

**1902-22: NEWS NETWORKS IN EAST ASIA AND THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE**

**1.** The alliance between Britain and Japan attracted strong opposition from political interests in Britain, the US, China, and Korea. Chinese and Korean nationalists felt that the Alliance gave British support to Japanese influence, military incursions and, in Korea's case, colonisation, as happened from 1910-45. The Americans were against the Alliance because they were, in principle, against imperial agreements and alliances, and because, in practice, the Alliance seemed to increase British and Japanese commercial and political influence in China at the expense of the United States. The Alliance was also opposed by Britons in East Asia who did not wish their country to support Japanese military influence in East Asia. Japan, however, wanted to continue the Alliance when it came up for renewal at the Washington Conference in 1921-22.

Two networks of newspapers in East Asia, the **Japan Advertiser network** and the **Japan Chronicle network**, each with close connections to the press in Europe, China and the US, conducted a campaign against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1920-22. Through its own propaganda network, operating from the Information Bureau in the Foreign Ministry, (Gaimushō Jōhōbu), Japan's **Foreign Ministry network** conducted a counter-campaign in an attempt to preserve the Alliance. The anti-Alliance forces were ultimately successful and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was replaced by a Nine-Power Agreement at the Washington Conference, alongside agreements to limit US, British and Japanese naval power.

**2. THE JAPAN ADVERTISER NETWORK CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE**

The *Japan Advertiser* began as a small local newspaper in Yokohama in the 1890s. B.W. Fleisher, an American businessman, bought the Advertiser in 1908 and built it up into Japan's strongest-selling foreign newspaper and the most influential English-language newspapers in East Asia, especially among American politicians and journalists.

Between the 1900s and 1930s, the *Japan Advertiser* network in China included connections with a number of influential newspapers and journalists: the *China Press*, *Millard's Review of the Far East*, the *China Weekly Review*, the *Shanghai Gazette*, the journalists Eugene Chen and George Sokolsky, Carl Crow's Chun Mei News Agency and the Trans-Pacific News Service; the *Shanghai Mercury* and the *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*

Unlike the *Chronicle*, the *Japan Advertiser* followed an uncritical editorial line in Japan. This was partly because the *Advertiser* owed its survival to Japanese help given after the 1923 earthquake and after a fire destroyed the newspaper building and printing presses in 1930. The *Advertiser* also owed its survival to American financiers, but some of their money came from a pro-Japanese source, Thomas Lamont. However, there was another side to the *Advertiser*. In an article written after the *Advertiser's* amalgamation with the *Japan Times* in October 1940, Gō Satoshi, the *Japan Times* editor, wrote of Fleisher,

**His leaders lacked the truculence of the *Japan Chronicle*, the strong personal opinions of Mr. George Woodhead in the old *Peking and Tientsin Times*, or the several strong-minded editors of the *North-China Daily News*.**

**Had Mr. Fleisher been in Shanghai or Peking in the first place, I haven't the slightest hesitation in saying that he would have been in the forefront of the powerful opinion there... But remember again, he had a different public.**  
(Japan Times, 13 October 1940).

Under extraterritoriality, newspapers published in China's International Settlements were subject to the law of their publishers' homeland (or their country of registration) rather than Chinese law. Gō believed that if the *Advertiser* been as exempt from Japanese control as some of his contemporaries were from Chinese control, the *Advertiser* would have been more outspoken.

What Gō did not know was that through a closely developed network of newspapers, journalists and news agencies in China, Fleisher operated 'in the forefront of the powerful opinion' in China and was promoted the expression of far more critical views of Japan in this China network than he ever published in the *Advertiser*. In 1921, a Foreign Ministry official noted that 'Fleisher hides two faces under the same hood and is playing a double game' (*Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryōkan*: August 1921). By then, the *Japan Advertiser* network was well on its way to becoming the main grouping of English-language newspapers in China promoting American and Chinese interests (in that order) and opposing Japanese ambitions in China. Although such a position was not the natural concomitant of pro-American views, the network became aligned with the nationalist movement in China and with Chinese-language newspaper networks promoting the Guomindang as the Chinese solution to China's problems.

The *Advertiser* network was well-financed and well-connected. In 1911 and 1918, Fleisher's main backer, Charles R. Crane put his Republican political and business network at Fleisher's disposal. Crane and the *Advertiser* network backed likely winners among Chinese nationalists and Crane supported politicians, journalists and media entrepreneurs who shared these objectives.

The anti-Japanese propaganda of the *Advertiser* network was based on a belief in the power of the press to influence US foreign policy by causing changes in public opinion, although this was not necessarily a sound argument. The *Advertiser* network in China initially supported the post-1911 Chinese Republic, but it aligned then aligned itself with the Guomindang and during and after the May 4th Movement its media were consistently critical of Japanese activities in China. The *Advertiser* network was heavily influenced by Crane, Millard's and Crow's Republicanism, by a horror of Communism, and by a visceral dislike for the Japanese as a race. Crane felt he had a mission to rescue China from Communism. Japan's Foreign Ministry network consistently highlighted Japan's mission to eradicate the Communist menace in East Asia, but having a common enemy did nothing to bring the Foreign Ministry network and the *Advertiser* network any closer.

### **The *Advertiser* network's campaign against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1920-22)**

Thomas Millard, now advising the Chinese Foreign Ministry, had long seen the Alliance as the main threat to the Open Door policy and American interests in China. His most radical argument against renewal was that the Alliance risked bringing Britain, the Dominions and America into open warfare, to the benefit of Japan and Bolshevik Russia. Millard's patron, Charles Crane, conveyed this concern to Woodrow Wilson in 1921. Learning that Britain's Lloyd

George was looking for an excuse to drop the Alliance, Crane's group planned their campaign. In May 1921 the *China Weekly Review* ran a series of attacks on the Alliance. In June and July 1921, Putnam Weale campaigned in London, and Millard barnstormed America, warning that outright war between Britain and America might occur if the Alliance continued. The *Advertiser* network's propaganda campaign against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was not the only cause of its abrogation. However, the network had *access* to senior politicians in Washington, Canada, Australia and London and this meant they could argue against the Alliance on a on-to-one basis.

### **3. THE JAPAN CHRONICLE NETWORK CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE**

The *Japan Chronicle* of Kōbe was a small, British-owned newspaper edited by a left-leaning Scotsman, Robert Young, and his even more left-leaning assistant, Morgan Young. The *Chronicle* had strong connections with Britain's *Manchester Guardian*, China's *North-China Daily News*, Lord Northcliffe's *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, and a number of liberal intellectuals in Japan including Uchimura Kanzo, Yoshino Sakuzo, Ōsugi Sakae and feminist intellectuals such as Itō Noe and groups such as the Seiranken, the leader of the Taishō labour movement, Suzuki Bunji, and international celebrities such as Bertrand Russell and Lord Northcliffe. On 8 December 1920, the accumulation of issues (the Shaw case, Japan's administration in Korea and other incidents), caused publication of an important Memorandum at the Far East Department at the British Foreign Office, which concluded:

In commenting on the ruthless record of Japanese colonisation, it is unfair to draw too strict a parallel with the supposed canons of occidental nations. In the first place, as already pointed out, the idea of justice is simply non-existent; and so to a considerable extent is the idea of individual responsibility. For a whole village to be burned as punishment for the crime of one of its inhabitants is to the Oriental a natural vindication of outraged authority; for it is the community and not the individual which is the responsible unit. But it is these very excuses for the Japanese which call attention to the wide discrepancy between their ideals and our own, and to the doubtful wisdom of our lending the prestige of our good name to an ally whose way of thinking and acting is so essentially different from ours. Already, history regards Great Britain and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as largely responsible for the handing over of Korea to Japan. Is our support, consciously or unconsciously, going to permit Japanese rule and its stern consequences to encroach further upon China and Siberia? The "Bushido" propaganda has done much to convince us that...the warrior's ideal is courtesy, gentleness and consideration. This impression has been supported by certain aspects of the Russo-Japanese war...but it is contradicted by all expert experience of the ways of Japanese bureaucracy at home, and still more by the record of Japanese military government abroad.

During and after the Washington Conference, the Northcliffe chain of newspapers started an intensive campaign advising the world not to trust Japan's commitment to the agreements made at Washington, and to beware of the threat of Japanese naval power in the Pacific.

## **WATCH JAPAN!**

### **SOME SIMPLE WORDS OF WARNING.**

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#### **“OFFICIAL DENIALS”**

**By VISCOUNT NORTHCLIFFE**

**FOR** what purpose are the great Japanese home and over-seas army and the great Japanese fleet being maintained?

**Why** are the Japanese people being taxed more severely than any other nation for the support of armaments?

**The** Washington Conference does not change the situation as much as we have been trying to think.

**...We** can hardly suppose that the Japanese have changed their plan for mastering China as the result of the Washington Conference. I venture to prophesy that they will merely alter their tactics and adapt them to the new circumstances.

**...A** close study of Japanese diplomacy indicates that the war party of Japan is as indifferent in its policy to the keeping of treaties as are many private Japanese traders in the regard of other people's patents and trade-marks.

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**When** calling attention to any matter that affects Japan we have always to remember that hourly, daily, weekly – morning, noon and night – Japanese propaganda is at work in the form of bribed newspapers, propaganda news agencies, propaganda plays, and propaganda films (18 April 1922).

In 1910, Northcliffe had discussed with G.E. Morrison, *The Times* correspondent in Peking, the need to check Japanese power in East Asia. Now Northcliffe published an article that attacked all the least appealing aspects of Japan's international relations in the previous decade: ambivalence during the Great War of 1914-18, perfidy over the Twenty-One Demands of 1915 (“Fortunately, journalistic enterprise placed these demands before the world and they were frustrated, but they revealed the mind of Japan”), and an indifference to international agreements.

One British journalist noted that during his November 1921 tour of Japan, Lord Northcliffe had visited Young at the *Chronicle* offices in Kōbe, “and unquestionably took away a good many of his ideas”. In May 1922 the *Asahi Shinbun* described the “Watch Japan!” campaign as ‘a nasty anti-Japanese composition that might have been written by Young of the *Japan Chronicle*’ and the *Jiji Shinbun* referred to the anti-Japanese influence of ‘a certain Scotchman resident in the Far East for many years’ (*Asahi Shinbun: Jiji Shinbun*: 5 May 1922).



#### **4. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY NETWORK CAMPAIGNS TO RENEW THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE**

The Foreign Ministry network followed the *Advertiser* network's campaign closely. In April 1921, the *Japan Times* called for renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and reported Weale's being sent abroad by the Chinese government to present the case for having Japan 'thrown out of' Shandong. The paper also quoted the *Peking & Tientsin Times*, which was also campaigning for the termination of the Alliance, to the effect that China was not yet ready to govern the areas administered by foreign powers.

In May, the *Japan Times* published without comment a Kokusai-AP dispatch from New York, 'That China is seeking the support of public opinion in the United States to prevent the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty has been declared by Bertram Lenox Simpson (Putnam Weale)...in a public statement'. In Britain that summer, J.O.P. Bland argued the case for renewal and for trusting Japan to maintain the integrity of China. Bland, (1863-1945), laid the groundwork for the arguments the Foreign Ministry network would present in the 1930s to justify Japanese military incursions in China: the corruption of the Chinese; the hopelessness of any Chinese solution to China's problems; and the need for a strong, modernizing power to intervene there. In June 1921 Bland wrote to *The Times*

**Are the activities of the military party in Japan likely to be diminished if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance is now denounced? Are the growing forces of intelligent Liberalism in that country likely to be discouraged if Britain and America combine to condemn this proud and sensitive nation to isolation and a policy of coercion?**

Discussing Bland's letter, the *Chronicle* argued that treating Japan as if its foreign policy was the product of a group of oversensitive children was insulting to liberals and militarists alike, and suggested that 'any self-respecting Japanese would tell Mr. Bland to take his Anglo-Japanese Alliance to a warmer place than Kobe is at the present time'.

In Shanghai, where the *Far Eastern Review* shared an office with the local branch of Kokusai, George Bronson Rea and Patrick Gallagher argued strongly for renewal. Millard's activities continued to irritate the *Japan Times*.

**Tommy Millard, the discoverer recently of the Anglo-French-Italian plot to dismember China, is continuing to have nightmares, and this time he is spending money on telegrams to President Harding which disclose a wicked Anglo-Japanese plot against the United States underlying the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.**

Coming not long after Britain had given Japan formal notice that renewal could not be taken to be automatic, such banter failed to conceal the alarm felt in Tokyo. In the spring and summer of 1921, Britain asked Japan to consider adapting the Alliance to a wider range of Pacific issues. The prospect of a decisive meeting that winter galvanized the debate in the public sphere.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance ended at the Washington Conference. Japan became party to a multinational treaty and agreed to limitations on its naval power. Some historians have seen this as

marking the beginning of Japan's isolation from the great powers.

### **Japan suspects anti-Japanese press networks**

In the aftermath of the Alliance, suspicions of an anti-Japanese press network working in East Asia occurred to the soldier-politician Ugaki Kazushige (1868-1956), and he drew this chart in his diary for 15 July 1923:

<b>SHANGHAI</b>	<i>The China Press</i> [American] (Extremely anti-Japanese) (Jewish) <i>The Shanghai Mercury</i> [British] (Neutral) (Jewish) <i>The North-China Daily News</i> [British] (anti-Japanese) (Jewish) <i>The Shanghai Times</i> [American] (Stance unclear) (Jewish)
<b>TIENTSIN</b>	<i>The Peking &amp; Tientsin Times</i> [British] (Extremely anti-Japanese) <i>The North China Star</i> [American] (Extremely anti-Japanese) <i>The Peking Leader</i> [American] (anti-Japanese) (Capitalized by US interests at ¥500,000) <i>The North China Standard</i> [Japanese] (Pro-Japanese)
<b>JAPAN</b>	<i>The Nagasaki Press</i> [American] (Of no influence) <i>The Japan Chronicle</i> [British] (Extremely anti-Japanese) <i>The Kōbe Herald</i> [British] (Stance unclear) <i>The Japan Advertiser</i> [American] (Superficially neutral) (Jewish) <i>The Japan Gazette</i> (Yokohama) [British] (Neutral)

Whether Ugaki's chart was inspired guesswork or based on surveillance reports is not known, and it is significant that he drew it up, but by the time he did so, Japanese reports on the Republican press in China were reporting the 'interference' of foreign journalists in Chinese media as a matter of course.<sup>1</sup> In 1939, officials of the North China Army Propaganda Section mapped a similar typology of foreign news agencies in China (*Hokushigun hōdōbu* 1939: 15).

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, *Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryō kan 1/3/2/. 46-1-4*.