared with the wage standards) and from Soviet figures of livestock, still well below the prewar and 1928 numbers. The manufacture of consumers' goods is still stunted as to quantity and quality in order to feed the insatiable maw of the war industries.

Despite or perhaps because of the intensive competition in arms, the prospect of a Soviet-Japanese war seems to be receding rather than advancing. A kind of uneasy equilibrium, resting on tanks, airplanes and bayonets, has been established along the great rivers, the Amur, the Ussuri and the Argun, which mark the new Russo-Japanese military frontier. Hayashi's recent statement that there have been twenty-four hundred border incidents between Russia and Japan since the establishment of Manchoukuo is capable of an optimistic as well as of a pessimistic interpretation. If it shows that there has been a conspicuous absence of good will in frontier relations, it also shows that neither country has been disposed to take advantage of innumerable pretexts for resorting to large-scale hostilities.

China is another active participant in the Far Eastern arms race. Over thirty per cent of the last national budget of 990,658,450 Chinese dollars (a little less than \$300,000,000) was earmarked for military expenditures. A considerable part of the provincial revenue certainly goes for troop maintenance; and the total outlay for ar-



Grim-faced Members of Japan's Cabinet

ment is further swelled by indeterminate contributions from funds which are at Chiang Kai-shek's personal disposition (the lucrative opium revenue, for instance, which does not appear in the budget) and by reconstruction projects of a strategic character.

China has made a special effort to build up an efficient air force. Last year, Chinese purchases of aeronautical material in the United States exceeded those of any other power and were valued at \$6,872,000, American money. A large German military mission, headed by General Von Falkenhause, has been stationed at Nanking for several years. While it has been notably adverse to publicity, its services are believed to have been especially useful in training the new type of Chinese officer, well versed in modern warfare and devoted to the state, not to any private war lord, and in strengthening the defenses which have been set up on the hills overlooking Nanking.

Military training is now obligatory for Chinese students and government employees. China's plans for a war precipitated by Japanese aggression have been framed on the assumption that the coast towns could not be held, in view of the overwhelming Japanese naval superiority. Strategic railways, of which the most important is the one connecting Canton with Hankow and the Yangtze Valley, and highways to such remote centers of China's huge interior as Chungking, Kweiyang and Yunnanfu, have been and are being rushed to completion. Arsenalns have been established at places which are reasonably safe against air attack; such as Sianfu, scene of Chiang Kai-shek's detention a few months ago, Chengtu, the capital of Szechwan, Chungking, on the upper Yangtze, and Nanning, in Kwangsi Province.

It is not only the large nations of East Asia, Japan, China and the Soviet Union, which are arming as rapidly as financial and economic resources permit. The spirit of intensive rearmament has spread to the smaller countries as well.

My trip took me from China to the Philippines. And one of the first sights that strikes the visitor to these green, palm-fringed islands is the number of new camps where the first conscripts of the Philippine national army are learning to drill, march and shoot. The Philippines until very recently were guarded only by a force of 4,000 or 5,000 American troops, concentrated in and around Manila, and by 6,000 Philippine Scouts, Filipino soldiers who were enlisted in the United States army. The American troops will be withdrawn as soon as the islands acquire the status of full independence—which will be on July 4, 1946, or perhaps, by arrangement, even earlier.

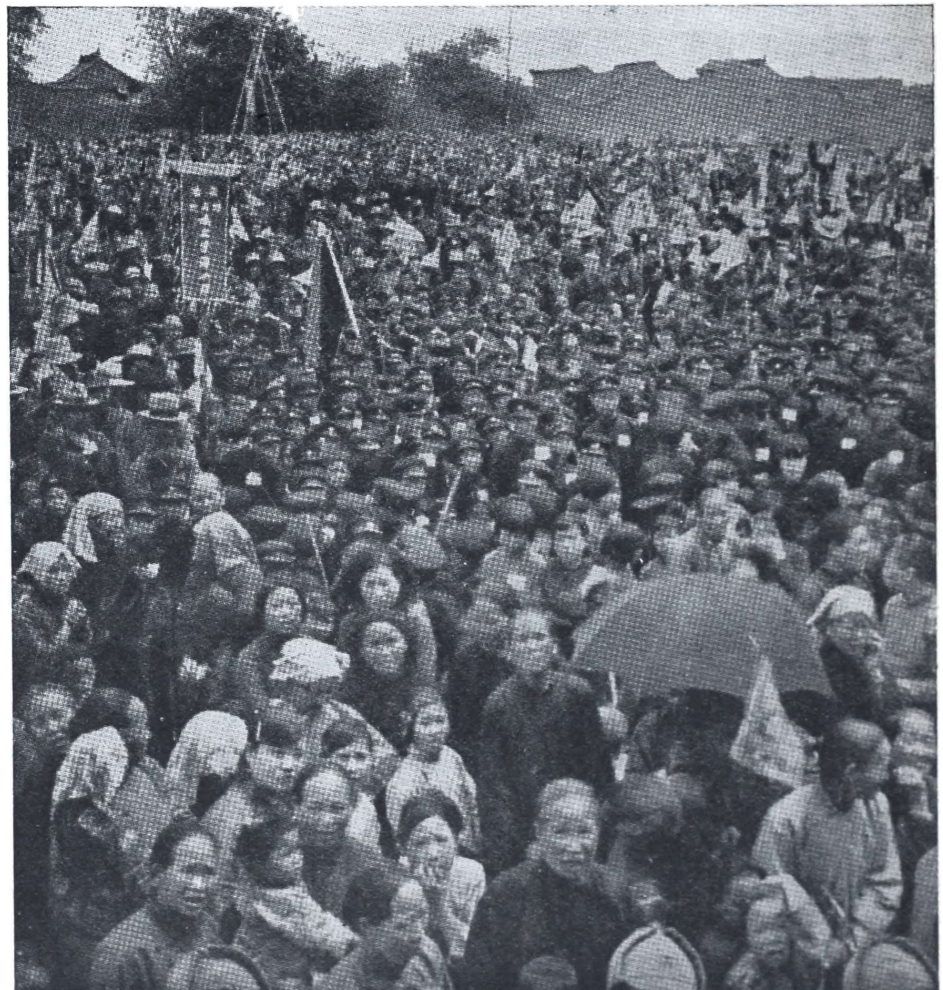
What was more important than the physical presence of American troops, who

have not seen action in the Philippines for many years, was the previous certainty that an outside attack on the islands would entail war with the United States. With a view to filling up the large gap which will be left in the pattern of national security when this assurance disappears, the Commonwealth government has put into effect a universal service defense scheme which was worked out by Major-General Douglas MacArthur, who has been serving as military adviser to President Quezon. Under this scheme 40,000 Filipinos will receive six months of camp training every year, so that a trained reserve of several hundred thousand men will be built up within a decade.

General MacArthur, in conversation with me in Manila, expressed enthusiastic confidence that the Philippines, as a result of his scheme, would be able to defend themselves against any invader. He emphasized such points as the difficulty of effecting large landing operations in the face of active opposition, the rugged character of the Philippine coastline, the adaptability of the forests and jungles to prolonged guerilla fighting. Not all observers are so optimistic about the ability of the islands to defend themselves against an attack in

force from Japan. There is a disquieting possibility of air raids; the northernmost of the Philippines can be seen on a clear day from the southern promontory of Formosa. It is not clear how expensive aircraft and naval units can be purchased out of the annual allotment of 16,000,000 pesos (\$8,000,000) which has been set aside as the permanent military item in the Philippine budget. But, whatever the future results may be, the Philippine government has committed itself to a program which involves the creation of the largest organized armed force the islands have seen since the times of Magellan, or before.

The seven thousand islands and islets of the Philippines merge, toward the south and southwest, with the vast archipelago of the Netherlands Indies, where over 65,000,000 Malays and other natives are under the rule of a tiny country thousands of miles away in Europe. Intensive Japanese commercial penetration, rate wars between Japanese and Dutch shipping lines and loose talk in Japan about the necessity for "southward advance," without its being made clear whether this advance is to be naval, political or purely economic, have generated no little concern among the Dutch administrators of this rich and extensive



Can These Masses Be United?

Philippine Commonwealth May Train Men for Foreign Service

An interview with Dr. Regala, Professor of International Law at the Law College, University of the Philippines yielded a JOURNAL representative some very interesting information about plans which Malacañan has on the fire for the training of a group of men who, some time in the indefinite future, may form the nucleus of a Philippine consular and diplomatic corps abroad.

Dr. Regala, who has been detailed to the Division of Foreign Affairs at Malacañan from the Department of Justice (his regular position) stated that, at present, there are four men working in the Division besides himself. The other three are, Mr. Leyves, a U. P. graduate, Mr. Borja, a graduate of the U. P. and Columbia Universities, and Mr. Silverio Almirianas, a recent Georgetown addition.

The plan is to have trained men ready to represent the Philippines abroad by 1946, when the country will become independent under the Tydings-McDuffie act (barring changes in the act before that time). This may be accomplished by sending men trained in foreign affairs to join the diplomatic and consular staffs of the United States abroad, for first-hand observation of how diplomacy is conducted. This can

be done, of course, even before 1946, with the approval of the United States Department of State.

Dr. Regala emphasized that all plans are still somewhat hazy and indefinite, but he mentioned that it has been suggested that the Philippines send three such men abroad to join United States diplomatic and consular staffs in foreign countries each year. This would give the Philippines about twenty men at the end of the Commonwealth period, and these men could then act as the advisers and teachers of others that would be needed.

The International Law professor also said that plans were afoot for the Department of State at Washington to send one of its experts here to help in training future diplomats and consuls. He heaped praise on the way the government of the United States has always been anxious to help the Philippine government by lending it its best experts in every field. He said that, in his opinion, this is a very important factor in future Philippine-American relations, since it means that a very large percentage of Philippine Government men will be, if they not already are, imbued with American ideals, and will have the American point of view.

When asked what effect making a Dominion of the Philippines instead of an independent nation by 1946 would have on these plans for a Philippine diplomatic corps, Dr. Regala laughingly stated that he refused to act as a political seer. Assuming, however, he said, that the Philippines become Dominion, occupying about the same status toward the United States that Canada occupies toward England, he pointed out that in all probability Philippine representatives would go abroad just the same as though the islands were independent. Canada and the other Dominions maintain their own representatives in foreign countries, he reminded.

Dr. Regala repeatedly emphasized throughout the interview that nothing has been definitely decided. All foreign affairs of the Commonwealth are now in the hands of the United States under the Philippine Constitution and the Tydings-McDuffie Act. While the necessity is recognized of training men for possible service of the Philippines abroad as consuls or ministers, even this has not been definitely decided upon. Any Filipinos who do join the staffs of the United States in foreign countries, will do so mostly as students and observers, preparing themselves for future service.

colonial empire. This concern has found expression in a substantial increase in defense appropriations. A big airplane base at Sourabaya and submarine and seaplane bases on the coast of New Guinea are among the most prominent features of the new defense plans. There is also a fleet of four cruisers, six destroyers, twelve submarines and some mine-sweepers. Some of these vessels are approaching the obsolete state; and there is a strong popular demand among the Dutch in the East Indies for more and newer ships, flying-boats and torpedo bombers.

The Dutch feel much more secure in the East Indies because of the rapid progress toward the completion of the great British naval base at Singapore. Although there is no public treaty between Great Britain and the Netherlands, it is generally assumed in the Far East that the manifold imperial interests in southeastern Asia would impel any British government to oppose actively any Japanese onset on the Netherlands Indian possessions. The important holdings of the largely British Shell Company in the oilfields of the East Indies (the largest source of oil in

East Asia) are another factor which must be considered in this connection.

Singapore is a very important element in the Far Eastern arms race. One of the world's largest naval bases has risen on what was formerly a jungle swamp on the northern side of this island, which is at the tip of the Malay Peninsula and commands in the main sea route from the Far East to Europe. Equipped with the third largest floating dock in the world and with a huge drydocks, its shore lined with warehouses and oil tanks, the Singapore base is in a position to take care of any fleet which Great Britain may choose to send into oriental waters.

The nonfortification agreement as to Pacific possessions which the United States, Great Britain and Japan concluded at Washington in 1922 did not apply to Singapore. By constructing an eastern Gibraltar there, Great Britain has perceptibly increased both the naval and the political weight which it can throw into the scales of East Asian politics. Singapore is an international cross-roads metropolis. China and India meet there. The great mass of

the population of the cosmopolitan port is Chinese; but one can find a picturesquely decorated Hindu temple in the city and Hindus are the city scavengers.

Singapore is the outlet of Malaya, one of the richest regions in the world in tin and rubber. A fleet stationed there could simultaneously operate for the protection of the neighboring Netherlands East Indian islands, block a southward thrust against Australia and protect the approaches to India. Singapore is already a main center of long-distance civil aviation; it is a main port of call for British and Dutch air liners plying between Europe and the Far East. It is rapidly becoming also an important military air base, with bombers and flying boats performing regular practice evolutions over the maze of near-by channels and islands.

North of Malaya lies picturesque Siam, land of constant heat, wide swampy paddy-fields, priests in saffron robes, naked little boys riding astride buffaloes, and garish, vividly colored Buddhist temples and pagodas. Long thought of mainly as a tourist

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in 20 years, or a time less than 2/3 of the brief space America has been in the Philippines. He does not worry because Japanese forces temporarily hold Manchuria, since Chinese are rapidly filling up Manchuria and the Japanese improvements there are beneficial mainly to Chinese. If traditionalism moved these Chinese, Dee C. Chuan would be entirely wrong about them—they would be inert, a people spiritually defeated, fleeing from and shunning the exigencies of their age. But as it is the same force moving them that moves the west, Dee C. Chuan is probably right about them. They seek mass life in Manchuria, as they do in China proper; and as they seek this as Chinese, so they will have it as Chinese.

Better thinkers by far than Thomas Steep have given us the clue to such phenomena as the Nanking government, the Philippine Commonwealth, and the new deal for India. One of these thinkers is the Spaniard Gasset. He points out the fact that during the 19th century peoples idealized common rights but left matters to their leaders without caring to take tangible hold of what their sentiment cherished. But in this century all this is quite changed, they now do take hold. China can't make terms with her past and invite a long era of renewed philosophical vegetation. China is now the Chinese people, who want, and will surely have, things for themselves. In this, they don't rebuff the west; they but join the west in the rapid forward-march. It is only because the west invents and passes the implementation of this novel régime along, that the west is taken as in the lead—accused sometimes of bluffing the east into acceptance of its standards. But the charge is untrue, the dynamics of our era enjoy electrical acceptance everywhere. In fact, the fundamental truth is, they are universally demanded, and no people will long permit itself to be excluded from them.

These are such facts as are true. There are few places in the world better than the Philippines in which to observe and verify the truth of them.

Arms Race...

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backwater, Siam during recent years has begun to play an important part in oriental politics, and it has not escaped the prevalent craving for more and better arms. Its military expenditure has risen from approximately 13,000,000 bahts (about \$6,000,000) in 1932-1933 to a record figure of 23,300,000 bahts in 1936-1937. Imitating methods of secretive European dictatorships, the Siamese budget-makers have not itemized their military outlay. Its precise destination, therefore, is unknown.

But it is known that a considerable number of airplanes and some tanks have been purchased abroad; the British financial adviser to the government, Mr. W. A. M. Doll, inserted into his last report a gentle warning that heavy expenditures abroad, together with the constant homeward drain of remittances from the large Chinese commercial community in Siam, might endanger currency stability. Siam is also building a navy; an additional appropriation of 18,000,000 bahts has been set aside for this purpose. Only small warships are being ordered, some destroyers having been bought in Japan and in Italy.

Siam is the only independent country in southeastern Asia. So it is naturally a focal point of international rivalry and intrigue. For a time there was some concern in British circles as to whether the new nationalist government which has succeeded the ousted King Prajadhipok might not swing over entirely into the Japanese orbit. Japanese trade grew rapidly; a Japanese cotton expert arrived to study the possibilities of growing Siamese cotton for the Japanese market; Siamese naval cadets were sent to Japan for training. There were persistent rumors that Siam, with Japanese financial backing, would construct a canal across the narrowest part of the Malay Peninsula, the Isthmus of Kra. Such a canal would be a stunning blow to Singapore, both commercially and strategically.

During my visit to Bangkok in the winter of 1936-1937 I gained the impression that British apprehensions were relieved, if not altogether allayed. No concrete proof of the Kra Canal scheme was obtainable; and the idea was specifically repudiated by Luang Pradit Manudharm, the Siamese Foreign Minister. After all, Siam is surrounded by British territory on three sides, by Malaya on the south, by Burma on the west and northwest. Moreover, the new régime in Siam, while definitely nationalist and inclined to resent any suggestion of tutelage from Great Britain, certainly has no desire to fall into a relation of dependence on Japan.

At the moment the Far Eastern arms race, which has been speeding up from year to year, has led to a state of unstable balance of power. The best guaranty of peace in Asia, as in Europe, had seemed to be the unwillingness of any government to take the responsibility of precipitating war when its neighbors were armed to the teeth and the outlook for victory was so uncertain. But peace on these terms was hardly to be regarded as permanent or stable.

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Vikings of

Ships without decks or engines, chart or compass, still cross the Indian Ocean to East Africa. They were trading along that coast before the first Portuguese explorers burst into those seas. They are running between the Persian Gulf and Zanzibar now, fleets hundreds strong, while the Queen Mary maintains her trans-Atlantic time-table.

They are the dhows, the ocean-going sailing ships that have not changed since the days of Ptolemy. I have sat at the tiller of a fast-coasting dhow off Zanzibar, yarned with dhow skippers and crews in Mombasa, Mozambique and Colombo. But I have never learnt all their secrets. The dhows, with their rakish lateen-rig and dark, battered hulls, have about them an air of mystery that is not easy to penetrate. By the rules of modern commerce, they should have been driven from the ocean long ago. Yet they sail on, defiant relics of an earlier age of seafaring.

The largest are about the size of Drake's hip, the Golden Hind. Some that venture over from the Persian Gulf to Mombasa, three thousand miles, do not displace more than ten tons. Their Arab crews are the Vikings of the East, accomplishing in their high-pooped dhows the deeds of adventure the old Norsemen achieved in their long-ships.

I remember a dhow that came drifting into Colombo Harbor after a hard passage from the Maldives—the shining atolls that are strung out in line for four hundred miles just north of the equator. My boatman spoke the island dialect, and we boarded the dhow to see how she had fared.

Her mast was the bent trunk of a coconut palm, her sails were mats. The fiber rigging was frayed. Sheets of corrugated iron covered with thatch formed the cabin. Nearly all the small bottles used for water storage were empty. Her crew of thin and timid young islanders seemed unaware of any feat of seamanship in bringing this flimsy ark safely to port. If it had happened in western waters the news would have been on the front page.

Sometimes the frail Maldivian dhows keep company in mid-ocean. Fleets of a hundred sail have been sighted, the dhows in the outer lines burning torches at night to keep the whole formation together.