PORTRAYING PREDESTINED PARTNERS?
GERMAN-JAPANESE MUTUAL PRESS DEPICTIONS, 1919-1933

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ABSTRACT

RICKY W. LAW: Portraying Predestined Partners?
German-Japanese Mutual Press Depictions, 1919-1933
(Under the direction of Christopher R. Browning and W. Miles Fletcher)

Traditionally scholars tried to explain the formation of the Berlin-Tokyo Axis using structural factors derived from the totalitarian, Marxist and latecomer theories. While these frameworks pinpoint the similarities between Japan and Germany, they do not shed light on the timing of the alliance and downplayed potential obstacles such as Nazi racism against non-Aryans, Japanese nationalistic anti-Western rhetoric, and the two countries’ conflicting economic interests.

In view of the shortcomings of the previous approaches, this essay examines interwar Japanese and German newspapers to gauge how the two countries portrayed each other. Evidence strongly indicates that while Germany and Japan exhibited interests in the other’s culture, society and economy, they did not depict each other as a predestined ally but merely saw it as one nation among many and even frequently attacked its policies. These findings suggest that contingent, not structural, causes led to Japanese-German rapprochement.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

_Akahata_ 赤旗

_Asahi_ 東京朝日新聞

_DNVP_ Deutschnationale Volkspartei

_G_ *Germania*

_JCP_ Japanese Communist Party

_KPD_ Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands

_Kokumin_ 國民新聞

_KZ_ *Neue Preußische Kreuz-Zeitung*

_NSDAP_ Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

_RF_ *Die Rote Fahne*

_SPD_ Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

_Japan Times_ *The Japan Times and Mail*

_V_ *Vorwärts*

_VB_ *Völkischer Beobachter*

_VZ_ *Vossische Zeitung*

_Yomiuri_ 讀賣新聞
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

While historians today see the Manchurian Incident and the Reichstag Fire as milestones on Japan’s and Germany’s paths to militarism and totalitarianism, allegations and conspiracy theories obscured the truth from contemporaries. Hitler’s regime blamed the communists for arson and the Kwantung Army accused the Chinese of sabotage. Yet distant observers managed to dissect these developments with literally black-and-white clarity. Even before the ruins of the Reichstag stopped smoldering a cartoon appeared in a Japanese newspaper to expose the culprit behind the blaze. In the illustration Hitler, personifying the German government, sets on fire the buttocks of a man representing the Communist Party and clobbers him with a mace labeled “repression” as the communist torches the parliament (Figure 1). The size and centrality of Hitler’s flame and the caption “Who lit the fire? The communist party’s butt is set ablaze” suggest that the cartoonist considered the regime

Figure 1. “Who Lit the Fire?”

\(^1\) Caption reads 「で・お尻に火がついたドイツ共産党」, in Ikeda Eiji 池田永一治, “Hi o tsuketa no wa dare da?” (Who lit the fire?), Yomiuri Shinbun 読売新聞, 1 March 1933. Hereafter Yomiuri. Japanese names are rendered in the family name-given name format.
responsible for the fire and the communists as merely reacting in desperation. At around the same time, as Japanese troops conquered all Chinese territories north of the Great Wall, a German newspaper carried a drawing to shed light on the true nature of Japanese military actions in China. Concisely titled “Japan,” the cartoon depicted a smirking Japanese general commenting against a backdrop of warplanes, soldiers, explosions and deaths, “We emphatically state that we are not waging any war” (Figure 2). The artist’s intention to highlight Japanese aggressiveness and insincerity emerged poignantly from a contrast of the background of destruction and the general’s nonchalant denial.

While these cartoonists should impress us with their penetrating insight into news-making events half a world away, we should also note the papers’ disapproval of the other country’s actions. Despite Tokyo’s suppression of domestic communism the Japanese paper sympathized with German communists as victims of Nazi brutality and painted Hitler as violent and manipulative. Meanwhile the German sheet portrayed a deceitful and aggressive Japan desperately spinning a fiction to conceal its bloody war in China. From these negative mutual depictions Japanese and German

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2 Caption reads „Wir bemerken ausdrücklich, daß wir keinen Krieg führen,” in “Japan,” Vorwärts: Berliner Volksblatt, Zentralorgan der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 12 January 1933. Hereafter V.
newspaper readers could hardly have imagined that in less than a decade their countries would become comrades in arms in a war for world domination.

These readers would find scholarly depictions of their countries as some structurally predetermined allies equally perplexing. The totalitarian school reasons that Germany and Japan followed an authoritarian or even fascist tradition that facilitated ideological resonance.³ Marxist historians meanwhile argue that rabid anticommunism and thirst for markets and resources drew these two advanced capitalist states to join forces in an imperialistic war.⁴ Lastly, proponents of the latecomer theory connect Germany’s and Japan’s relatively tardy formation of the industrialized nation-state, underdeveloped democratic middle class and self-imposed urge to catch up with the old colonial empires. As the theory has it, these commonalities tied the two “have-not” nations together to challenge the status quo by unseating the satiated imperialist powers.⁵

While these comparative frameworks pinpoint the two countries’ similarities and parallel trajectories, they do not adequately explain convergence and its timing, let alone the

³ For totalitarianism’s influence in works on Japanese-German collaboration, see Frank Iklé’s *German-Japanese Relations, 1936-1940: A Study of Totalitarian Diplomacy* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956) and Ernst Presseisen’s *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy, 1933-1941* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1958). Despite the two books’ narrow emphasis on diplomatic and military factors they remain the definitive histories of interwar German-Japanese cooperation, with the former approaching from the Japanese side and the latter from the German one. Also approaching from the German side, John Fox examines the role of the German Foreign Office in advocating Japanese-German rapprochement. See his *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).


problems associated with treating the alliance as structurally foreordained. Taking the latecomer theory to its logical extreme, for instance, would compel one to argue that by 1871 the completion of the Meiji Restoration and the foundation of the Kaiserreich had laid the cornerstone of the Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Yet such a claim downplays conflicts such as Japan’s resentment toward German participation in the Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese War, Wilhelm II’s support for Russia during the Russo-Japanese War and warnings of the “Yellow Peril,” Germany and Japan’s mutual hostility in the Great War, and contradictions between Nazi racial hubris and Japanese nationalistic hypersensitivity. Moreover, so far scholars have researched mainly the political and military aspects of German-Japanese cooperation between 1936 and 1945. Thus, while we have fine works on Japanese-German diplomacy, a comprehensive study of interwar German-Japanese relations encompassing culture, society, economy and technology still awaits to be written.

In view of the shortcomings and skewed temporal focus of the previous approaches, press opinion in the 1920s and early 30s provides a unique tool for examining Japanese-German relations. This period witnessed the rise of democracy and free speech in Germany and Japan. As society expressed itself through elections and mass media, an analysis of newspapers can reveal what Japanese and German readers could learn about each other. Though foreign policies rarely lie within public purview, decision-makers must still have been exposed to the media’s power to mold perceptions. In addition, the 1920s were the period when future leaders of Nazi Germany and militarist Japan came of age politically; what they read in the papers about the other country probably influenced their first impressions and presumptions. This essay thus aims to uncover how Japanese and Germans portrayed each other in their newspapers, specifically whether they accorded the other
country any privileged treatment as a potential ally. The first part of the essay explores the press images; the second explains why the papers depicted the other as such. Evidence indicates that despite the papers’ general interests in the other country’s culture, economy and society, they did not automatically endorse its actions but rather treated it as just one power among many. Moreover, the rise of Nazism prompted Japanese newspapers to single out Germany as ruthless in domestic politics and defiant in world affairs, while the growth of militarism in Japan drove the German press to denounce its aggression against China and faithlessness to the League of Nations.
CHAPTER II
THE PRESS IN GERMANY AND JAPAN, 1919-1933

Some comments on interwar newspapers will help contextualize the argument and explain how the press influenced popular moods. In Germany,\textsuperscript{6} as the Kaiserreich collapsed under defeat and revolution at the end of World War I, so disappeared all wartime media censorship. Leftist and rightist forces fought over leadership of the country, with each side churning out propaganda to argue its case and gain converts. Ultimately the “Weimar Coalition” of Social Democrats, German Democrats and Center Party established a republic and adopted a constitution quite liberal for its time. Article 118 proclaimed that “every German is entitled, within the bounds set by general law, to express his opinion freely in word, writing, print, image or otherwise… There is no censorship.”\textsuperscript{7} Although the constitution seemed to shield freedom of expression from persecution, the chink in this armor remained “the bounds set by general law” beyond which the press might not trespass. Indeed the police ordinances, regulations and emergency decrees the republic issued during its many crises limited the latitude of the media.\textsuperscript{8}


\textsuperscript{8} Eksteins, 70. On Weimar press censorship, see Klaus Petersen, Zensur in der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1995), 113-155. For example, the police frequently banned papers for espousing inflammatory language before key parliamentary or presidential elections in an attempt to reduce
Yet attempts to contain the press also conceded a tacit acknowledgement of the papers’ power to influence the public and to channel popular sentiments into political actions. While political rallies were impressive events, newspapers, unlike speeches, had staying power and the ability to reach the remotest hamlets, to explain nuanced arguments with clarity and to perform the crucial task of ideological news interpretation. Moreover, Germany was overwhelmingly literate and most midsized towns had access to their own dailies in addition to papers from nearby cities. Considering the broad reach of the press in informing the public and mobilizing opinion, we may use it as one medium to study Germany’s perception of the world.

This essay examines six German papers spanning the political spectrum. From the far left stemmed *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Banner), founded in November 1918 as the official organ of the Spartacus League and later the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD). The paper enjoyed an initial circulation of 30,000. Despite Weimar censors’ readiness to ban the paper for its incendiary language, circulation expanded to 140,000 by 1933. After the Reichstag Fire the Hitler regime outlawed the KPD and all communist publications.

Members of the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) made their voices heard in their organ *Vorwärts* (Forward), established in 1876 when street violence. Generally speaking the communist press suffered from censorship much more often than the Nazi papers.

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9 Ibid., 71.

various leftist factions merged their publications to create an official paper. The Vorwärts hit its crest in 1918, with a circulation of 300,000 for both morning and evening editions. Throughout the 1920s support for the SPD eroded and the paper’s circulation shrank to 82,000 in 1929. In May 1933 the Nazi regime dissolved the SPD and drove the Vorwärts underground.11

Liberals and democrats represented themselves in the Vossische Zeitung (Voss’s Newspaper), the oldest newspaper in Berlin. Begun unofficially in 1617 the paper survived Prussian censors and gained a reputation for political independence and support for liberal causes. By 1848 Tante Voss (Auntie Voss) reigned as the largest German newspaper. In the 1920s the paper advocated democracy and pro-business politics. Circulation peaked in 1931 at around 81,000 before dwindling to 41,000 in 1934, shortly before the regime banned its publication.12

The Germania, affiliated with the German Center Party (Deutsche Zentrumspartei), spoke for Catholic interests. In 1871 the small Berlin Catholic community founded the paper to counter government and press attacks in the predominantly Protestant capital. Due to its skill in polemics and politically strategic location, the Germania eventually became a semi-official channel of the Center Party even though it lacked the type of advertising and subscription revenues available to Catholic papers in the Rhineland and Bavaria. Circulation in 1929 reached 43,000.13

11 Volker Schulze, “Vorwärts (1876-1933),” Deutsche Zeitungen, 329-347. For more on the Vorwärts, see Asmuss, 60-62; Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 303-321; Stöber, 221-223; and the resurrected Vorwärts’s website, Vorwärts, <http://www.vorwaerts.de/>.

12 Klaus Bender, “Vossische Zeitung (1617-1934),” Deutsche Zeitungen, 25-39. For more on the Vossische Zeitung, see Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 250-258; and Stöber, 211-213.

13 Klaus Martin Stiegler, “Germania (1871-1938),” Deutsche Zeitungen, 299-313. For more on the Germania, see Asmuss, 52-54; Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 290-302; and Stöber, 217-220.
The Neue Preußische Kreuz-Zeitung (New Prussian Cross Newspaper) catered to the traditional, nationalistic conservatives. Though never an official party paper, the Kreuz-Zeitung cooperated closely with the rightist German National People’s Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP) and its paramilitary formation Stahlhelm (Steel Helmet). Since the DNVP served as junior coalition partner in the Hitler regime, the Kreuz-Zeitung managed to survive until 1939. Maximum circulation was about 60,000.\(^\text{14}\)

To the extreme right belonged the Völkischer Beobachter (People’s Observer), the official organ of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP).\(^\text{15}\) In 1920 the Nazi Party purchased a newspaper of a Munich suburb and transformed it into a propaganda outlet. Throughout the 1920s the paper like its parent party languished in the margin. Circulation surged after the Nazi electoral breakthrough in 1930 so that after Hitler’s appointment in 1933 the figure reached 310,000.\(^\text{16}\)

While the runs of these papers may appear small in a nation of some 65 million, it bears stressing the fragmented state of Weimar press in which no paper dominated nationally as The Times did in Britain. Germany’s political and publishing landscapes, with regional capitals like Hamburg, Munich and Frankfurt competing with Berlin, also contributed to this decentralization. Moreover, non-subscribers could read papers posted on boards, in restaurants, barbershops and libraries. Lastly, papers like the Rote Fahne and Völkischer

\(^{14}\) Meinolf Rohleder and Burkhard Treude, “Neue Preussische (Kreuz-) Zeitung (1848-1939),” Deutsche Zeitungen, 209-224. For more on the Kreuz-Zeitung, see Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 240-242; and Stöber, 214-217.

\(^{15}\) The word völkisch, a cognate of the English “folk,” defies concise translations. Volk convokes the romantic image of a clan or tribal community jelled together by ethnic, historical, mythical and cultural ties.

\(^{16}\) Margarete Plewnia, “Völkischer Beobachter (1887-1945),” Deutsche Zeitungen, 381-390. For more on the Völkischer Beobachter, see Adolf Dresler, Geschichte des “Völkischen Beobachters” und des Zentralverlages der NSDAP (Munich: F. Eher Nachf., 1937); Asmuss, 39-43; Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 380-388; and Stöber, 227-231.
Beobachter appeared in local editions as well, and the parties did not hesitate to churn out competing publications in any one market. Nazis in Berlin could choose between the Beobachter and Der Angriff (The Attack),\textsuperscript{17} socialists between the Vorwärts and Der Abend (The Evening), and communists among the Welt am Abend (World in the Evening), Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (Workers’ Illustrated Newspaper) and Rote Fahne.\textsuperscript{18} Together party-affiliated newspapers constituted half of all papers, with the rest taking their cues from ideological standard bearers like the Beobachter or Vorwärts. The politically diverse newspapers studied in this essay should furnish a fair representation of the Weimar press.

Newspapers arrived in Japan in the early 1860s either as translated Western sheets for a few Shogunate leaders or commercial bulletins composed by foreigners.\textsuperscript{19} After the Meiji Restoration the press grew rapidly, thanks to the breathtaking Westernization campaign to expand literacy and to adopt the latest print technology. In the 1870s and 80s newspapers became politicized and unofficial party mouthpieces through participation in heated political


\textsuperscript{18} For more on other communist publications, see Sean McMeekin, The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, 1917-1940 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

debates. Yet as readership expanded, the papers relied more on subscription for support and less on the editors’ connection to political parties.20

The press’s drive for profit by adopting populism pitted it against the government’s proclaimed authority to monitor printed words. In addition to censorship, a libel law had been on the books since 1875 and the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 further limited the latitude in reporting.21 In practice, however, the censor’s red ink ebbed and flowed with the level of social tension. Whereas during the Great War officials terminated pro-German foreign newspapers and punished the Asahi Shinbun (朝日新聞, The Asahi Daily) for criticizing Japan’s intervention in Siberia, the period of our concern, the 1920s and early 30s, overlapped with the era known as Taishō Democracy that witnessed advances in suffrage and party politics, social stability, economic growth and international peace – hence laxer restriction of the press.22

This essay surveys five newspapers spanning the political spectrum. From the far left stemmed the Akahata (赤旗, Red Banner), founded in 1928 as the organ of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). Although estimating the circulation of the paper of an outlawed party poses a challenge, the Akahata did show signs of greater organization and presumably

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popularity after its inception by evolving from handwritten leaflets to lithographs to newsprints by a press with movable types. In 1935 the Akahata printed its last issue after the virtual extinction of the JCP, even as an underground organization.  

From the moderate left came the Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, which, according to one observer, “prides itself on being the most liberal Japanese newspaper, mostly read by intellectuals, members of the liberal professions and business men.” Despite this reputation and its willingness to challenge censors by breaking banned news such as post-1918 social unrest, the Asahi also proved capable of profiting from jingoism by inciting enthusiasm for the Manchurian Incident. Partly due to its appeal to both the elite and ordinary readers, the Asahi reigned as the most popular paper until 1945, with a circulation in the Tokyo area approaching one million.  

The Yomiuri Shinbun (The Daily Yomiuri), founded in 1874 as an “inconspicuous arts paper confined to literary and to cultural affairs,” belonged approximately to the center right. In the late 1920s one observer commented that it reported news in an “incidental” or “casual” style. Yet under a new management in the 1930s the Yomiuri transformed itself to

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23 Preface to the paper’s 1954 reprinting, in Akahata: Higōhō jidai no nihon kyōsantō chūō kikanshi 赤旗:非合法時代の日本共産党中央機関紙, 1928-1933. For more on the Akahata, see also the revived paper’s website, Shinbun akahata しんぶん赤旗, <http://www.jcp.or.jp/akahata/>.  


26 For more on the Asahi, see A. Morgan Young, 414; Suzuki, 11-15; Wildes, Press and Social Currents, 38-40; Lee, 19-21; Hayasaka, 8-12; and the newspaper’s website, Asahi Daily 朝日新聞, <http://www.asahi.com/>.  

27 Itō, 13; and Wildes, Press and Social Currents, 33.  

28 Wildes, Press and Social Currents, 33.
gain subscription by turning “somewhat more nationalistic, sensational and popular” than the 
*Asahi*.29 By 1938 the paper had grown its circulation phenomenally to 950,000.30

The *Kokumin Shinbun* (國民新聞, The Peoples’ Newspaper) appealed to the 
nationalistic right. Following the political sojourn of its colorful founder, the social critic 
Tokutomi Sohō (德富蘇峰), the paper abandoned liberalism for populist nationalism and 
xenophobia; one commentator recalled that Tokutomi “rants very heartily on such subjects as 
the White Peril.”31 After the Russo-Japanese War the *Kokumin* aligned itself with the 
government but alienated the public for defending unpopular policies like suppressing news 
of post-1918 unrest. Though still a major paper in the 1930s, its circulation dwindled to 
around 100,000.32

The political bearing of *The Japan Times and Mail*, a Japanese-edited paper in 
English, eludes simple generalization since it eclectically reprinted Japanese editorials and 
Western articles. Potential readers included foreigners and Japanese eager to improve their 
English or knowledge of foreign views, but under heavy competition for such a limited 
market the *Times* could not have attracted enough subscribers to maintain financial buoyancy.

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29 Stein, 177. For more on the *Yomiuri*, see Young, 413; Suzuki, 15-16; Lee, 24-27; Hayasaka, 14-16; 

30 Hayasaka, 6.

31 A. Morgan Young, 416.

32 For more on the *Kokumin*, see Leslie Russell Oates, *Populist Nationalism in Prewar Japan: A 
Biography of Nakano Seigō* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 12; Itô, 6; Lee, 29-33; Wildes, 42-44; Hayasaka, 
University Press, 1980).
Indeed evidence suggests that the paper accepted government subsidies to disseminate official viewpoints.\textsuperscript{33}

As was the case in Germany, the Japanese authorities’ eagerness to censor the press only betrayed the influence newspapers wielded in society. Indeed, during much of the interwar period the papers worked as powerful organizations capable of reaching the avidly literate Japanese. Many families received more than one paper, so that by 1927 the number of subscriptions in Tokyo exceeded the number of households by 130,000.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, corporations and government offices often placed newspapers in reception areas and employee lounges, a practice till popular today. An American sociologist remarked in 1929 that “most Japanese… agree in stating that the press should be regarded as the influential factor working toward improvement in social and political conditions.”\textsuperscript{35} The two largest press groups, the \textit{Asahi} and the \textit{Mainichi (毎日)}, published newspapers in various cities and each boasted a combined daily circulation of about two million. In turn these papers generated enough profits to enable their parent firms to perform myriad social functions. For example, the \textit{Asahi} and \textit{Mainichi} groups each ran its own telephone and telegraph services, and an airline to bring home news from the continent. They also organized fundraising drives to assist disaster victims or collect funds for naval construction.\textsuperscript{36} Considering the newspapers’ broad reach and impact on society outside informing the public and molding opinion, we may depend on them as one medium to study Japan’s perception of the world.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{33} Wildes, \textit{Press and Social Currents}, 374-5. Wildes cites as proof his conversations with government officials about the existence of the subsidies. For more on the \textit{Times}, see the newspaper’s website, \textit{The Japan Times Online}, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/>.

\textsuperscript{34} Huffman, 363.

\textsuperscript{35} Wildes, \textit{Press and Social Currents}, 53.

\textsuperscript{36} Suzuki, 15-17.
\end{flushright}
CHAPTER III
JAPAN IN FINE PRINT

In the period studied German newspapers showed interest in Japanese athleticism, culture and traditions, yet at times they still viewed Japan with some lingering exoticism. In addition, the press saw Japan as economically unstable, perceived it as just another imperialist power, and abhorred Japanese aggression and untruthfulness in its interaction with the League of Nations.

Athleticism

The papers expressed much interest in and admiration for Japanese athletes, especially tennis players and swimmers who participated in international competitions. In 1933 the Japanese tennis team arrived in Berlin to compete with Germany for advancement in the Davis Cup. The Vossische Zeitung, having witnessed during the French Open that the Japanese were “fast like weasels,” already expected a tough match.37 The Kreuz-Zeitung also foresaw a challenge for the Germans.38 Yet the visitors’ annihilation of the host team still shocked and impressed the papers. An account of the singles matches praised the

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37 “Vor allem Nunoi zeigte phantastische Sachen; beide sind schnell wie die Wiesel und nehmen die schwersten Bälle,“ in “Japans hervorragendes Doppel” (Japan’s excellent double), Vossische Zeitung: Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrtten Sachen, 27 May 1933, Evening Edition. Hereafter VZ. Unlike in English, comparing someone to a weasel in German carries no negative connotation.

38 “Unsere Chancen gegen Japan. Die Gäste rechnen mit leichtem Sieg” (Our chance against Japan. The guests anticipate easy victory), Neue Preußische Kreuz-Zeitung, 9 June 1933. Hereafter KZ.
“resourceful, cold-blooded and strong” Japanese player.\(^{39}\) The next day’s article on the doubles matches reprimanded the lackluster German team but also acknowledged the “fair and tireless” Japanese team for its tactics and for playing like a machine.\(^{40}\) Japanese swimmers too captured headlines. After a solid showing in the 1928 Olympics, Japanese swimmers impressed German journalists with their victory over the hitherto dominant Americans in 1931. The reporter looked forward to an exciting rematch in the 1932 Olympics but also lamented the “totally hopeless situation” of German swimmers.\(^{41}\) By 1933 a sufficiently impressed \textit{Völkischer Beobachter} reported that the Japanese held the world’s first, second, third, fourth or fifth place in a whole range of aquatic events.\(^{42}\)

In other sports the papers generally appreciated interaction with Japan. The \textit{Vossische Zeitung}, for example, urged Berliners to consider the invitation by the \textit{Osaka Asahi} to a Brandenburg soccer club for exhibition games in Japan.\(^{43}\) The \textit{Rote Fahne} looked forward to the first ever jiu-jitsu and judo matches between German worker athletes and Japanese, “both masters in their classes.”\(^{44}\) When Professor Kanô Jigorō (嘉納治五郎), the founder of judo,
visited Germany, the *Völkischer Beobachter* somehow linked Kanō’s effort to promote exercise in daily life in Japan with Nazi indoctrination programs.\(^45\) Whatever their ideologies, the papers appreciated the achievements of Japanese athletes.

Despite this respect for Japanese sportsmen, the press ultimately seemed more interested in German athletes. Admiration for Japanese prowess in tennis and aquatics served also as a mirror to reflect badly on Germany’s performance, and the more ideologically extreme papers freely saw what they chose to see in Japanese athletics. Moreover, athleticism alone did not constitute the decisive quality of a potential ally. When Australia eliminated Japan in the Davis Cup the papers found it unimaginable that anyone could defeat the team that routed Germany, yet none advocated closer cooperation with Australia as a result.

**Culture, Tradition and Inscrutable Japan**

The newspapers showed a definite interest in Japanese culture and tradition covering performance and visual arts, movies, literature, travelogues and expert commentaries. Often the papers advertised artistic performances with Japanese themes, indicating a public curiosity in Japan. One of the most successful musical comedies, *The Geisha*, appeared to be quite popular, running continuously for at least seventy-five nights in the first half of 1919 alone.\(^46\) Even in 1932, over thirty years after the musical’s birth, a commentator still found it interesting enough to preview a performance.\(^47\) German opera fans also had access to

\(^45\) “Exz. Professor Dr. Jigoro Kano in Berlin” (His Excellence Professor Jigoro Kano in Berlin), VB, 17 June 1933.

\(^46\) Advertisement, “DIE GEISHA” (THE GEISHA), VZ, 29 March 1919.

\(^47\) Dr. Fritz Brust, “‘Die Geisha,’” G, 1 January 1932.
Madama Butterfly by Giacomo Puccini.\textsuperscript{48} On the big screen moviegoers could see Japan-themed films like Die Kwannon von Okadera (The Kwannon of Okadera), directed by the pioneer cinematographer Carl Froelich.\textsuperscript{49}

Besides performance arts and films Japanese visual arts and literature also received press coverage. For example, the Vossische Zeitung recommended an exhibition of woodblock prints reflecting Japan’s impressions of foreigners in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{50} The Germania meanwhile had an expert contribute an article familiarizing readers with Japanese poetry.\textsuperscript{51} Readers could also find short stories, such as one on Yoshiwara, the pleasure quarter of old Edo, by the acclaimed journalist and author Hans Natonek.\textsuperscript{52} The Marxist Rote Fahne and Vorwärts respectively carried poems and short stories on the life of workers in Japan.\textsuperscript{53}

Firsthand accounts by celebrities provided the press with the means to satisfy readers’ curiosity about Japan. In the 1920s and early 30s travelers could find only two reliable options to journey from Germany to Japan – the Hamburg-Amerika Line or Norddeutscher

\textsuperscript{48} Advertisement, KZ, 21 January 1932.

\textsuperscript{49} Advertisement, VZ, 1 January 1921.

\textsuperscript{50} M. O., “Japanischer Europäer-Spiegel. Die ältesten künstlerischen Darstellungen” (Japanese mirror of Europeans. The oldest artistic exhibitions), VZ, 29 September 1931.

\textsuperscript{51} P. Dr. Andreas Eckardt, “Japanische Poesie” (Japanese poetry), G, 3 March 1932.

\textsuperscript{52} Hans Natonek, “Yoshiwara,” VZ, 3 August 1919. Natonek authored several novels and short stories, and worked as the chief editor of the Neue Leipziger Zeitung from 1917 to 1933.

\textsuperscript{53} Moriyama Kae, “Aus der Mandschurei zieht der Sturm auf” (A storm rises from Manchuria), RF, 15 March 1932; and Fritz Tenes, “Takagi streikt. Aus dem japanischen Arbeiterleben” (Takagi strikes. From the life of a Japanese worker), V, 5 October 1932.
Lloyd Line.⁵⁴ Such a costly and time-consuming voyage remained out of reach to most; small wonder then readers had to experience Japan vicariously. Hanns Maria Lux, a writer of some standing, shared his tour to ancient Nara with readers of the *Germania*.⁵⁵ Adventure seekers would relish the account by Wolfgang von Gronau when he visited Japan during his circumnavigation flight in 1932.⁵⁶

In addition to travelogues expert commentaries sought to educate the public about Japan. The journal by Professor Carl Heinrich Becker, a former Prussian minister of culture, appealed to the educated and businesslike audience of the *Vossische Zeitung*.⁵⁷ Of the papers studied only the *Vossische Zeitung* had its own correspondent in Japan, Professor J. Plaut, to explain regularly aspects of Japanese culture like New Year’s rituals.⁵⁸ The *Völkischer Beobachter* used its own Japanologist, Professor Karl Haushofer, the father of geopolitics, to enlighten readers about Japanese traditions.⁵⁹ After several fires in Tokyo the paper revealed that half of the buildings in the “so-called ‘modern’ city Tokyo” were still built with wood

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⁵⁴ Advertisement, “Deutsche Frachtdampferlinie nach OSTASIEN” (German cargo steamer to EAST ASIA), VZ, 4 November 1921. The Trans-Siberian Railway depended on Soviet goodwill. Lufthansa flights to East Asia did not become available until 1938.

⁵⁵ Hanns Maria Lux, “Reisebrief aus Nara-Japan” (Travel letter from Nara-Japan), G, 9-10 September 1931. Lux served as leader of the Nazi *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, proof that he occupied a notable place in the literary scene.


⁵⁷ C. H. Becker, “Reise-Eindrücke aus Ostasien” (Travel impressions from East Asia), VZ, 5 February 1933.

⁵⁸ J. Plaut, “Neujahr in Japan” (New Year in Japan), VZ, 21 February 1921.

⁵⁹ Prof. Dr. Karl Haushofer, “Sitten und Gebräuche in Japan” (Conventions and customs in Japan), VB, 15-16 January 1933. The German army sent Haushofer to Japan in 1908 as an advisor and instructor for the Japanese army. Haushofer became a convinced Japanophile in the process.
and paper.\textsuperscript{60} The Japanese emperor too aroused some curiosity. A reporter for the \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung} told anecdotes of the monarch disguising as a commoner to inspect his countrymen’s livelihood under his reign.\textsuperscript{61}

Although the newspapers exhibited real interest in Japanese culture and tradition, they remained a product of the stereotypes and Eurocentrism prevalent in the period. The \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung} applauded Tokyo’s decision to make students learn to Romanize the Japanese alphabet, predicting enthusiastically that abandoning the ancient characters would only bring positive results to Japan, much like Atatürk’s Latinization of Turkish.\textsuperscript{62} Nor could the commentators refrain from making blanket statements like “the Japanese found no architectural style of their own.”\textsuperscript{63} Oftentimes the press seemed more interested in how prevalent German culture had become in Japan rather than in Japanese culture itself. The nationalistic \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung} understandably focused on the popularity in Japan of German war movies and the adoption of German print technology by Japanese newspapers.\textsuperscript{64} And the \textit{Germania} discussed the reception of German paintings in Tokyo.\textsuperscript{65} Even the internationalist

\textsuperscript{60} „Die sogenannte ‚moderne’ Stadt Tokio,“ in Walter Rietschel, “Warum brennt es so viel in Tokio?“ (Why does Tokyo catch on fire so much?), VB, 7 January 1933.

\textsuperscript{61} Hans Helbig, “Der Doppelgänger des Mikado” (The doppelganger of the Mikado), KZ, 6 January 1933.

\textsuperscript{62} “Japan schreibt Lateinisch” (Japan writes Latin), KZ, 23 June 1933.


\textsuperscript{64} “Film-Aufschwung in Japan” (Movie boom in Japan), \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung}, 20 January 1933; and “Japans Zeitungsriesen: Deutsche Maschinen – musterhafte Einrichtungen” (Japan’s newspaper giants: German machines – exemplary organization), KZ, 12 April 1933.

\textsuperscript{65} “Mutter und Kind in Japan. Die Ausstellung in Tokio” (Mother and child in Japan. The exhibition in Tokyo), G, 28 May 1933.
Vorwärts expressed pleasant surprise that Japanese orchestras and choirs played Beethoven’s symphonies and sang Haydn’s Die Schöpfung (The Creation) in German.66

Thus, although the press expressed curiosity in Japanese traditions, at times Japan seemed to garner praise for being a diligent student of Western civilization rather than maintaining its own culture. Moreover, information on Japan in the press stemmed from Westerners writing about Japan rather than from the Japanese themselves, as Western writers created the operas, movies, short stories, travelogues and commentaries available to the proverbial German in the street. In particular, the plots of both The Geisha and Madama Butterfly revolved around the interaction between a European male and a Japanese female. In The Geisha, an already-engaged English sailor excused his kissing a geisha by saying that he was only introducing her to the magic of the Western way of life.67 In Madama Butterfly, a geisha jilted by an American sailor stoically committed ritual suicide because she could not bear the shame that her lover had married an American woman: “To die with honor, when

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67 The dialogue between the sailor Fairfax and the geisha Mimosa is too good to miss. I beg my readers’ indulgence:

Fairfax: You don’t give away a heart with every verse, do you, little Almond-eye – not even a kiss!
Mimosa: A what?
Fairfax: A kiss!
Mimosa: A kiss? We do not have them in Japan.
Fairfax: What? No kisses in this country? Now, here’s something for me to teach you.
Mimosa: What is it – a kiss?
Fairfax: You’re a charming little geisha,
Quite the nicest girl in Asia,
But I fear there’s something missing,
Oh, my pretty Japanese!
English, French and German misses
Do not ask me what a kiss is,
They are all expert at kissing.

one can no longer live with honor."  

Although we have no sure way to uncover whether German audiences seriously believed what we today consider stereotypes about Japan, we do know for certain that the papers’ depiction of Japan consisted mainly of Western constructs of how they imagined Japan should be.

Since the newspapers already had a preconception of Japan, they voiced their surprise and explained as mysterious instances when reality defied their expectation. One such preconceived idea had it that close ethnic and cultural ties linked China and Japan in one East Asian bloc. The *Vossische Zeitung*, commenting on the Manchurian Incident, suggested that Japan had forgotten the Chinese origins of its script, literature, art, statecraft and religion.  

The *Vorwärts* remarked too that Japanese and Chinese should be “ethnic brothers.” Yet when the conflict continued, the press became frustrated in its inability to scrutinize East Asian affairs. The *Kreuz-Zeitung*, after searching for answers to the question of “what this ‘yellow war’ is all about,” advised readers to pay close attention to Asia’s “sphinx face.”  

The *Vossische Zeitung* meanwhile mused that the war made no political sense to anyone outside the Japanese officer corps. When Japan’s representative to the League, Matsuoka Yōsuke (松岡洋右), tried to justify Japan’s action in Manchuria by claiming that the Japanese mentality differed fundamentally from the West’s, the *Vorwärts* commented dryly

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69 “Japan fühlt sich jeder Lage gewachsen” (Japan feels like rising to every occasion), VZ, 22 December 1931.


71 „Aber Asiens Sphinxgesicht erfordert unsere Aufmerksamkeit, und es ist immer besser, auf Entwicklungen vorbereitet zu sein, als sich von ihnen überraschen zu lassen,“ in “Der gelbe Krieg” (The yellow war), KZ, 6 March 1932, Pictorial Supplement.

72 Dr. Sven von Müller, “Der Schwarze Drache” (The Black Dragon), VZ, 17 May 1932.
that if Japan could not comprehend elementary moral concepts then indeed its mentality would stand totally foreign to a “Western” one.\textsuperscript{73} The \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung} verged on giving up attempting to solve the mystery, “What does Japan want?” – a question “almost impossible for the white men to answer.”\textsuperscript{74} It also complained that the European simply could not put himself into the position of the Japanese, since “the thoughts and feeling of the Asians remained perpetually secretive and unsolvable.”\textsuperscript{75} Finally, the \textit{Vossische Zeitung} conceded that Japanese domestic politics presented quite a “riddle” for Western observers to tackle.\textsuperscript{76} Thus by the newspapers’ own admission Japanese domestic and external politics faced Europeans with a puzzle wrapped in an enigma. By portraying Japan as so inscrutable, the press could not be reserving a favored spot for Japan as a potential ally for Germany.

\textbf{Economy}

In the Weimar period the press paid close attention to Japan’s economy and focused on three conflicting but related aspects: the economy grew as Japan engaged in territorial

\textsuperscript{73} „Man soll also lieber die Konsequenzen ziehen und Japan aus dem Völkerbund ausscheiden lassen, der auf jenen elementaren ,westlichen’ Moralbegriffen beruht, die den Japanern völlig fremd sind, als daß man der anders gearteten japanischen Mentalität zuliebe das schuldlose und ohnmächtige China seinem Schicksal preisgibt,” in “Neue japanische Gewalttaten. Während der Völkerbund verhandelt…” (New Japanese atrocities, while the League of Nations deliberates...), V, 23 November 1932, Evening Edition.

\textsuperscript{74} „Bei der Rätselhaftigkeit der ostasiatischen Denkart für uns weißrassige Menschen erscheint es schwierig und fast unmöglich, mit einiger Gewißheit die Frage ,Was will Japan?’” in “Was will Japan?” (What does Japan want?), KZ, 7 January 1933.

\textsuperscript{75} „Dem Europäer wird das Denken und Fühlen des Asiaten immer geheimnisvoll und unlösbar bleiben; er vermag sich in seine Gedankengänge mit ihren tiefsten hintergründen kaum hineinzuversetzen,” in “Alarmschüsse aus Japan” (Shots of alarm from Japan), KZ, 18 May 1932.

\textsuperscript{76} „Das merkwürdige Geheimnis, mit dem der Fall umgeben wird, und das für Außenstehende lächerlich geringe Gewicht der Gründe, die für die Notwendigkeit des Regierungswechsels ins Feld geführt werden, geben dem abendländischen Beobachter wieder einmal Rätsel der japanischen Innenpolitik auf,” in “Faschismus in Japan?” (Fascism in Japan?), VZ, 24 May 1933.
expansion and rearmament, the resultant state of crisis the economy plunged into from overheating, and Japan’s menacing attempts to export its way out of its financial straits.

Japan’s economic growth in the 1920s and relatively quick recovery from the world economic crisis after 1929 impressed the newspapers. After the Versailles Conference the Germania carried an article detailing how the Japanese economy had benefited from the Great War at Europe’s expense by reducing foreign debt and increasing exports.\(^77\) The expansion in Japan’s shipping industry in particular caught the attention of the papers. In 1921 the Vossische Zeitung advised readers not to dismiss the claim of the shipping concern Nippon Yüsen Kaisha (日本郵船會社) to be “the world’s largest shipping company.”\(^78\) After the outbreak of the Great Depression the same paper reported that while Europe languished in economic doldrums, Japanese shipping remained active and profitable.\(^79\) And as Japan imported more iron from Germany in 1933 to sustain its invasion of North China and rearmament program, the Vossische Zeitung celebrated with a sigh of relief Japanese purchasing power in a time of sliding commodity prices.\(^80\)

Though impressed with Japan’s performance, the press did not blind itself to Japan’s financial straits, several of which resulted exactly from the phenomenal expansion. In fact the

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\(^{78}\) „Nippon Yusen Kaisha. Größte Handels-Reederei der Welt;“ in “Von der japanischen Schifffahrt” (From Japanese shipping), VZ, 7 January 1921.

\(^{79}\) “Schiffarts-Konjunktur in Japan” (Business cycle of shipping in Japan), VZ, 23 March 1933; and “Lebhafe Ostasienfahrt” (Lively East Asian Voyage), VZ, 2 April 1933.

\(^{80}\) “Japanische Käufe am Eisenmarkt” (Japanese purchases in iron market), VZ, 30 March 1933, Evening Edition; “Ostasiatische Eisenkäufe” (East Asian iron purchases), VZ, 5 January 1933; and “Japan als Eisenkäufer. Vollbeschäftigte Rüstungsindustrie” (Japan as iron buyer. Fully-employed armament industries), VZ, 2 February 1933, Evening Edition.
word *Krise* (crisis) appeared regularly in articles on the Japanese economy. Always in 1921, merely two years after Versailles, the *Vossische Zeitung* noted that Japan, a Great War victor, suffered from the typical postwar ailments of inflation and government spending swollen by military provisions, which in Japan’s case ate up an atypical 50 per cent of the entire budget. The correspondent, the abovementioned Professor Plaut, could not hide his shock, “In the history of the world there exists no precedent in which military outlay made up half of the entire budget of a people in peacetime.” Six years later, as Japan launched a naval construction program to replace older ships, he again questioned why Japan needed new weapons in a time of financial stress when it recognized no obvious enemies beyond the horizon. Later, in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident, the press across the political spectrum attributed heavy financial burdens to Japan’s adventurism. The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported that Tokyo had to float 35-50 million Yen of debts to cover the expedition. As Japan abandoned the gold standard late in 1931 the *Germania* linked this course of action to the costs of operation in Manchuria. The *Vossische Zeitung*, while acknowledging Japan’s desire to protect its investments in Manchuria, remarked that the war

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81 For example, „Angesichts der schweren wirtschaftlichen Krise, welche Japan im verflossenen Jahre durchgemacht hat, und die es noch lange nicht überwunden zu haben scheint, wenn auch vielleicht die schwierigsten Augenblicke vorüber sind, dürften einige Angaben über die japanischen Finanzen von allgemeinem Interesse sein,” in “Japanese Finances” (Japanese finances), VZ, 14 February 1921, Evening Edition; and Wilhelm Schulze, “Der Yen in der Krise” (The Yen in the crisis), VZ, 15 June 1933.

82 „In der Geschichte der Welt liegt kein Präzedenzfall dafür vor, daß die militärischen Ausgaben eines Volkes in Friedenszeiten nahezu die Hälfte seiner Gesamtausgaben betragen sollen,” in J. Plaut, “Die Sorgen der Sieger” (The worries of the victors), VZ, 24 February 1921.

83 J. Plaut, “Japans Flottenprogramm” (Japan’s fleet program), VZ, 9 January 1927, Post Edition.

84 “Völkerbundsrat schwätzt – Japan marschiert” (League of Nation council speculates – Japan marches), VB, 24 November 1931.

85 “Japan verläßt den Goldstandard. Die Kosten des mandschurischen Abenteuers” (Japan abandons the gold standard. The costs of the Manchuria adventure), G, 17 December 1931.
in China pushed the border of economic rationality by risking American sanctions.\(^8\) Both Marxist papers, the *Vorwärts* and *Rote Fahne*, saw the conflict as one in which an imperialist power acted aggressively in response to economic pressures.\(^8\)

Besides viewing Japan’s armament program and military engagement as “overextending itself,”\(^8\) the press also demonstrated how Japan lay at the mercy of boycotts of Japanese goods by China, Japan’s most important export market. In 1919, when Japan had its right to inherit Germany’s sphere of influence in China recognized in Versailles, student protests and worker strikes broke out in Beijing and Shanghai, followed by a nationwide boycott of Japanese merchandise. Known as the May Fourth Movement, the demonstrations and boycott impressed the *Germania* enough to attribute a local Japanese withdrawal to the movement’s damage to Japan.\(^9\) As to be expected, the Manchurian Incident triggered another wave of refusals to buy Japanese. The *Vossische Zeitung* detailed that Japan’s exports to China shrank to 60 per cent of the previous volume and saw Japan’s retreat from the gold standard as part of the fallout.\(^10\) Another commentator noted that while in the short term Japan effortlessly captured city after city in China, in the long run time worked for China, “Japan’s most dangerous opponent.”\(^11\) The *Vorwärts* went so far as to praise the


\(^{87}\) “Japan als Wirtschaftsmacht. Kräfte und Ziele des japanischen Imperialismus” (Japan as economic power. Power and goals of Japanese imperialism), V, 3 February 1932; and “Der Krieg im Ferne Osten und die internationale Lage” (The war in the Far East and the international situation), RF, 3 February 1932.


\(^{89}\) “Wie das chinesische Volk die Japaner boykottiert” (How the Chinese boycott the Japanese), G, 2 August 1919, Evening Edition.

\(^{90}\) “China boykottiert Japan” (China boycotts Japan), VZ, 22 December 1931.

\(^{91}\) „Der gefährlichste Gegner Japans ist – C h i n a. Die Feststellung klingt gewagt in einem Zeitpunkt, wo die japanische Armee fast widerstandslos eine chinesische Stadt nach der andern besetzt… Aber die Zeit
boycott as beneficial to the growth of Chinese domestic manufacturing and a just economic weapon against Japanese bomber pilots.  

To diversify its export destinations and reduce its dependence on China, Japan attempted to send its goods to other parts of Asia and Europe, an act the German press perceived as a threat to European economic hegemony. In 1921 the *Vossische Zeitung* detailed how industries in Thuringia had to compete with Japan, which had taken advantage of the wartime Allied blockade of Germany and penetrated markets previously dominated by Thuringian exports, particularly in the areas of toys, porcelains, and Christmas-tree decorations.  

Another realm of market competition between Germany and Japan occurred in the export of rayon. The *Kreuz-Zeitung*, noting “the fantastic development of the Japanese rayon industry,” asked its readers, “Is Japan spinning a web around us?” When Gandhi organized a boycott of British products in India, Japan stepped right in to satisfy the needs of “fellow Asians.” Two newspapers, however, described the event menacingly as “Japan conquering India.”

Although one cannot doubt that the Japanese economy attracted much coverage by the German press, attention alone does not equal automatic approval, and one can detect a 


92 “Chinas Boykott gegen Japan. Wirtschaftliche Waffen gegen Bombenflieger” (China’s boycott against Japan. Economic weapon against bomber pilots), V, 3 November 1931.

93 Dr. W. H. Edwards, “Thüringen und Japan” (Thuringia and Japan), VZ, 7 September 1921.

94 “Spinnt uns Japan ein? Die phantastische Entwicklung der japanischen Kunstseideindustrie” (Is Japan spinning a web around us? The fantastic development of the Japanese rayon industry), KZ, 15 January 1921. See also, “Japans Kunstseide-Konkurrenz” (Japan’s rayon competition), VZ, 27 February 1933, Evening Edition.

95 “Japan erobert Indien. Die Wirkung von Gandhis Boykott-Parole” (Japan conquers India. The effect of Gandhi’s boycott rallying cry), VZ, 18 September 1931; and “Japans erobert Indien” (Japan conquers India), G, 12 March 1933.
whiff of resentment in the articles on Japan. This phenomenon understandably became visible whenever Germany entered into direct competition with Japan, which enjoyed allegedly unfair advantages of a depressed currency, longer working hours and low wages.96 The correspondent who wrote on the expansion of Japanese shipping lamented that it was Europe’s tragic and senseless self-destruction during World War I and the disbandment of the German merchant fleet that opened the way for the upstart to penetrate into areas of previous European dominance.97 Nor did the papers ignore the social and diplomatic costs behind Japan’s growth and expansion. The Vossische Zeitung reminded its readers that Japan produced its competitively priced textiles by literally trapping girls in a labor system bordering on slavery. Should Japan fail to sustain its exports, “the distressful social situation of the Japanese industrial workers would degenerate further.”98 One writer even penned a short story, complete with a poem, to expose the despair of the factory girls – and all these criticisms from a pro-business newspaper.99 As Japan extended its economic activities into China, the press also noticed its growing dependence on and vulnerability to the Chinese market, ultimately contributing to the economically irrational adventure in Manchuria and resultant Chinese boycotts. In addition, the press harbored no illusion regarding Japan’s paranoiac arms buildup and its detrimental effects on the economy, an unnatural condition, as

96 “Rückgang im Ostasien-Geschäft” (Downturn in Far Eastern transaction), VZ, 15 April 1933, Evening Edition.

97 “Von der japanischen Schifffahrt” (From Japanese shipping), VZ, 7 January 1921.

98 „Elend, wie die sozialen Bedingungen der japanischen Industrie-Arbeiter schon sind, würden sie sich noch wesentlich verschlechtern, wenn Japan die auswärtigen Absatzmärkte nicht halten und erweitern könnte,” in Prof. Dr. Hermann Levy, “Japans Wirtschaftskampf. Verhängnisvolle Expansionspolitik” (Japan’s economic struggle. Disastrous expansion policy), VZ, 5 December 1931.

99 Hermann Lint, “Kimono,” VZ, 14 January 1932, Evening Edition. One wonders whether the paper would criticize German businesses as harshly had they treated their employees as egregiously.
one commentator saw it, reminiscent of the *Kaiserreich*’s on the eve of World War I.\textsuperscript{100} Putting together these images of the Japanese economy in the German press, one gathers the impression that Japan’s finances teetered on the brink of disaster and stood one wrong move away from a total meltdown, a trap Japan attempted to escape by exporting aggressively and thereby hurting German interests. Thus one must conclude that the German press did not portray Japan as economically stable, let alone a potential ally.

**Japan as an Imperialist Power**

German newspapers across the political spectrum portrayed Japan as one among many imperialist powers. Already on 20 September 1931, two days after the outbreak of hostility in Manchuria, the *Germania* placed Japanese actions on the same level as America’s continental expansion, English overlordship in Egypt and French prerogatives in the Versailles Treaty.\textsuperscript{101} The *Völkischer Beobachter* likewise saw the Incident under the auspices of Anglo-French-Japanese friendship.\textsuperscript{102} The Marxist *Vorwärts* and *Rote Fahne* not surprisingly portrayed the struggle as part of a global imperialistic war to subjugate peasants and workers. “Japanese policies against China,” proclaimed the socialist paper, “never followed the tune of racial feelings but clear imperialistic power politics.”\textsuperscript{103} Furthermore the paper attributed the helplessness of the League of Nations to the connivance of Japan with

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\textsuperscript{100} Erich von Salzmann, “Japans wirtschaftliche Lage” (Japan’s economic situation), VZ, 18 July 1921, Evening Edition.

\textsuperscript{101} “Explosionsgefahr” (Danger of explosion), G, 20 September 1931.

\textsuperscript{102} J. Frenck, “Die japanische Politik in China” (The Japanese policy in China), VB, 2 October 1931.

\textsuperscript{103} „Japans Politik gegen China war nie ein Spiel auf den Saiten des Rassegefühls, sondern klare imperialistische Machtpolitik,“ in Peter Garwy, “Sturmzeichen im Fernen Osten. Imperialistischer Machtkampf um die Mandschurei” (Signs of storm in the Far East. Imperialist power struggle for Manchuria), V, 22 September 1931.
other powers – “the League of Nations was powerless because the great powers controlling it
wanted it to be so.”\textsuperscript{104} The communist paper minced no words and denounced the League as
the center of an organization of war criminals and the Manchurian Incident an imperialistic
plot against Chinese communists.\textsuperscript{105} Interestingly enough, the \textit{Rote Fahne} and \textit{Völkischer
Beobachter} found themselves speaking in unison to accuse France as the merchant of death
shipping arms to Japan.\textsuperscript{106}

Yet words alone did not quite fulfill the newspapers’ wish to depict Japan as just one
of several imperialist powers, so they deployed clever illustrations to convey their message.
In December 1921, during talks among Japan, America, Britain and France in the
Washington Naval Conference on disarmament, the \textit{Vossische Zeitung} carried a cartoon to
caricature the unwillingness of the powers to step forward for arms reduction. Labeled
“Disarmament Conference: ‘You first, then I!’”, the drawing featured some soldiers to
represent the participants, with each holding on to their dear weapons and volunteering the

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\textsuperscript{104} \textit{“Aber der Völkerbund war machtlos, weil die Großmächte die ihn beherrschen, es so gewollt
haben,”} in “SAI. und IGB. gegen Japan. Und gegen das Versagen der Völkerbundsmächte” (SAI and IGB
against Japan. And against the collapse of League authorities), V, 7 February 1932. The SAI and IGB stood
respectively for Sozialistische Arbeiterinternational (Socialist Workers International) and Internationale
Gewerkschaftsbunde (International Federation of Unions).
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\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{“Hände weg von den chinesischen Sowjets! Der Krieg um die Aufteilung Chinas. Die japanische
Regierung befehlt allgemeine Mobilmachung – Amerika tritt auf den Plan – Der Völkerbund als
Organisationszentrums der Kriegsverbrecher – Ein imperialistisches Komplott gegen die chinesischen Sowjets”
(Hands off from the Chinese Soviets! The war for the partition of China. The Japanese regime orders general
mobilization – America joins the plan – the League of Nations as organization center of war criminals – an
imperialistic conspiracy against the Chinese Soviets), RF, 16 October 1931.
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\textsuperscript{106} \textit{“Französische Kanonen für Japan”} (French canons for Japan), RF, 26 January 1932; and Dr. T.,
“Frankreich ist Japans Waffenlieferant” (France is Japan’s weapon deliverer), VB, 13 February 1932.
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man next to himself for disarmament (Figure 3). The soldier on the far left appeared Japanese, with the standard five-cornered star on his helmet and the hilt of his sword just visible below his belt. In this image the Japanese soldier represented just one of the powers, indistinguishable from the rest.

An illustration in the *Kreuz-Zeitung* developed further still this theme of Japan as one of the heavily armed powers. In an article attacking Versailles’s restriction on the size and equipment of German armed forces when other powers armed themselves to the teeth, the author marshaled a visual aid to convey his message. The chart on the right showed how Germany lacked an air force while other nations freely developed military aviation (Figure 4). The other charts highlighted Germany’s deprived conditions on land and at sea. Each chart included Japan’s state of armament alongside those of other powers as a point of reference. The illustrator certainly saw no “have-not” solidarity between Germany and Japan, which appeared as an enforcer of Versailles and the treaty systems despised by nationalistic Germans.

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108 Illustrations by D. L. D. in Major a. D. von Keiser, “Das nationale Deutschland und die Abrüstungskonferenz” (The national Germany and the disarmament conference), KZ, 7 December 1931.
While the *Kreuz-Zeitung* saw the League as stiflingly pacifistic, the *Rote Fahne* viewed it as menacingly militant, all the time maintaining that Japan constituted but one member of an imperialistic bloc. In a cartoon titled “The League of Nations at work,” a monstrous creature wearing the League’s hat rains down death and destruction on a city (Figure 5).\(^{109}\) Readers could not have missed the Japanese flag flying alongside those of America, France and Britain. In a drawing of the “Geneva Disarmament Swindle,” a monster representing the war industries of various nations basks in the sun (pun intended probably) of Japanese weapon contracts while slithering its way to China (Figure 6).\(^{110}\) Again Japan appeared as one of the

\(^{109}\) “Der Völkerbund an der Arbeit” (The League of Nations at work), RF, 3 April 1932.

\(^{110}\) Caption reads „Kriegsindustrie somit sich an den japanischen Aufträgen – Streikt gegen alle Kriegslieferungen!“ in untitled cartoon, RF, 26 February 1932.
imperialist powers conspiring to subjugate a peaceful people.

In less controversial contexts the German press also depicted Japan alongside other powers. In 1932, after Gandhi successfully wrested some concessions from the British government, the Vorwärts carried a cartoon to celebrate his nonviolent approach to seek political changes. In the drawing a circle of uniformed officers surrounds in wonderment a half-naked, scrawny Gandhi, remarking, “Strange, that this teeny civilian represents some sort of power” (Figure 7).111 The Japanese officer, shorter than the others, takes his place as one power alongside the Italian, Russian, French, British and American. Finally, during the 1933 London Economic Conference, the Völkischer Beobachter printed an image to mock the selfishness and helplessness of the powers in face of the global economic crisis (Figure 8).112 As the patient “world economy” lies dying, Uncle Sam

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argues with a man representing the French Republic. Tucked in the far right stands a figure depicting Japan, looking rather clueless and squinting through the indispensable horn-rimmed glasses.

There can remain no doubt that the German press portrayed Japan as just another imperialist power and not possessing qualities that might be sought in an ally. In addition, the cartoons mocking the disarmament and economic conferences deliberately set a distance between Germany and the other colonial empires by omitting a figure representing Germany and showing the powers’, including Japan’s, inability to handle the Depression and unfair suppression of Germany’s reasonable aspirations.

**Japan and the League of Nations**

In the period examined by far the most prominent news item on Japan revolved around the Manchurian Incident and the subsequent drawn-out deliberation in the League of Nations. From the numerous articles on Japan’s negotiation with the League one can see a Japan that was aggressive and dishonest – not exactly attractive qualities in a prospective ally.

The press relentlessly attacked the League’s inability to rein in a belligerent Japan; from right to left the papers hurled harsh criticisms at the League. The *Völkischer Beobachter*
ridiculed the League’s “capitulation” in the face of Japanese action, while the *Kreuz-Zeitung* called attention to the “helpless” state of the League’s council when Japan refused to halt its operation in Manchuria. Throughout October and November 1931 the more moderate *Germania* and *Vossische Zeitung* asked again and again if Japan would submit to the League’s authority. “Will Japan come around?” became almost a weekly headline. The answer always disappointed: “Japan does not yield,” or “Japan repudiates the council.” Newspapers from the left showed even less patience with Japan’s ability to invade China while the League wrung its hands. The *Vorwärts* decried the League’s “withdrawal,” while the *Rote Fahne* accused the League of downright complicity in Manchuria by giving Japan virtual license.

To make a deeper impact with their messages, the papers relied on visual means to underline Japan’s truculence and the League’s helplessness. The *Vorwärts* deployed its artist most effectively to highlight Japan’s aggressiveness and threat to world peace. In a cartoon titled “Attention – Kid-nabbing!” a mother, personifying the League, naps while kidnappers, dressed as Japanese soldiers and complete with ninja daggers between their teeth, lay their

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114 “Der hilflose Völkerbundsrat” (The helpless League of Nations council), KZ, 24 September 1931.

115 See for example, “Lenkt Japan ein?” (Will Japan come around), VZ, 9 November 1931, Evening Edition.

116 “Japan gibt nicht nach” (Japan does not yield), G, 13 October 1931.

117 “Japan lehnt den Rat ab” (Japan repudiates the council), VZ, 11 October 1931.

118 “Rückzug des Völkerbundes” (Withdrawal of the League of Nations), V, 26 September 1931.

119 “Imperialistisches Banditentum in Genf” (Imperialist banditry in Geneva), RF, 20 October 1931.
hands on an innocent baby representing peace (Figure 9). The caption warned, “Nations, beware! The child kidnappers are at work again!” An illustration by the *Rote Fahne* emphasized Japan’s aggressiveness, abetted by the League’s timidity. Labeled “The Japanese Pacemaker of the League of Nations,” the cartoon portrayed a giant of a Japanese with a bayonet making great strides and leaving behind League commission members armed only with folders (Figure 10). As if the League could not appear any more useless in the face of Japanese bullying, the *Völkischer Beobachter* shared its own interpretation of the situation. In a cartoon titled “Nothing Learned,” a portly Chinese man tries vainly to thwart the bayonet thrust of a Japanese soldier by threatening to complain to Geneva, “Hold on! Or I’ll to tell the League of Nations!!” (Figure 11).

120 Caption reads „Völker, aufgepaßt! Wieder sind die Kindesräuber am Werk!” in “Achtung – Kindesraub!” (Attention – Kid-nabbing!), V, 19 May 1932.

Besides depicting Japan as an aggressor, the papers portrayed Japan as a liar in the Manchurian affair and its interaction with the League. The Japanese government insisted that the “incident” did not constitute a war, since that would mean Japan had violated the Nine-Power Treaty preserving China’s territorial integrity and the Kellogg-Briand Pact outlawing war. To show the hollowness of Japan’s claim, a *Völkischer Beobachter* reporter first detailed an offensive by Japan and then annotated a press release by the Japanese war minister, “The Japanese War Ministry proclaimed that it would be a great error to think that Japan was waging a war in China. (A good ‘joke.’) Japan’s action in Manchuria amounted solely to purely policing measures (!!).” One may find it remarkable that the Nazi paper refrained from using racist terms or logic to criticize Japan’s action or explain China’s weakness, thereby indicating a lack of predilection for either people. The *Kreuz-Zeitung*, while criticizing the League for allowing itself to be duped by Japan, sarcastically agreed that Manchuria could indeed be truly independent, that is, from China but not Japan. Likewise the *Germania* always used

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123 „Der japanische Kriegsminister erklärte, es sei ein größer Irrtum, zu denken, daß Japan gegen China Krieg führe. (Ein guter ‚Witz‘.) Bei dem japanischen Vorgehen in der Mandschurie handle es sich lediglich um rein polizeiliche Maßnahmen (!!).“ in “Aber kein Krieg....” (But no war....), VB, 20 November 1931.

124 „Der Völkerbund läßt sich dupieren“ (The League of Nations allows itself to be duped), KZ, 18 February 1932; and “Unabhängigkeitserklärung der Mandschurie” (Independence declaration of Manchuria), KZ, 18 February 1932.
quotation marks when mentioning “independent” Manchuria. Meanwhile the *Vossische Zeitung* grew sick of the platitudes Japan was force-feeding the League, blasting the explanation given by the Japanese delegate as “the most contorted, sorry and helpless blabbering” that one had yet heard in the hall of the League council. When Japan announced in March 1933, after its own withdrawal from the League, that it would form a competing organization for Asian nations, the *Vossische Zeitung* pointed out that only Japanese and one Manchukuo representative attended the event, which dodged issues like the role of China, even though plenty of government bigwigs appeared for propaganda purposes. Lastly, the two leftist papers spared no feelings and called Japanese answers to other nations for what they were – hypocrisy.

To hammer home the message of a dishonest Japan, the papers again deployed images. In February 1932 the *Vorwärts* printed a cartoon titled “Summit of Pacifism,” in which the Japanese representative to Geneva waxes eloquent to other bored members, “The best proof that we are not waging a war is the fact that our bomb raids engage only peaceful civilians” (Figure 12). Against the background of bombs exploding amid Chinese men,
women and children incapable of returning fire (hence no war), the representative’s explanation rang hollow. Another cartoon in the Vorwärts mocked Japan’s dishonesty in its interaction with the League of Nations. The caption explained, “In Geneva it is declared: ‘The Japanese troops are engaged nonstop in clearing out of Manchuria’” (Figure 13).130 In the drawing Japanese soldiers are indeed clearing out the possessions of Chinese peasants in a campaign of pillage. The Rote Fahne too printed a cartoon to show how Japan would dupe the commission to be sent by the League to investigate the situation in Manchuria. Titled “The ‘State of Peace,’” the drawing depicted a commissioner encountering some Japanese soldiers transporting an oversized cannon (Figure 14).131 The commissioner asked naively, “Where are you heading [with the cannon]? I

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130 Caption reads „Die japanischen Truppen sind unausgesetzt mit der Räumung der Mandschurien beschäftigt,“ in “In Genf wird erklärt:” (In Geneva it is declared:), V, 5 November 1931.

thought the war is over…” The soldiers answered, “Yes, sir, we are just heading to Vladivostok for a little sparrow hunt!” Not only did the cartoonist want to show Japan’s duplicity and the League’s credulousness, he also wanted to convey the message that Japan’s aggression in Manchuria threatened the Soviet Union.

Indeed unforgiving hostility to the League stood out as a recurrent theme in Weimar newspapers, and Japan’s action in Manchuria merely confirmed what the press knew all along about the League. On the one hand nationalists despised Geneva as the enforcer of the Versailles Diktat and administrator of territories like Danzig and Saarland. While the League bullied a disarmed Germany not capable threatening anyone, in the face of real aggression from Japan it retreated with its tail between its legs. On the other hand Marxists resented the League for not granting Soviet membership at first and perpetuating colonial rule in the Middle East and Africa in the mandate system. Japanese impunity in Manchuria merely showcased the collusion among the imperialist powers controlling the League. Just as the reporting of Japanese athletic achievements served to highlight German failures, the real focus of press coverage of Japan’s interactions with the League lay with German resentment toward Geneva, which the papers ideologically interpreted as either a hypocritical defender of pacifism or aggressive enforcer of colonialism.
As we have seen, although the press seemed interested in Japanese sportsmen and geisha, they also indulged in the notion of Japan as part a mysterious Asia with incomprehensible politics and a problematic economy that seemed to head from one crisis to another. Moreover, the papers depicted Japan as just one in an imperialist bloc to which a truly “have-not” Germany did not belong. Lastly, the press’s negative reactions to Japanese aggression and dishonesty can hardly support the claim that Japan and Germany were some sort of predestined allies.
CHAPTER IV
GERMANY IN FINE PRINT

Overall the Japanese press presented Germany through a kaleidoscopic image ranging from a serious analysis of the Weimar constitution to a casual discussion of the musical merit of the anthem *Deutschland über Alles* (Germany over everything). Yet recurring topics emerged out of this eclectic mosaic to highlight certain aspects: admiration of Germany’s ex-monarch, culture, science and economy, a perception of Germany as part of the West, and concern over German territorial claims in the Pacific, Nazi book-burning and anti-Semitic measures.

Royal Treatment

A strong interest in the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II marked reports on Germany. As soon as the Great War ended the newspapers began to fear that the Allies were contemplating trying Wilhelm for war crimes. Thus the *Yomiuri* praised the Netherlands for providing refuge to the Kaiser and rejecting the Allied demand for extradition. The paper warned against setting a precedent of trying a “sacrosanct sovereign,” and cited the “fierce opposition” of the

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132 Nakura Bun’ichi 名倉聞一, “Doitsu no shinkenpō” 獨逸の新憲法 (Germany’s new constitution), *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, 24-29 August 1920, hereafter *Asahi*; and “Kaikin ni natta doitsu no kokka” 解禁になったドイツの國歌 (Germany’s legalized national anthem), *Yomiuri*, 27 July 1926.

133 「我國及米國代表者の如き、神聖不可侵の君主を審問することは、國際法上に一新例を開くものなりと、反對の意志を表示したりと云ふ」, in “Dokutei hikiwatashi mondai (oranda no kyozetsu seitō)” 獨帝引渡問題(和蘭の拒絶正當) (The problem of extraditing the Kaiser [Holland’s refusal correct]), *Yomiuri*, 28 January 1920.
Taishō Emperor to holding Wilhelm responsible.\textsuperscript{134} Japan had high stakes in the debate: if the Kaiser could be tried for Germany’s actions, then Japan, with a constitution based on the Kaiserreich’s, might one day face the same charges.\textsuperscript{135} Despite revelation of Wilhelm’s old letters urging the Russian Czar to snatch Korea, the Kaiser in the 1920s and 30s enjoyed royal treatment by Japanese newspapers, which meticulously reported his minor ailments or remarriage as newsworthy. Moreover, the press repeatedly exaggerated the chance of his return to Germany to reclaim his throne, an expectation raised further still by the rise of monarchists such as Paul von Hindenburg and Franz von Papen. When von Papen as chancellor took over the Prussian government in a coup, the Nichinichi (日々) even fancied that the ex-crown prince would become Germany’s president.\textsuperscript{136} Likewise the press interpreted Nazism in terms of monarchical restoration and called Hitler “head of a restoration faction” after his failed putsch.\textsuperscript{137} Despite Hitler’s proclamations of his plan to remake Germany into something hitherto unseen, the papers kept imagining Nazism as restorationist. Instead of seeing the crown prince’s membership in the Nazi Party as submission to Hitler’s appeal, the Kokumin rationalized that this royal-Nazi link could only

\textsuperscript{134} 「日本駐箚和蘭公使館員は既に前獨帝を審問せんとする企図に對し日本皇帝陛下が猛烈に反對せられ日本政府は若し他國が引渡要求を撤回せば引渡要求を主張せざる旨誓言せり」，in “Nihon kōtei no hantai zendokutei hikiwatashi mondai to kakkoku” 日本皇帝の反對 前獨帝引渡問題と各國 (The emperor’s opposition. The problem of extraditing the ex-Kaiser and various nations), Yomiuri, 28 January 1920.

\textsuperscript{135} 「帝國憲法第三條に曰く「天皇ハ神聖ニシテ侵スヘカラス」と明定すれば帝國政府並に國民は此心を以て常に他國の元首にも對する」, in “Kōwa shinsō (8) dokutei shobun mondai” 講和真相 (八) 獨帝處分問題 (The true story of making peace VIII: the problem of punishing the Kaiser), Yomiuri, 9 July 1919. The Kokumin echoed this concern by calling any trial of the Kaiser a violation of international ethics and humanitarianism (審問は國際道德及政治上人道上の見地より之を審問するに止め), in “Zendokutei shinmon no keishiki” 前獨帝審問の形式 (The format for trying the ex-Kaiser), Kokumin Shinbun, 21 January 1920. Hereafter Kokumin.

\textsuperscript{136} Nichinichi editorial translated as “Party or Despotic Government,” The Japan Times and Mail, 15 September 1932. Hereafter Japan Times. The Nichinichi was the Tokyo counterpart of the Osaka Mainichi.

\textsuperscript{137} ��Fukuhekiha kyotō taiho” 復辟派巨頭逮捕 (Capture of head of restoration faction), Asahi, 11 November 1923.
facilitate the Kaiser’s return to power. Perhaps something novel about a monarch’s restoration touched Japanese reporters, but their myopic magnification of Wilhelm’s importance distorted their grasp of German politics. Not only did the press see republican Germany in the shadow of the Kaiser, it also assumed that the rightist Nazi Party would automatically support restoration.

**Profound Culture**

Besides its ex-monarch Germany attracted the newspapers’ interest in its culture. Soon after World War I a critic predicted in the *Yomiuri* that German culture’s “deep thought and strong emotions” would propel it back to the core of world culture. He also published a series in the *Kokumin* to compare German literature before and after the war. The *Asahi* meanwhile discussed culture by reviewing films by the German studio UFA and a dramatic rendition of Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Vor Sonnenaufgang*. For the centennial of Goethe’s death, the *Asahi, Yomiuri, and Japan Times* all paid tribute for days to the literary giant.

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139 '獨逸文明の特徴は思想の深さと、感情の激烈さ...將來世界文化の中心となるのは、矢張り獨逸でなければならない', in Yamagishi Mitsunobu 山岸光宣, “Doitsu bunka no shōrai” 獨逸文化の將來 (The future of German culture), *Yomiuri*, 17 September 1919.

140 Yamagishi Mitsunobu, “Senzen sengo no doitsu bungaku” 戦前戦後の獨逸文學 (Pre- and postwar German literature), *Kokumin*, 17-19 November 1920.

141 See for example, Kayano Shōshō 芽野薫, “Haputoman sono sakuhin ni tsuite” ハウプトマンその作品について (On a work by Hauptmann), *Asahi*, 15 November 1932; “Shin’eigahyō aikokusha’ doku ufa eiga” 新映評「愛國者’獨ウフア映畫 (Review of ‘In the Secret Service’ by Germany’s UFA), *Asahi*, 3 March 1932.

142 For example, see Okutsu Hikoshige 奥津彦重, “Gētē no me gēte hyakunensai o kinen shite” ゲー テの眼 ゲーテ百年祭を記念して (Goethe’s eyes, commemorating Goethe’s centennial), *Asahi*, 14-16 March 1932.
fact, the *Asahi* reported that on the day of the anniversary a Goethe festival took place in Tokyo featuring the German ambassador as keynote speaker and performances of Goethe’s works.\(^{143}\)

German music and scholarship too drew the attention of reporters. In addition to the aforementioned study of the anthem, the *Asahi* detailed in a long article the plight of German musicians during the Great Depression.\(^{144}\) The German language itself aroused so much interest that the front pages of papers frequently advertised German courses and books on topics such as lessons from Germany’s recovery, Hitlerism, and German economic theories.\(^{145}\) Japanese scholars welcomed German membership in the League of Nations not just because of its impact on peace but because it facilitated German research on Japan and academic exchange between the two nations.\(^{146}\) A *Yomiuri* report on Japan’s acceptance of German books as valid reparations payments in lieu of cash revealed most tellingly this admiration of German culture.\(^{147}\) One could hardly imagine France or Belgium allowing Germany to replace coal shipments with copies of Goethe’s *Faust.*

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\(^{143}\) “Hyakunensai no ‘gête no yû’” 百年祭記念の「ゲーテの夕」 (“Goethe’s night” commemorates his centennial), *Asahi*, 23 March 1932.

\(^{144}\) Ishikawa Renji 石川鋭次, “Doitsu gakudan no genjô” ドイツ楽壇の現状 (Current state of German music), *Asahi*, 29 October 1932, Evening Edition.

\(^{145}\) See for examples, advertisement, “Shin doitsugo kôza” 新ドイツ語講座 (New German lecture), *Asahi*, 27 September 1927; advertisement, “Hittoraa to hittoraa undô” ヒトラールとヒトラール運動 (Hitler and Hitler movement), *Yomiuri*, 4 February 1933; and, advertisement, “Doitsu keizai shisôshi” 独逸経済思想史 (History of German economic thoughts), *Yomiuri*, 10 February 1933.

\(^{146}\) Kanokogi Kazunobu 鷲子晋信, “Renmei shinjin doitsu no nihon bunka kenkyûnetsu” 聯盟の新人ドイツの日本文化研究熱 (Japanese culture boom in new League member Germany), *Yomiuri*, 14 September 1926.

\(^{147}\) “Baishôkin no kawari ni doitsu kara shoseki o monbu naimu no ryôshô te kotoshi wa rokuman senyo en hodo” 賠償金の代りに独逸から書籍 文部内務の両省で 今年は六万千余円ほど (Books from Germany to replace reparations. Ministries of Education and Home Affairs received about 61,000 Yen’s worth), *Yomiuri*, 10 October 1926.
Sophisticated Science

In addition to culture, German technology also attracted the attention of the press. The papers celebrated as sensations the visits of German Nobel physicist Albert Einstein and chemist Fritz Haber to Japan.\textsuperscript{148} When the airship \textit{Graf Zeppelin} embarked on its circumnavigation of the globe in 1929, the press built up excitement for its arrival in Japan by educating the public on aviation and tracked every leg of the dirigible’s flight. German aviators who made their way to Japan, such as the aforementioned von Gronau, invariably received a hero’s welcome.\textsuperscript{149} The papers even held the German navy in high esteem despite its lackluster record in the Great War. Already in 1919 the \textit{Kokumin} hailed German naval technology as “first rate.”\textsuperscript{150} Even in its reduced postwar state the German navy still intrigued reporters. The \textit{Japan Times} detailed in two articles how Germany’s “pocket battleships” brilliantly complied with the Versailles Treaty and yet defied its intention to deny Germany a blue-water navy.\textsuperscript{151} The \textit{Kokumin} went as far as to commend the German navy as “still the model of the world” from whose spirit Japan had much to learn – lofty praises indeed from a country with one of the world’s strongest navies in 1933.\textsuperscript{152} In everyday settings too the press exposed readers to German science, as drug makers like Bayer regularly advertised their

\textsuperscript{148} “Dokugasu sen no sōsetsusha ha hakushi sanjyūichi ni raichō” 毒ガス戦の創設者 ハ博士三十日に来朝 (The originator of poison gas warfare, Dr. Haber, comes to Japan on the 30th), \textit{Yomiuri}, 29 October 1924. Haber went to Japan to visit the grave of his uncle, who served in Hakodate as the first German consul.

\textsuperscript{149} See for example “Enrai no guronau ki kasumigaura ni anchakusu” 遠来のグロナウ機霞ヶ浦に安着す (Gronau’s machine lands safely at kasumigaura), \textit{Asahi}, 5 September 1932. For more on von Gronau, see footnote 56.

\textsuperscript{150} 「戦艦の如きは艦隊主砲等凡て獨逸一流」, in “Dokukan bunpai ikan” 獨艦分配如何 (How to divide the German fleet), \textit{Kokumin}, 4 November 1919.

\textsuperscript{151} “Germany’s New Navy,” \textit{Japan Times}, 4 March 1933, p. 8; and “The German Navy: New Pocket Battleship,” \textit{Japan Times}, 1 April 1933.

\textsuperscript{152} 「大和魂を誇るわ々々も一應このドイツ魂に学んで見る必要はないでしょうか」, in “Tsuyoi doitsu no shinkaigun izen sekai no mohan kaigun” 強い獨逸の新海軍 依然世界の模範海軍 (Germany’s powerful new navy, still the world’s model), \textit{Kokumin}, 15 January 1933, Sunday Supplement.
products in the papers.\textsuperscript{153} Japanese trading houses peddling new panaceas without foreign connections often borrowed the names of German celebrities such as Erwin von Baelz (a physician for the Japanese royal family), Wilhelm II and Goethe to help boost sales.\textsuperscript{154} No doubt, the companies selling these wonder drugs invoked the “endorsements” by famous Germans to attempt to bestow respectability to their potions.

**Competitive Economy**

The German economy consistently made headlines in the papers, but reporters sometimes held mixed sentiments. Immediately after World War I Japanese correspondents deplored the everyday hardships suffered by ordinary Germans,\textsuperscript{155} one even penned a travelogue of his harrowing trip through the “hell of starvation” along the Rhine.\textsuperscript{156} As Germany’s economy rebounded, however, the papers’ sympathy hardened into alarm. Reports surfaced in the late 1920s of German economic penetration in Asia to exploit the void left by a boycott of Japanese goods and to expand trade with Manchuria, long treated by Japan as its sphere of influence.\textsuperscript{157} Ironically Germany, having lost in Versailles its

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{153} See for example, advertisement, “Doitsu baierusei novaruginjō” (Piramidon pills, made by Germany’s Bayer), *Asahi*, 20 October 1932.

\textsuperscript{154} See for example, advertisement, “Doitsu no furōchōjyuyaku de kekkaku to ichōbyō ga naoru” (Using German youth-restoring drug to cure tuberculosis and intestinal diseases), *Asahi*, 25 June 1932.

\textsuperscript{155} XYZ, “Dokujin no seikatsu” (The livelihood of Germans), *Asahi*, 26 February 1920.

\textsuperscript{156} Hayashi Hisao 林久男, “Gakidō meguri” (Concerning the hell of starvation), *Asahi*, 22-29 February 1924. In Buddhism, gakidō, literally “place for starving ghosts,” is one of six hells to which souls of gluttonous individuals are consigned after death as punishment for their indulgent lifestyle. The writer’s choice of gakidō to describe postwar German suffering might thus indicate that he deemed the hardship as at least somewhat deserved.

\textsuperscript{157} “Doitsu semento ni nanshi nan’yō shinsaru” (German cement invades south China and the Southern Seas), *Yomiuri*, 16 August 1928; and “Doitsu tai shi shōsen ni shinkeizai
extraterritorial rights in China, often became the favored partner for Chinese businesses. After the outbreak of the Depression, Germany alongside America and Europe reacted by hiking protectionist tariffs and stonewalling Japanese requests for lower import duties in international trade talks. The Japanese press thus saw Germany as part of a West threatening Japan’s vital interests in export. In protest the Asahi printed two cartoons to mock Western obstructions to free trade. In the first, drawn by the famous cartoonist Okamoto Ippei (岡本一平) in October 1932, Japanese exporters struggle to scale the wall of “rising tariffs” despite favorable exchange rates and export subsidies from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry while Chancellor von Papen hides behind a protectionist wall with the rest of the West (Figure 15).\footnote{Okamoto Ippei, “Rikikobu ga tarin!” 力こぶが足りん! (Exertions are not enough!), \textit{Asahi}, 15 October 1932.}

Seven months later the West remained unmoved as ever, and the Asahi devoted another drawing to show the folly of high tariffs. Again Germany behaves as one of the Western nations by trapping itself on its own island of high tariffs and thus stranding the ship of commerce (Figure 16).\footnote{Tsutsumi Samuzō 堺寒三, “Kanzei hikiage kyōso” 關税引上競争 (Competition in raising tariffs), \textit{Asahi}, 12 May 1933. In the cartoon the figure representing England piles more bricks on the wall labeled “Ottawa Conference,” which in the summer of 1932 resolved to raise tariffs for the British Empire.}

Whatever sympathy the press entertained for the German economy after World War I had long evaporated by the early 1930s.
Thus, despite general interest in German royalty, culture, science and economy, a palpable undercurrent lurked in the press against blind admiration of everything German. A writer who had lived in pre-1914 Germany said that he had seen it as its most arrogant and hailed the fall of the *Kaiserreich* as an “advance for humanity.”\(^{160}\) On Japan’s embrace of German culture, a *Yomiuri* editor expressed relief that World War I halted the flow of German know-how, since it freed Japanese scholars from the German legacy and forced them to blaze their own path.\(^{161}\) Even vaunted German medicine attracted critics. One Japanese medical professor complained that not only did ignorant patients waste money on Western drugs that were no better than domestic counterparts, but also Japanese doctors “blindly worshiped Germany.”\(^{162}\) Respect for Germany thus elicited some criticism from those who preferred a more independent Japan.

\(^{160}\) “Doitsu no inshō” 独逸の印象 (An impression of Germany), *Yomiuri*, 9 September 1921.

\(^{161}\) “Gakujutsu fūsa to hanpatsuriki” 学術封鎖と反撲力 (Knowledge embargo and [Japan’s] resiliency), *Yomiuri*, 30 January 1920.

\(^{162}\) “Byōnin wa fumimayou baiyaku no konran jidai kokusanhin to gaikoku seisihin no kōka kurabe” 病人はふみ達る薬の混亂時代 國産品と外國製品の効果くらべ (A confusing time for patients looking for drugs: comparing domestic products and foreign imports), *Asahi*, 8 May 1933.
Germany as Part of the West

The way the press attacked protectionism highlighted another aspect of Germany’s image in newspapers – as just part of a Euro-American West. The internationalist Akahata most effectively portrayed Germany as one part of the world through visual means. For the “International Antiwar Day” on 1 August 1931, the Akahata printed a leaflet showing a global proletariat revolution that drove international capitalists into scrambling for their lives. The drawing depicted the German communist party as only one of the world’s many communist movements; in fact the communist parties from Japan, China, Korea and Taiwan occupied more prominent places than that from Germany or any from Europe. On the capitalist side, Chancellor Heinrich Brüning was shown as just one of many plutocrats fleeing the rising Red tide alongside Herbert Hoover, Benito Mussolini and Chiang Kai-shek (Figure 17).163

Another image, published after Germany’s creditor nations adopted a moratorium on debt payments in 1931, showed President von Hindenburg and other capitalists such as Hoover and British Prime Minister Ramsey McDonald struggling desperately to prop up a crumbling wall representing the “German bourgeoisie” and “capitalist system” with a pole labeled “moratorium” (Figure 18).164

The less ideological papers also saw Germany’s connectedness to the rest of the Euro-American bloc. In the 1920s and 30s both the Asahi and Yomiuri wrote editorial after editorial on the impact of German domestic politics on Europe. They even celebrated elections with limited contemporary and historical import as turning points for European

163 Special Supplement, Akahata, 1 August 1931.
164 Untitled cartoon, Akahata, 12 August 1931.
Figure 17. Communist movements around the world rising to shield the Soviet Union from international capitalists. Brüning (ブリュニング) is seen dragging a cannon inconspicuously on the lower left, just on top of Mussolini. On the far right is Chiang, behind a fleeing Hoover with a cannon under his arm.
peace. With the rise of Nazism in 1933, however, Germany emerged as the most pressing threat to Western stability. As Germany made more bombastic claims after Hitler came to power, the Japanese press began to realize the danger Germany posed. In a cartoon of the “European nursery,” Germany the problem child annoys France by bouncing on its security blanket “Rhineland,” keeps Britain and Austria wide awake, and gives Italy the chance to harass Yugoslavia (Figure 19). Despite its more threatening stance, Germany in the press still appeared as just one power, and a problematic one, in Europe that hardly seemed suitable to be a potential ally for Japan.

At the same time Germany’s involvement in the League of Nations clashed with Japan’s ambitions in Asia. After the Manchurian Incident the League authorized a commission under Lord Lytton to investigate whether the

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165 “Rekishi o kurikaeshite doitsu sosenkyo no kekka” 歴史を繰り返して ドイツ総選挙の結果 (History repeating: result of German general election), Yomiuri, 10 December 1924.

166 Okamoto Ippei, untitled cartoon, Asahi, 16 March 1933. Translated as “European Situation Growing Critical,” Japan Times, 17 March 1933.
struggle involved a genuine aspiration for Manchurian independence. The commission, including a German delegate, unanimously condemned Japan as the aggressor but recommended establishing an autonomous Manchuria under virtual Japanese control. Still unsatisfied, Japan announced its withdrawal from the League, an event the press celebrated as Japan’s assertion of itself in defiance of the West. The Asahi carried a cartoon, titled “Great Power Japan Leaving the Bath,” that shows an oversized Japan, personified by its representative to the League Matsuoka, retreating from the “warm bath of the League” and leaving other Western nations, including Germany, shivering in the cold (Figure 20).\(^\text{167}\) To emphasize Japan’s autarkic independence from

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\(^\text{167}\) Caption reads 「日本『もういやだ、出る、みなさんごゆるりー』西洋諸国『こりや急に湯が減って寒くなった。ハツクショイ』, in Okamoto Ippei, “Daikoku nihon datsuyu no zu” 大國日本脱湯の圖 (Great power Japan leaving the bath), Asahi, 22 February 1933.
the world the paper printed a cartoon depicting a Japanese husband cooperating with his
Manchurian wife to construct a “Manchurian-Japanese bloc” while ignoring the jealous gaze
and threatened economic sanctions of “various countries,” which included an unmistakable
mustached caricature of Hitler (Figure 21).\textsuperscript{168} Whatever relationship Germany had to the rest
of Europe, the papers viewed Germany as a component of the Western chain constricting
Japan’s expanding interests.

**Former German Pacific Possessions**

When Japan and Germany came into conflict over former German territories
controlled by Japan, the press voiced its patriotism in unison. During World War I Japan as
an Ally seized the German-held Marshall, Caroline and Mariana island groups in the Pacific.
After the war Japan received a League mandate to administer these islands, but Japan’s
withdrawal from the League in 1933 led some nationalistic Germans to question whether
Japan could still hold the mandate. Japan tenaciously defended its right to the islands, but
Germany scandalized world opinion by arguing at the London Economic Conference that it
could best fulfill its reparations and debt obligations by regaining the productive capacity of
its former colonies.

The prospect of Germany demanding the return of its former possessions outraged the
Japanese press. When certain American politicians suggested Japan relinquish its mandate
should it leave the League, the *Asahi* derided such talk as “nonsense.”\textsuperscript{169} As the threatened

\textsuperscript{168} Okamoto Ippei, “Shinsetai e no shiren” 新世帯への試練 (Trying out a new home), *Asahi*, 23
February 1933.

\textsuperscript{169} “Nihon no inin tōjichi o doitsu e kaese beikokunai ibbu no guron” 日本の委任統治地をドイツへ
還せ 米国内一部の愚論 (Returning the Japanese mandate islands to Germany, nonsense from some in
America), *Asahi*, 28 September 1932.
withdrawal materialized the feud over the mandate also intensified. In March 1933 the Yomiuri agreed with the Imperial Navy that the islands belonged to Japan by right of its sacrifice in the Great War and not by the mandate, which merely confirmed Japanese administration.\textsuperscript{170} Other newspapers vociferously denied any legitimacy in Germany’s demands. The Osaka Asahi put down any potential German claim as “illegal and irrational” and argued that “there is no reason why Japan should entertain such German overtures whatever her real motives or intentions.”\textsuperscript{171} The Nichinichi regretted Germany’s “poor diplomacy” in sending “absurd” feelers for talks over the islands,\textsuperscript{172} and even hinted sinisterly that “Japan should be prepared for the possible worst to come… for justice is not always upheld by everybody.”\textsuperscript{173} Mobilizing more altruistic ideals, the Höchi Shinbun argued that Japanese control of the islands would only safeguard peace and open sea lanes in the Pacific and the East China Sea.\textsuperscript{174}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image22.png}
\caption{A drooling Hitler, backed by the West, covers the fruit of Japan’s labor in the Pacific islands.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{170} “Nan’yō inin tōjichi no mondai” 南洋委任統治地の問題 (The problem of the South Sea island mandate), Yomiuri, 30 March 1933. Translated as “South Sea Islands Under Japanese Mandate,” Japan Times, 31 March 1933.

\textsuperscript{171} Translation of Osaka Asahi editorial, “Japan’s Mandates,” Japan Times, 28 March 1933.

\textsuperscript{172} Translation of Nichinichi editorial, “Japan’s Mandates and Germany,” Japan Times, 28 March 1933.

\textsuperscript{173} Translation of Nichinichi editorial, “Mandate Problem,” Japan Times, 1 April 1933.

\textsuperscript{174} Translation of Höchi editorial, “Mandate and Germany,” Japan Times, 2 April 1933. The Höchi reigned as the most popular newspaper in Tokyo at the end of the Meiji era. After the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 the Nichinichi and Asahi slowly eroded support for the Höchi.
As the controversy raged on, the papers pressed into service even more original and graphic rationales to justify Japan’s claim, though the theme remained that Germany harbored no legitimate grievance. The *Asahi* cartoonist Okamoto devoted three drawings to the cause, each arguing for Japan’s rightful ownership of the islands for a different reason. In the first, a drooling Hitler, backed ominously by the West, looks longingly at a blooming tree representing the disputed islands that a sullen gardener personifying Japan has nurtured with authority from the mandate (Figure 22). The message rang loud and clear: Japan had taken the pain to cultivate the islands and now the West coveted the harvest. The cartoon thus set aside the issue of legal ownership and deplored Germany for immorality in trying to steal the fruits of another country. The second cartoon, in which Hitler urges his underlings to harass a lady representing Japan while leaving himself out of the fray, developed the theme of righteousness further still. She complains about the “annoying” little Nazis and chides them for lacking “propriety” in laying their hands on the bananas representing the islands (Figure

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175 Okamoto Ippei, untitled cartoon, *Asahi*, 26 March 1933. A similar but indirect justification of Japan’s continued possession of the islands can be seen in a report in the *Kokumin* that gives a detailed account of how the islands prospered under Japanese management. See “Inin tōji irai no nan’yō no keizai hattatsu nihon ni totte minami no seimeisen” 委任統治以来の南洋の経済発達 日本に取って南の生命線 (The economic development of the South Seas Islands since the mandate, a southern lifeline for Japan), *Kokumin*, 31 March 1933.
The third cartoon shows Hitler selfishly preventing other powers from getting together to tackle the Depression by passing obnoxious gas symbolizing Germany’s demand for former colonies (Figure 24). Thus the paper now phrased the debate in terms of international cooperation rather than Japan’s selfish interests in holding on to the islands. Even the Kokumin, normally supportive of nationalism, felt compelled to warn other nations controlling former German colonies to be on guard against rising German nationalism. Preponderant evidence from the press indicates that Japan saw no need to sacrifice its own interests to accommodate Germany.

Nazi Book-burning

The Nazi regime’s limit on freedom of the press – a frontal assault on the journalistic profession – and the burning of books elicited a chorus of criticisms from the papers. The Yomiuri reported that after the Reichstag fire the Hitler regime seized the opportunity to shut

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176 Okamoto Ippei, “Hitora o hiku” (Hitler withdraws his hand), Asahi, 30 March 1933.

177 Caption reads 「真ツ平ご免ねえ。ちよいと聞いてもらひてえ話があるんで」委員A 『るデモ古い尻を持だしたな』委員B 『あきれた questõesでゲス』, in Okamoto Ippei, “Okadochigai” お門違い (Calling at the wrong house), Asahi, 18 June 1933. It is interesting that in Figure 8 the Beobachter saw France as the selfish obstacle, while in Figure 24 the Asahi portrayed Germany as the roadblock to global economic recovery.

178 「今後機会ある毎にドイツ代表はこの主張を次第に露骨に強調するものと予想され 舊領を領する委任統治地を有する諸国は何れも警戒している」, in “Doitsu daihyō keizai kaigi ni kyūryōdo kaifuku o mochidasu” (German representative at economic conference presents demand for return of former territories), Kokumin, 18 June 1933, Evening Edition.
down the leftist press. While the Yomiuri rendered neutrally the Fire Decrees giving Hitler broad power as “emergency law,” the Asahi minced no words and denounced them as “martial law in essence” under a “police state.” Both the Asahi and Japan Times pointed out Nazi intimidation of foreign correspondents in Germany who filed unflattering stories. The former urged readers to pay attention to the regime’s suppression of journalists. The latter even published a commentary, cosigned by the editor and publisher, to denounce censorship under Hitler: “As night follows day, such censorship follows dictatorship… Under the censorship the German people will live in darkness… Germany, by the sweep of a pen held by one who has gained power by the meanest tricks of propaganda and mob organization, is left stripped of the fundamental human right to read and reason.” The denunciations of the press against thought control show that, whatever the politics of the individual newspapers, the professionals working in the press saw themselves first and foremost as journalists who understood firsthand the damaging effects of censorship. When

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179 “Saha kikanshi hakkō teishi” 左派機關紙発行停止 (Publication of leftist papers terminated), Yomiuri, 1 March 1933.

180 “Doitsu mizōyū no kiki: kinkyū daitōryōrei happu” ドイツ未曾有の危機 緊急大統領令発布 (Unprecedented crisis in Germany, issuance of emergency law by the president), Yomiuri, 2 March 1933, Evening Edition.

181 「人民保護令」は事實上警察の下に戒厳令を施行するもので右大統領の下において人民の自由権を完全に無視して警察政治が出現するに至るものと見られる」, in “Zendoitsu o tsutsumu: Kakumei irai no henchō, jimmin hogorei (jitsus hitsecteki kagenrei) naru” 全ドイツを包む 革命以来の変調 人民保護令(実質的戒厳令)成る (Encircling all Germany, turning away from the revolution, implementing the people protection decree [martial law in essence]), Asahi, 1 March 1933. The “revolution” in question was that in 1918 that ushered in the Weimar Republic. The Japan Times also describes in conditions in Germany as under “virtually martial law” in “Drastic Measures to End Communism Taken by Germany,” Japan Times, 2 March 1933.

182 “Reich Government out to Eradicate Communism in Toto,” Japan Times, 4 March 1933, and 「ナチス政府と外界新聞記者団との正面衝突の形勢となり成行は注視されている」, in “Hitorō seifu kondo wa gaijin kishadan to shōtsu” ヒトラー政府今度は外人記者団と衝突 (And now the Hitler regime clashes with foreign press club), Asahi, 7 April 1933.

183 “Hitler Censorship,” Japan Times, 11 March 1933.
they saw Germany sink into the darkness of information control, they rose up in one voice against the deplorable development.

An even more shocking event, the torching of books, further alienated the newspapers. In May 1933 Germany began burning books deemed “indecent” or written by leftists or non-Aryans. The *Asahi* lamented that the Germans, under the guise of “protecting German women,” incinerated irreplaceable works of erotic art, including a number from Tokugawa Japan.184 A few days later the paper ruefully compiled a list of “famous works” the Nazis “cremated,” including those by Karl Marx, Upton Sinclair and Erich Maria Remarque. The destruction of Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* in particular hit a sympathetic chord because the movie of his novel had caused a sensation in Japan for its realistic depiction of combat.185 Newspapers that had reviewed the movie favorably now had to report on Germans burning the book. While the bombastic *Kokumin* managed to call the book-burning “daring,” it still regretted the fate of certain “great works,” especially *All Quiet*, which was “also victimized.”186 The descriptive, personifying phrases chosen by these papers, like “cremated” and “victimized,” denote the importance the papers attached to the books and revealed their shock at the Nazi outrage.

The wider Japanese society saw Nazi book-burning in an equally negative light, and the press made a point to publicize actions by individuals and groups to voice their
disapproval. A few days after the book-burning, the *Asahi* reported that prominent literati had formed a group to protest what the *Asahi* termed “destruction of culture” and what the *Yomiuri* decried as an “outrage against human culture” in Germany.\(^{187}\) The organizers intended to collect signatures on a letter to Hitler and expressed surprise that Japanese scholars acted ahead of their European and American colleagues to show their disgust.\(^{188}\) Although the paper did not mention whether the scholars believed their letter would persuade the Führer to spare copies of Marx’s *Das Kapital*, Japanese intellectuals felt close enough to the German cultural scene to protest, and the press deemed academic opinions on Germany newsworthy enough to report. Once again the coverage shows that while the Japanese paid close attention to German culture, that focus did not necessarily translate into approval of Germany’s political actions.

**Anti-Semitism**

Nazi persecution of Jews confounded the Japanese, though the papers’ protests lacked the unanimity shown in the dispute over the Pacific islands or the criticism of book-burning. German Jews did not make news in Japan until their persecution by the Nazis,\(^{189}\) namely the

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\(^{187}\) “Jinrui bunka e no bōkyō nachisu ni dōdō chōsen” 人類文化への暴挾ナチスに堂々挑戦 (An open challenge to the Nazis for their outrage against human culture), *Yomiuri*, 3 June 1933.

\(^{188}\) 「ナチスの文化破壊に対する反動の第一陣が欧米諸国を尻目にかけて我が國において結成されたことは奇現象」, in “Waga bunroandanjin kara nachisu ni kōgi funsho wa ‘bunka no hakai’” わが文論壇人からナチス抗議 焚書は『文化の破壊』 (Protest to the Nazis from our men of letters, book-burning is “destruction of culture”), *Asahi*, 14 May 1933. Later on the intellectuals, artists and thinkers joined leftist labor organizations to form an “alliance for freedom” (自由同盟), which demonstrated outside the German embassy when it hoisted the black-red-white imperial flag and sent a letter to the Japanese Ministry of Education and Culture to criticize the government’s silence in the face of Nazi barbarity. See “Nachisu e kōgibun, hoko o itten, monbushō e” ナチスへ抗議文 鋼を一轉文部省へ (Protest letter to the Nazis changes direction to the Ministry of Education), *Asahi*, 3 June 1933.

\(^{189}\) In a *Yomiuri* article in 1928 the writer claimed that “the Jews prospered while Germany declined” (獨逸は衰へたが彼等は儲く). Other accusations against Jews sounded so similar to those leveled by radical
boycott against Jewish businesses in April 1933. The conservative Kokumin commended the action against Jews, whose “evil hands” supposedly played a role in Japan’s withdrawal from the League and its consequent isolation.\textsuperscript{190} A reporter for the same paper accepted at face value the regime’s excuse to boycott Jewish firms as “retaliation for Jewish boycotts against German goods” without asking why Jews needed to act against Germany in the first place.\textsuperscript{191} The Yomiuri, meanwhile, switched over time from criticism to approval of anti-Semitic policies in Germany. As Einstein visited Japan in 1922, the paper recalled the attempt of Tohoku Imperial University to recruit the physicist, musing that Japanese could not understand anti-Jewish prejudice and implying that Tohoku should have succeeded since among Europeans the Germans were the most intolerant of Jews.\textsuperscript{192} In 1933, however, the paper sensationally warned that Jews had even infiltrated Japanese society, as manifested by the fact that Jews held the most shares in electric companies, bought the most government bonds, and controlled some public opinion through its control of the Japan Advertiser.\textsuperscript{193}

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\textsuperscript{190}「日本脱退を遂に決意せしめに国際連盟の背後に躍るユダヤ系の魔の手とは！...遂に世界的孤立に陥らすに至った裏面には、ユダヤ人の奇怪なる陰謀のあった事が白日の下に暴露された」, in “Zensekai ni an’yaku suru yudayajin no inbō” 世界に暗躍するユダヤ人の陰謀 (The plot of the Jews who are actively scheming in the whole world), Kokumin, 23 February 1933.

\textsuperscript{191} “Doitsu zendo ni watatte yudayajin boikotto” 独逸全土に互つて猶太人ボイコット (Boycott against Jews across all Germany), Kokumin, 30 March 1933.

\textsuperscript{192} 「欧羅巴の人達がユダヤ人を迫害することは吾々の想像さへ及ばぬ所である」...ユダヤ人といへば眼の仇きにして嫌ふ欧州人、殊にこんなことに掛けては人一倍狭量なドイツ人に容れられず」, in “Kyō kuru a hakushi ni nihon no ikan” 今日来るア博士に日本の遺憾 (Japan’s regret to Dr. Einstein, who arrives today), Yomiuri, 17 November 1922.

\textsuperscript{193} 「例へば日本に於ける電撃会社の株は誰が多く持つてあるか、その最も多くを有する者はユダヤ人である。日本の外債の持主は英米人と云はるが、その大部分はユダヤ人である...東京におけるジャパン・アドヴェタイザーの社長フライシャー氏の知きもユダヤ人である」, in Nakata Shigeharu 中田
On the left side of the political spectrum the papers condemned Germany outright. The *Asahi*, never in any mood to condone anti-Semitism, printed a scathing commentary by its senior correspondent in Berlin. The author expressed utter incomprehension of the persecution of Jews and pointed out that only Germany, “a young civilization,” did not treat its Jews as social equals. He criticized Nazi “punctiliousness” for categorizing people as “half” and “quarter” Jews, and labeled Hitlerism “the other half of Metternich’s medieval regressivism.”

When the Nazis harassed Jewish intellectuals and artists, the *Asahi* reported that Germany was now expelling some “maestros” in arts and literature. The persecution of scholars prompted the *Yomiuri* to lament the forced resignation of the Nobel chemist Fritz Haber, a converted Jew who was patriotic enough to oversee Germany’s gas warfare in a bid to win World War I and stoop to alchemy after the war to try to extract gold from seawater to help pay reparations. The *Asahi* deemed the persecution of Jews so utterly absurd that it printed a sarcastic cartoon showing a Storm Trooper arresting a Jew’s pet and turning it over to Hitler and a squad of overzealous Nazis, proclaiming, “Look! I got this damn one, it’s a

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194 "今頃何のユダヤ人排斥問題だ？世人は齊しく怪けな顔をする...ほとんどドイツだけであるといってもいい、それだけドイツ人の国民的文明は低いのだ、イギリスではユダヤ人がもう貴族となってしまっている...それに『半』ユダヤ人、『四分ノー』ユダヤ人を加へて居ると潔癖なナチスの人々をさへ相互に相手の姓名が怪しかったり...元来ヒトラーリシムはナポレオン戦争後のメツテルニヒの反動主義に瓜二つの中世式復古主義である』, in Kuroda Reiji 黒田禮二, “Haiyudaya shugi hitorā no buki” 排ユダヤ主義ヒトラーの武器 (Anti-Semitism, Hitler’s weapon), *Asahi*, 2 April 1933.


196 “Nōberu jushōsha no ryōshi mo hisōna intai – hāberu kyōju to man shi” ノーベル受賞者の霑氏も悲壮な引退－ハーベル教授とマン氏 (The tragic resignation of two Nobel laureates, Professor [Fritz] Haber and [Thomas] Mann), *Yomiuri*, 5 May 1933.
cat owned by the Jews!” (Figure 25).\textsuperscript{197} The Asahi did not merely speak out against anti-Semitism, in June 1933 it appealed to businesses and institutions of higher learning to hire Jewish scholars and scientists fleeing Germany.\textsuperscript{198}

As Nazi anti-Semitic measures turned increasingly stringent and violent, however, all newspapers showed less ambivalence in frowning on Germany’s actions. The Yomiuri attacked Nazi tactics as “terrorism” and reported that all German Jews lived in “terror.”\textsuperscript{199} Even the Kokumin complained that anti-Semitism was becoming increasingly “blatant,” as Germany barred Jews from the national tennis team.\textsuperscript{200} A Kokumin editorial advised that although the Jews might be a “tumor” (腫物) much like the Koreans pained Japan, Germany should leave the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
    \item Caption reads 「こいつ、ユダヤ人に飼われてやがった猫ですぞ！」, in Kishi Takeo 岸丈夫, “Yudayajin hakugai” ユダヤ人迫害 (Persecution of Jews), Asahi, 21 May 1933.
    \item “‘Shin’ai naru nihon yo doitsu gakusha no hone o hirohe’ yūmeina yudayakei no gakusha kara hisōna shūshoku undō” 「親愛なる日本よドイツ学者の背を拾へ」有名なユダヤ系の学者から悲壮な就職運動 (“Dear Japan, gather the ashes of a German scholar,” a tragic movement to find employment from a famous Jewish scholar), Asahi, 29 June 1933.
    \item “議事堂放火事件以来ユダヤ人に対するヒトラー政府の迫害と廃絶とはテロリズム”, in “Hittorā shushō iyojyo dokusai e nachisu berurin daigaku o shūgeki, doitsu ni tero jidai” ヒトラー首相訓々獨裁へ ナチス伯林大學襲擊 ドイツにテロ時代 (Chancellor Hitler increasingly dictatorial. Nazis attack Berlin university. Germany in age of terror), Yomiuri, 11 March 1933, Evening Edition; and “Zendoku no yudayajin kyōfu no ichinichi” 全獨のユダヤ人恐怖の一日 (A day of terror for all German Jews), Yomiuri, 2 April 1933.
    \item 「ドイツヒトラー政府のユダヤ人排斥は毎々露骨となりドイツ庭球協会はデビス・カツブ戦を犠牲にしてもユダヤ人選手と代表として出場させる事を禁止する」, in “Yudayajin no shutsujō o seishiki ni kinshi” ユダヤ人の出場を正式に禁止 (Jews officially forbidden to participate [in Davis Cup]), Kokumin, 26 April 1933.
\end{enumerate}
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Jews alone, who “are by themselves unharmsful, although they have power sufficient to resist undue oppression and to burst into revolutionary movements.”

While anti-Semitism in and of itself did not incite protest from all Japanese papers, the brutality involved in Nazi repression of Jews aroused criticism from papers across the political spectrum. Moreover, at this point the Japanese press seemed not to have grasped the true nature of Nazi racism as targeting not only Jews but all non-Aryans, especially since thus far American discrimination against Japanese had exercised the newspapers far more than any perceived German racial arrogance. Indeed the press had cited German newspapers’ criticisms of the 1924 Immigration Exclusion Act in the US as proof of a global outcry against American racism. This fixation with American discrimination against Japanese probably also deflected the attention of journalists from examining closely Nazi racism against non-Aryans.

As we have seen, the Japanese press did not portray a uniform image of Germany. Rather, the newspapers’ understandings of Germany appeared kaleidoscopic and shifting. Despite showing interest in various aspects of Germany, Japanese papers in the period did not depict Germany as a desirable potential ally. In fact, after the Great War when some

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201 “Doitsu no yudayajin haiseki” 獨逸のユダヤ人排斥 (Germany’s rejection of Jews), Kokumin, 30 March 1933. Translation appeared as “Germany’s Exclusion of Jews,” Japan Times, 31 March 1933. Oddly enough, despite some of the inflammatory language, the author was trying to make the point that Japan should be generous in Manchuria to prevent insurrections.

202 In the period surveyed the press mentioned German prejudice against colored races only once. In February 1933, as Germans debated the merits of hosting the 1936 Olympiad, some radical rightists argued that the Games should bar colored peoples from participating. The Asahi brushed aside such talks as marginal and comical, see “Doitsu kyokuyū jin’ei no orimpikku haigeki yūshokujin jogai ni tobidasu chinron ippan wa isshō ni fusu” (German extreme right camp attacks Olympiad by curious talks of excluding colored peoples, people mostly laugh it away), Asahi, 14 February 1933, Evening Edition.

203 See “Doitsu shinbun mo beikoku kōgeki hainichi mondai de” 獨逸新聞も米國攻撃 日米問題で (German press also attacks America for the problem of discrimination against Japanese), Yomiuri, 18 April 1924; and “Osorerubeshi taiheiō no shōrai nichibei gaikō wa masu ken’aku to doitsu shinbun no beikoku kōgeki” 恐れるベシ太平洋の将来 日米外交は益す陰悪と獨逸新聞の米國攻撃 (Fearing for the future in the Pacific, Japanese-American diplomacy increasingly treacherous and the German press’s attack on America), Asahi, 20 April 1924, Evening Edition.
Westerners suggested that Japan, as the last holdout of militarism, imperialism and authoritarianism, would become a “second Germany” or “Germany in the East,” the Yomiuri strongly denounced such talks as “fantasy” and “biased.” Furthermore, when a Korean spread rumors in Rome of a Japanese-German-Russian alliance, the paper made a point to deny such an accusation.

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204 “Nihon wa daini no doitsu nariya (beijin no byūsō)” 日本は第二の獨逸なりや(米人の謬想) (Japan to become a second Germany [an American’s fantasy]), Yomiuri, 28 March 1920; and “Nihon wa tōhō no doitsu de iru tohō mo nai shinbunō no shokumegane ron” 日本は東方の獨逸である 途方もない新聞王の色眼鏡論 (Japan as Germany in the Orient, biased theory of a clueless newspaper tycoon), Yomiuri, 21 May 1922.

205 “Nichidokurō dōmei no setsu senjin no fumō rōma o sawagasu” 日獨露同盟の説 鮮人の謬妄羅馬を騒がす (Talk of Japanese-German-Russian alliance, Korean scandalizes Rome with false accusation), Yomiuri, 25 September 1919. Emphasis mine.
CHAPTER V
GERMAN MEANS OF DEPICTION

The means through which the German press portrayed Japan can reveal just as much as the newspapers’ depictions of Japan, for they shed light on the thought and information filtering processes the papers used to make sense of events thousands of kilometers away. In general the Weimar press deployed three methods: familiarization through juxtaposition, ideological interpretation and visualization.

Familiarization through Juxtaposition

Journalists frequently juxtaposed a foreign concept next to a domestic one to bring faraway Japan closer home. Even simple juxtapositions could work effectively. Readers new to Japanese politics would find the Seiyūkai (政友會) comprehensible since the papers paired it with conservatives in Europe.206 Whereas few Germans would grasp the significance of Kasumigaseki (霞ヶ関) in Japan, by calling it “Tokyo’s Wilhelmstraße” the reporter handily conveyed the centrality that it had in Japanese foreign policymaking.207 Anticipating that readers might struggle to keep track of foreign cities like Harbin, Dairen and Fushun, writers searched for European counterparts to give the cities some individual identity. Thus Fushun became the Manchurian Cardiff, Dairen the Asian Karlsruhe, Schwerin or Breslau, and


207 „...Kasumigaseki, der Wilhelmstraße Tokios,“ in Wilhelm Schulze, “Japan sieht Blokadegespenster” (Japan sees specter of blockade), VZ, 3 May 1933.
Harbin the “Paris of the East” or Chicago.\textsuperscript{208} One reporter found enough similarities to label Manchuria the “Asian Belgium.”\textsuperscript{209} Yet by juxtaposing Asian cities to European ones the authors also made a value judgment. For example, readers should admire Harbin as a melting pot like Chicago since its residents came from many different countries. By highlighting only the positive quality in the comparison, the author ignored the reality that Japanese lived in the city because they had just conquered it, a fact not so surprising since the writer held Japan in high regard.

Facing the conundrum of the Manchurian Incident, the newspapers detected lessons from Europe that Asia could apply to resolve its problems. To help readers contextualize the entangled relationship between China and Japan, who as mentioned should supposedly behave as ethnic brethren, one commentator compared the Sino-Japanese struggle to those between Serbs and Bulgarians, Czechs and Poles, or communists and fascists.\textsuperscript{210} Another suggested that the Chinese, torn by internal strife, could look to the strengthening of post-1871 Germany as incentive to unite against external threats.\textsuperscript{211} Noting the increasing influence wielded by the military in Japanese politics, the \textit{Vorwärts} warned that Japan would suffer Germany’s fate as when Ludendorff triumphed over Bethmann-Hollweg.\textsuperscript{212} To this effect the paper also printed a cartoon, titled “The ‘Prussia of the East,’” to mock how the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{208} Joern Leo, “Mandschurische Schätze” (Manchurian treasures), VZ, 29 December 1931, Evening Edition; Wilhelm Schulze, “Drei mandschurische Städtebilder” (Portrayals of three Manchurian cities), VZ, 9 April 1933; Wilhelm Schulze, “Auf heißem Boden in Asien. Charbin, das Zentrum der Nordmandschurie” (On hot ground in Asia. Charbin, the center of North Manchuria), VZ, 26 March 1933.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Julius Elbau, “Mandschurische Feuerwehr” (Manchurian fire brigade), VZ, 15 November 1931.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Richard Katz, “Granen im Osten” (Grains in the East), VZ, 31 October 1931, Evening Edition.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Dr. A. Wirth, “Japan und Rußland” (Japan and Russia), KZ, 29 May 1932.
\item \textsuperscript{212} “Japans Militarismus” (Japan’s militarism), V, 5 February 1932.
\end{itemize}
Japanese military could “in grand European fashion” demand the resignation of the war minister (Figure 26). The abovementioned pro-Japanese reporter reasoned that Japan’s difficulties in international relations lay not so much with the substance of its policies but with its bad reputation, much like Germany’s in the Great War due to hostile propaganda. Also in the context of World War I, the *Rote Fahne* warned that war mania in Japan in February 1932 eerily resembled Germany’s in August 1914, while the *Vorwärts* saw Japan after the Manchurian Incident in the unenviable position of Austria-Hungary in 1914 – both advance and retreat carried enormous risks. One may find it significant though unsurprising that the papers interpreted current events using their ideologies to derive so-called lessons. Thus the anti-war *Rote Fahne* and *Vorwärts* saw the specters of Ludendorff, Austria-Hungary and World War I in East Asia in 1931-32.

Conversely, journalists used juxtaposition to derive lessons from Asia for contemporary Europe. As border disputes broke out between Lithuania and Germany in 1932

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213 Caption reads „Die Armee fordert den Rücktritt des Kriegsministers. Ist jetzt große europäische Mode!“ in “Die ‘Preußen des Ostens’” (The ‘Prussia of the East’), V, 18 May 1932. It is unclear to what event the cartoonist was referring. The cartoon might well allude to the recent assassination of the Japanese prime minister by military cadets and junior officers on 15 May 1932, but the would-be putschists did not specifically demand the resignation of the army minister.

214 Wilhelm Schulze, “Bürokratie in Fernost” (Bureaucracy in Far East), VZ, 30 April 1933.

215 „Kriegsraserei in Tokio” (War mania in Tokyo), RF, 9 February 1932.

216 „Japan in der Rolle Oesterreich-Ungarns 1914” (Japan in the role of Austria-Hungary, 1914), V, 13 October 1931.
the *Völkischer Beobachter* wondered if East Prussia, already cut off from mainland Germany, would suffer the fate of a “German Manchuria.” The reporter fully appreciated the illegality of Japan’s severance of Manchuria from China, and that was exactly his point – any infringement of the integrity of East Prussia would violate international law. In 1933 the *Beobachter* conferred upon Austria the dishonor of “Europe’s Manchuria” – defenseless, impotent and reduced to a pawn of great powers. The lesson this time seemed obvious – a nation could either be armed or be strong-armed – fully in agreement with the Nazi Social Darwinist Weltanschauung. Also deploring Germany’s forcibly small arsenal, an officer contributing to the *Kreuz-Zeitung* detected a lesson for Germany from the poorly armed Chinese troops and their spirited defense against the Japanese: “a poorly equipped people can still defend its battlefield honor if they possess strong will.” Again, we should note that these purported lessons from Asia for Germany remained consistent with the papers’ existing ideology; no doubt the *Beobachter* would denounce any foreign designs on East Prussia with or without the Manchurian precedent.

**Ideological Reporting**

This ideological interpretation of news and filtering of information occurred even when no lessons needed to be gleaned. The *Völkischer Beobachter* demonstrated a remarkable ideological consistency in commenting on Japan. In 1923, after the Great Kanto

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217 “Litauens Spiel mit dem Feuer: Soll Ostpreußen die deutsche Mandschurei werden?” (Lithuania’s game with fire: Should East Prussia become the German Manchuria?), VB, 3 March 1932.

218 “Opfer der Wehrlosigkeit: Oesterreich und die Mandschurei” (Victim of defenselessness: Austria and Manchuria), VB, 20 January 1933.

Earthquake had flattened much of Tokyo, a reporter applied ruthless (rücksichtslos) Social Darwinist logic to make the case that other powers could use this chance to exploit Japan’s weakened state.\(^{220}\) When hostility broke out in Manchuria the Beobachter saw the war as a struggle between two races, reasoning that Japan’s overpopulation led it to expansion, an oft-repeated Nazi argument for Lebensraum.\(^ {221}\) The paper reasoned that the League’s weakness demonstrated that no country should ever rely on the hot air from “diplomats” for protection, but instead depend on tanks and warplanes.\(^ {222}\) Finally, the paper warned that Germany would certainly suffer China’s fate as a plaything of foreign interests if it would not be led by Adolf Hitler.\(^ {223}\) Alas, if only the Chinese had their own Führer!

This dictator did exist in the form of Chiang Kai-shek, alleged the other two ideological interpreters, the Rote Fahne and Vorwärts, but in a sense different from the Beobachter’s charismatic savior. Whereas the Nazis saw a dictator as solution, the two papers reviled Chiang as the cause of Chinese suffering. To this effect the Vorwärts carried a cartoon, labeled “In China,” in which a

\(^{220}\) “Japans Not” (Japan’s need), VB, 15 September 1923.

\(^{221}\) “Der Völkerkampf im Osten” (The racial struggle in the East), VB, 9 February 1932; and “Japan in China,” VB, 23 September 1931.

\(^{222}\) “Japanische Neujahrsoffensive” (Japanese New Year offensive), VB, 31 December 1931.

\(^{223}\) “Der Konflikt China-Japan” (The China-Japan conflict), VB, 19-21 March 1932.
starving and naked Chinese peasant explains to a threatening Japanese soldier, “You are too late. My own generals have already cleaned me out!” (Figure 27). Not to be outdone, the *Rote Fahne* published a poem by the cabaret composer Erich Weinert to mock Chiang. And to wish its readers a merry Christmas, the paper printed a cartoon sardonically titled “…and Peace on Earth!” (Figure 28). In the illustration depressing scenes adorn a Christmas tree. The top left image showed canons thundering and people dying in Manchuria, while the top right featured a man about to be executed in Nanking. Overall the Marxist papers downplayed nationalities and grouped the Japanese imperialists together with the Chinese generalissimos as oppressors of peasants and workers.

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225 Erich Weinert, “Tschang Kai Schek” (Chiang Kai-shek), RF, 30 October 1931. A stanza runs as follows: Nein, du erinnerst dich auch nicht mehr An den kleinen, verhungerten Sekretär, Der einst über seines Volks Revolte Die reine Fahne des Sun Yat Sen entrollte Und warf das Händlergeschmeiß in den Dreck! Der trug deinen Namen – Tschang Kai Schek!

226 „…und Friede auf Erden!’’ (...and peace on earth!), RF, 25 December 1931. The other images depicted workers laid off by the Borsig firm, political prisoners, state subsidies for the churches and the despair of the unemployed.
The more moderate papers too did not restrain from filtering news and information. The pro-military *Kreuz-Zeitung* saw the Chinese execution of a Japanese staff officer accused of spying as the fundamental cause of the Manchurian Incident.\(^\text{227}\) In the months afterwards it devoted pages to analyze the various equipment the Japanese army deployed. The pro-business *Vossische Zeitung* understandably stressed the economic impact of the conflict in East Asia while trying its best not to offend either side to maintain business as usual. Immediately after the first shots in Manchuria the paper urged readers not to jump to partisan conclusions and declared that Germany only wished to trade with both sides.\(^\text{228}\) The paper understood Japan’s need to protect its substantial investment in Manchuria, yet it also agreed with China that Manchuria belonged to China.\(^\text{229}\)

Most intriguing of all, the *Germania* uttered pro-Japanese sentiments whenever a chance arose. In 1931 the paper printed a flowery eulogy for the ex-premier Hamaguchi Osachi (浜口雄幸), lamenting that in his death the world lost a great pacifist in the East.\(^\text{230}\) Even after the outbreak of hostility in Manchuria, the paper still managed to put a positive spin to Japanese actions, citing the need for Japan to protect lives and properties from Chinese bandits.\(^\text{231}\) This Nipponophilia seemed strange, as Japan made no special accommodations to its Catholics or the Vatican, but some clues did seem to explain the paper’s stance. In September 1931 the paper reported that Japanese police raided an atheist

\(^{227}\) “Kriegerischer Konflikt Japan-China” (Martial conflict between Japan and China), KZ, 19 September 1931.

\(^{228}\) “Japan besetzt Mukden” (Japan occupies Mukden), VZ, 20 September 1931.

\(^{229}\) Dr. Sven von Müller, “Mandschurischer Film” (Manchurian film), VZ, 23 October 1931.


group and apprehended some communists. During the Manchurian conflict the *Germania* mentioned that a French mission came under attack by “Chinese bandits” and thanked Japanese troops for exercising a stabilizing influence. Even more telling, in 1933 the paper carried an account on the state of a Christian mission in Manchuria, detailing how the Japanese military entrusted a Swiss Father with running the Red Cross there and how important a role the mission played in stemming Bolshevism. It also praised Japan’s “expanding campaign against attempts at social unrest” at home. These signs point to a religiously conservative newspaper that, paranoiac about the rise of communism and socialism in republican Germany, deeply appreciated the energetic actions taken by a regime – any regime – to defend religion and combat the spread of Bolshevism, and it interpreted news from that country through its ideological lenses.

**Visualization**

As we have seen the papers also portrayed Japan through visual means, though the more businesslike *Germania* and *Vossische Zeitung* refrained from commenting on news with cartoons. As a result, the illustrations available to readers and to us stemmed mostly from the more politically extreme papers. Most frequently Japan appeared in the drawings as

232 “Japan löst Gottlosenverbände auf” (Japan dissolves atheist groups), G, 8 September 1931.


234 Prof. Dr. Aufhauser, “Die christliche Mission in der Mandschurei” (Christian mission in Manchuria), G, 2 February 1933.

235 “Der Kommunismus in Japan. Wachsender Kampf gegen die socialen Umsturzversuche” (Communism in Japan. Expanding campaign against attempts at social unrest), G, 26 March 1933.

236 In addition, German Catholics played a special role in Japan. The Jesuit order assigned Japan to German Jesuits as their area of missionary activities. For more on the relationship between the Catholic Church and Japan, see Hans Martin Krämer, *Unterdrückung oder Integration? Die staatliche Behandlung der katholischen Kirche in Japan, 1932 bis 1945* (Marburg: Förderverein Marburger Japan-Reihe, 2002).
an armed and uniformed soldier (Figures 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14). This phenomenon certainly resulted partly from the fact that a military conflict catapulted Japan to the press’s attention; inevitably Japan would have to appear martial in such a context. In drawings in which Japan appeared next to the West, the character often stood head and shoulders below the Europeans (Figures 7 and 8). In two cartoons Japan appeared as a man squinting through horn-rimmed glasses (Figures 8 and 12). Germany did not have a monopoly of these images of the militarist, diminutive and nearsighted Japanese; American media relied heavily on such stereotypes in anti-Japanese propaganda before and during World War II.\textsuperscript{237} This pattern indicates that the German press did not invent any visual depictions of Japan and instead tapped into existent Western constructs, once again demonstrating that the newspapers did not make arrangements for Japan as a potential ally.

CHAPTER VI
JAPANESE MEANS OF DEPICTION

In addition to a mosaic image of Germany, the pattern of Japanese press reporting reveals three main approaches that the press used to make sense of developments in Germany: a trial-and-error learning process, ideological news interpretation and visualization.

Learning Process

As the reporting on Nazi anti-Semitism showed, the papers’ handling of German events did not remain static. Instead, their knowledge of Germany evolved with new developments and depended on the resources at the papers’ disposal. Immediately after World War I, Japanese reporters had to file stories on the ex-enemy Germany from other European countries. This likely meant that Japanese correspondents had to retranslate reports already rendered from German to another language. No doubt this process increased the chance for error and contributed to some of the misconceptions about Germany. Not until the early 1920s could a large paper like the Asahi afford its own correspondent in Berlin, improving markedly its quality and quantity of news items on Germany. Yet news is by definition unprecedented, and even the Asahi’s Germany watchers could not have immediately grasped the meaning of developments there. For example, the reporters’ obsession with the ex-Kaiser misled them into seeing every rightist movement, including Nazism, as restorationist. Only after passage of the Enabling Act in March 1933 guaranteeing
a Hitler dictatorship did the papers gradually stop suggesting the possibility of a return to
monarchy.

This learning process the press used to try to digest new information appeared most
clearly in the verbal and visual representations the newspapers deployed to make sense of
Hitler. Few in Germany, not to mention Japan, had ever heard of Hitler before his 1923 failed
putsch. In its aftermath the Osaka Asahi reported the arrest of a certain “von Hitler” (フォン
・ヒットラー, literally “Fon Hittorä”). In a German family name von denotes aristocratic
lineage, yet there was nothing noble about Hitler. A contemporaneous article in the Yomiuri
falsely promoted the former private-first-class Hitler to “General Hittoreru” (ヒトトレル将
軍). The accepted transliteration of Hitler then became the more accurate “Hittorä” (ヒッ
トラー) until 1930, when reporters finally switched to “Hitorä” (ヒトラー), the rendition
still in use today. Yet the old spellings “Hittorä” and “Hittoreru” lingered on, and often two
or more versions appeared in the same article. While this phenomenon
may not convey any connotation outside orthography, it does suggest a
refinement of the understanding of Hitler from ambiguity to clarity and
consensus.

The evolution in the visual representation of Hitler appears
even more clearly. On 28 January 1933, the Asahi carried an article on
rumors of a Hitler cabinet and attached an abstract drawing of Hitler

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238 Osaka Mainichi article reprinted in Taishō nyūsu jiten 大正ニュース事典 (The Taishō news

239 “Bavaria fukuheki tonza ka rūdendorufu hittoreru ryōshōgun ikedori saru” 巴威復辟顛挫か ルー
デンドルフ・ヒットトレル兩將軍生擒さる (Restorationists defeated in Bavaria? Generals Ludendorff and
Hitler captured alive), Yomiuri, 11 November 1923.
composed mainly of lines and blots of black (Figure 29). The abstraction likely stemmed from the uncertainty over whether Hitler would head a government, and, if he did, what policies he would pursue. On 22 March, one day before the assured passage of the Enabling Act giving the chancellor “absolute dictatorial authority,” the article reporting the news included an image of a grim-looking Hitler (Figure 30). By this time, the Nazis had forced passage of the Reichstag Fire Decrees, silenced the socialists, beaten the communists out of existence and cowed the centrists into subservience. No doubt could remain over what further power to Hitler would bring to Germany, and the caricature of Hitler reflected the seriousness of the situation. Finally, on 18 June, when Germany dropped a bombshell at the London Economic Conference by demanding the return of its former colonies, the Asahi headline stood next to an unambiguously demonic portrayal of Hitler (Figure 31). By now the world had seen the German clamor for the Pacific islands, anti-Semitic boycott, book-burning, expulsion of Jewish scholars and suppression of all opposition. Small wonder the portrayal of Hitler turned decidedly negative.

This evolution of the representation of Hitler shows that the Japanese press did not approach Hitler or Germany with a

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240 “Hitorã tsui ni dakyô doku no seikyoku itenkô” ヒトラー遂に妥協 独の政局一転向 (Agreement with Hitler at last, a turnaround in German politics), Asahi, 28 January 1933, Evening Edition.

241 “Hitorã dokushushô zettai dokusaiken o yôkyû: kenpô mushi no kengen o fukumu” ヒトラー獨首相 絕對獨裁權要求 憲法無視の権限を含む (German Chancellor Hitler demanding absolute dictatorial authority, including power to bypass constitution), Asahi, 22 March 1933, Evening Edition.

242 “Kyûryûdo no henkan o dokudaihyô totsuyo yôkyû” 舊領土の返還 独代表突如要求 (German delegation suddenly demands return of former possessions), Asahi, 18 June 1933, Evening Edition.
predetermined positive or negative slant. Instead, it absorbed knowledge as events unfolded and refined its positions and reactions much as any news organ striving to be objective and unbiased should. Although the images studied here all come from the Asahi, even the Kokumin, as noted previously, could not give a positive spin to violent anti-Semitism, the destruction of literary masterpieces and revival of German ambitions in the Pacific. The Kokumin too came to realize that a Hitler dictatorship might threaten Japan’s security.

**Ideological Reporting**

The effects of ideology and politics on Japanese reporting on Germany also merit attention. While the newspapers at times adopted a similar stance on issues, they often diverged on the aspects they chose to emphasize. The most political paper of all, the Akahata, filtered news liberally. On the occasion of the approval of the debt moratorium for Germany, the paper stressed that the German Communist Party opposed any payment, since the proletariat bore the cost of imperialist wars and the payments merely exploited what little the poor had to prop up the failing capitalist system.\(^{243}\) The Akahata, however, uttered not a word on the real headline news, namely the legitimization of Nazism through its cooperation with the Nationalists and other conservative groups to oppose all reparations.\(^{244}\) Yet it was the paper’s election coverage that revealed most clearly its filtering of news. For the election in July 1932, it printed the headline “The party of proletarian dictatorship garners 5.3 million

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\(^{243}\)「ドイツの被圧迫大衆を永久にかかる搾取と圧制とから解放する方法プロレタリア独才のみであると主張し、その為に斗争したのはドイツ共産党であった」, in “Doitsu ni okeru kaikyū tōsō gekka” 独乙に於ける 階級斗争の激化 (Intensification of class struggle in Germany), Akahata, 12 August 1931.

\(^{244}\) The Akahata explained that since the “bourgeois press” was not giving the KPD any coverage, the Japanese paper would have to take up the task: 「ブルジョア新聞はドイツに起っているプロレタリアートの進出に関して殆ど黙殺している。」, in ibid.
votes!!“245 That the Nazis doubled their votes and became the largest party in the Reichstag was explained away as the result of “connivance of the von Papen cabinet, policies of bloody terrorism against communism and clever manipulation of xenophobia.”246 For the election in November 1932, the Akahata again dwelled on the gains of the KPD: “Votes for German Communist Party increased by 700,000,” while ignoring the real significant development that the Nazis lost two million votes.247 For the election in March 1933, when the Nazis obtained enough votes to form a majority coalition government, the Akahata celebrated the performance of the KPD in preserving 80 seats and reasoned that Hitler merely won votes from “various small parties, backward agitators from the worker camp and new petit bourgeois voters with no prior political self-awareness.”248 If one read only the Akahata, one might believe that the KPD stood on the verge of some major electoral breakthrough before Hitler came to power and would make a comeback despite relentless suppression. Without fabricating any facts, a newspaper could create misleading impressions simply by shifting its emphasis.

Perhaps we can excuse the sensational Akahata for its selective coverage, yet ideological tainting of news affected other less political papers. After all, the party organ preached only to the choir, as no non-communist would want to be caught with an issue of

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245 “Puroretaria dokusai no tō ni atsumaru gohyaku sanjyūman hyō!!” ブロレタリアの獨裁の黨に集る五百三十萬票!! (The party of proletarian dictatorship collects 5.3 million votes!!), Akahata, 5 August 1932.

246 「ヒトラー・ファシストの國粹社會黨はパペーン現内閣の援助を得、共産主義に対する流血のテロル政策に防衛され、そして巧妙な排外主義的煽動で二百十九の議席を獲得し」, in ibid.

247 “Doitsu kyōsantō tokuhyō nanajyūman hyō o zōdai” ドイツ共產黨得票 七十萬票增大 (Votes for German Communist Party increased by 700,000), Akahata, 15 November 1932.

248 「國粹社會黨(ヒトラー黨)は諸小黨の散票、労働者陣營の後れした動揺分子の投票、これまで全く政治的自覚を持たなかった新たな小ブル的投票者層を強制的に動員して」, in “Daidan'atsu no doitsu kokkai senkyō ni giseki hachiyon o mamoru!” 大彈壓のドイツ國會選舉に議席八十をまもる! (Preserving 80 parliamentary seats in German parliamentary election under large-scale repression!), Akahata, 15 March 1933.
the illegal paper. The driving force behind the *Kokumin*, the nationalist Tokutomi, chided the Germans in 1920 for “the lack of a national essence” that led to internal feuds and their defeat in World War I.\(^{249}\) The same criticism of the Germans as given to infighting resurfaced in 1932, when an editorial called for the “iron and blood” of a “second Bismarck” to sweep aside splinter parties while another writer urged the Germans to come to their senses and see the need for a dictator.\(^{250}\) When that potential dictator’s party lost votes in November 1932, the *Kokumin* proved itself not above ideological partiality and copied the *Akahata* by rationalizing that Nazi electoral decline signaled a shift of voter support to other rightwing parties rather than the left.\(^{251}\) When the Nazis finally established a one-party dictatorship, the *Kokumin* commented that Hitler had cured the Germans of their “addiction to internecine conflicts.”\(^{252}\) The nationalistic *Kokumin* appeared quite consistent in its support for the nationalistic Nazi movement, at least until German expansionism potentially threatened Japanese interests in the Pacific.

Even the two moderate papers, the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri*, clearly favored certain issues. The *Yomiuri*, retaining an interest in scholarship, noted what rising German nationalism

\(^{249}\) Tokutomi Sohō, “Doitsu kokuminsei no kekkan” 獨逸國民性の缺陷 (Lack of German national essence), *Kokumin*, 26 March 1920.

\(^{250}\) 「ドイツは再びビスマルクの鎧血を必要とし、ドイツ国民は熱烈にビスマルクの強力に憧憬している。小黨分立の現状にいつては、第2のビスマルク出ざる限り、解散また解散、內閣の更迭また更迭を免かれざるべし」, in “Doitsu no sōsenkyō to tōhei bakurō” 獨逸的總選挙與黨弊暴露 (General elections in Germany and exposure of party evils), *Kokumin*, 20 September 1932; and 「ドイツ人は分裂分争を好む傾向を有し…ドイツ人は如何にして獨裁政治の必要があるやうである」, in Gorai Kinzō, “Hittorōtō no bunretsu?” ヒットラー黨の分裂? (The Hitler party splitting?), *Kokumin*, 16 December 1932.

\(^{251}\) 「従ってヒトラー派の減少はその票数を左翼から食われたものではなくて、右翼から食われたものである」, in Gorai Kinzō, “Nankyoku ni tatsu hitorō” 難局に立つヒトラー (Hitler in a bind), *Kokumin*, 10 November 1932.

\(^{252}\) 「實際は、ヒトラーが、獨逸國民の紛争餘の缺點を根治する為に、大手術を施したのである」, in “Doitsu no ikkoku ittō shugi” 獨逸的一國－黨主義 (Germany’s one-nation, one-party ideology), *Kokumin*, 30 June 1933.
brought to schools and education. Responding to rumors that the German education ministry ordered school children to memorize the Versailles Treaty, the *Yomiuri* became concerned with the revival of militarism.253 The paper also made a point to report the re-legalization of student dueling, sarcastically calling it a “masterpiece” of Nazi legislation.254 Meanwhile the *Asahi* focused on the legal aspect of Nazism. After another indecisive election in November 1932, it commented that prolonged deadlock meant the continued exercise of the presidential decree and that political instability in Germany deserved “regret and sympathy.”255 On the Fire Decrees, translated as “decree for the protection of people from the communist threat” (共産禍に対する人民保護令), the *Asahi* explained that they contradicted Article 2 of the constitution ensuring the people’s freedoms.256 Even before the Enabling Act (“trust in government act,” 政府信頼法) granting Hitler “dictatorial authority” (獨裁的権能), the paper had concluded that the abolition of the federal system and persecution of the republic’s supporters meant that the Weimar constitution, though never officially abandoned by the Nazis, was in effect not worth the paper it was printed on.257 Even German violation of
international law concerned the *Asahi*. When Storm Troopers crossed the Rhine to take over the municipal government of Cologne, it presented the act as noncompliance toward Versailles’s ban on German soldiers west of the Rhine.²⁵⁸ Considering that the troopers likely carried only clubs or pistols, the report reveals that the *Asahi* stretched its analysis and went out of its way to hold Germany responsible for any possible treaty violation.

Looking at the events the newspapers chose to report, a trend emerged to show that the papers’ depiction of Germany differed according to the eyes of the beholder and that at least in part they saw a Germany that they wanted to see. The *Akahata* supported the German Communist Party not because of its German but its communist quality. Likewise the *Kokumin* saw something admirable in the National Socialist Party not for its Germanness but for its nationalism and authoritarianism. And the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* both lamented the demise of the republic more because it represented the demise of democracy, liberalism and internationalism than some abstract notion of Germany. Ideology and politics mattered much more than any preconceived positive image of Germany, if indeed any existed.

**Visualization**

Lastly the Japanese papers deployed cartoons to help readers visualize their messages. Most noticeably, the illustrations discussed in this essay all used a prominent politician to represent Germany as a whole, such as von Papen in Figure 15, Brüning in Figure 17, von Hindenburg in Figure 18 and Hitler in the rest. This feature contrasts sharply with cartoons in

²⁵⁸ "Doku kokusui shakai tōin heiwa jōyaku o mushisō chitai rain sagan ni shinnyū" 獨國粹社會黨員平和條約を無視す非武裝帯ライン左岸に侵入 (German Nazi Party members ignore peace treaty, enter demilitarized left bank of the Rhine), *Asahi*, 14 March 1933.
the German papers, which relied on stereotypical, nameless figures in uniforms or wearing
horn-rimmed glasses to caricature Japan. The Japanese press appeared to know more about
Germany than its German counterpart about Japan and it expected its readers to be
conversant enough to recognize Hitler even if the image constituted only lines and blots of
black. This gulf in mutual familiarity probably reflected the imbalanced interaction of
knowledge and impact between Japan and Germany. Japan made liberal use of German
innovation, and this technological flow remained a strong one-way current.\(^{259}\) Whereas a
reversion of the Pacific islands to German control would drastically shrink Japan’s defensive
perimeter, for Germany ownership or loss of the archipelagos translated to negligible
material difference, as World War I amply demonstrated. In other words, the islands meant
much more to Japan than to Germany, and it paid Japan to monitor closely German political
developments. The prominence of individuals in the cartoons, particularly Hitler, mirrored
the personal, charismatic nature of late Weimar politics. Despite the heavy attention paid to
Hitler, Japanese caricatures showed him as misbehaving, drooling, passing gas and playing
baseball (as will be seen shortly), indicating that the press did not reserve a favored place as
predestined ally for the regime he would establish.

CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Amid the flurry of alarming reports on the Enabling Act and the Pacific islands, a Japanese company apparently posed the question “What do you think of Hitler?” to potential employees to test their knowledge of current events. One uninformed candidate, undoubtedly an avid baseball fan, blurted out, “Hitler refers to a power hitter” (Figure 32).260

Before making too much of the newspapers’ portrayals of the other country, we should keep in mind that the press constitutes only one piece in the jigsaw image of one country’s perception of another. Moreover, newspapers by nature present only one side of a dialogue. Without resources such as letters to the editor, scholars have to tread carefully to determine whether subscribers read what they bought and how they reacted. In order to paint a comprehensive picture of Japanese and German understandings of the other nation, historians need to research further using other reflective sources such as travelogues, letters and diaries of expatriates, and substantial works of intellectuals.

260 Caption reads 「社員採用試験の質問『ヒトラーとは？』野球ファンの彼、思はず『強打者の事を申します！！』, in Yasumoto Ryōichi 安本亮一, “Meitō?”名答? (Right answer?), Asahi, 26 March 1933.”
Yet the unique role the press played in the pre-television age as the principal medium to inform people of events outside their locales makes an analysis of newspapers worthwhile and rewarding. This study of the images of Germany presented by the Japanese press reveals a kaleidoscopic picture. On the one hand Japanese admired Germany for its colorful ex-monarch, profound culture, advanced science and competitive economy. On the other hand, an undercurrent of minority opinions surfaced occasionally to caution against unquestioned acceptance of everything German. The newspapers usually depicted Germany in a Euro-American context, but with the rise of Nazism Germany began to stand out as a nation of expansionist ambitions that barbarically trampled on culture and human rights. The contradictions in the portrayals alone demonstrate that there existed no preconceived consensus about Germany in the Japanese press. Instead, the newspapers learned to refine their understanding of Germany and selectively reported ideologically agreeable news items while turning a blind eye to the others. The overall press images of Germany strongly indicate that pre-1933 Japan did not visualize Germany as a potential ally. Particularly in the first half of 1933, after the rise of Nazism and before the nearly complete erosion of Japanese liberalism, the press saw Germany in an overwhelmingly negative light.

In Germany, the newspapers on the one hand admired Japanese athleticism and certain features of its culture (or what Westerners portrayed as Japanese tradition). On the other hand the press noticed Japan’s inscrutable domestic politics, highly unstable economy, suspicious status as an imperialist power aligned with the traditional empires, and capacity for aggression and duplicity – factors that certainly rendered it unsuitable to be an ally of Germany. Moreover, the newspapers employed techniques of juxtaposition that often focused more on Germany than Japan, often reducing Japan to merely a convenient example to
promote the ideology of the individual papers. Through a dogmatic interpretation of news events, the papers further narrowed their vision so that each saw a Japan that it wanted to see.

In view of these impressions one must conclude that the later rapprochement and still later alliance between Germany and Japan resulted from contingent factors other than the structurally predetermined tendency suggested by previous interpretive frameworks. Some Germans and Japanese must have developed more favorable views of the other country between 1933 and 1936. One finds it remarkable that a potential deathblow to any Japanese-German friendship, namely Nazi racism against all non-Aryans, hardly registered in the Japanese press outside a strictly anti-Semitic context. Instead, Nazi commentary on the Sino-Japanese conflict remained largely neutral and free of racism, while Japanese newspapers found American discrimination of Japanese far more offensive than Nazi Aryanism. In addition, Hitler’s emphasis on the conquest of Lebensraum over the recovery of colonies removed the Pacific islands as a potential roadblock. Indeed, in 1933 none of the German newspapers surveyed devoted any article to the islands. Moreover, Germany and Japan shared deep resentment toward the League of Nations as an enforcer of the Diktat, obstacle to one’s legitimate territorial ambitions or an instrument of Anglo-French encirclement. Lastly, the activeness of the domestic communist movements in both countries as indicated by their newspapers’ increasing sophistication and popularity, and the boastful clout of the Communist International must have made the Soviet threat loom large over Japan’s and Germany’s horizons.

In addition, as the Japanese government and Nazi regime applied stricter censorship to the media and thus deprived themselves of feedback and criticism from society, political and military leaders might well have lured themselves into an information filtering process
by interpreting what the free press saw as the other nation’s negative features as positive and admirable. In Germany, some Nazis might have already been imagining a common front with Japan since the Manchurian Incident in September 1931:

It is war in the East. Not just the eternal, familiar civil war among the Chinese, but instead open war as the solution in the struggle for living spaces… The “Far East” is showing old Europe once again how wars are waged. Japan is held back by as little scruple now as in 1904, when it opened hostility against Russia by sinking three Russian warships in Port Arthur without a prior declaration of war. Needless to say, nowadays Japan cares little for the pretty statutes of the League of Nations.²⁶¹

While in Japan, an irrational paranoia about the spread and infiltration of communism drove some also to imagine a common front with Germany. As the government-subsidized Japan Times had it:

In Japan as in Germany, there are the forces of nationalism on the one hand And on the other those of communism – the latter to a very less degree to be sure, yet still manifested, if not politically, at least in police activities. Hence it is with close attention that Japan witnesses the conflict of these divergent forces in Germany.²⁶²

It must have been this Nazi admiration of Japanese unscrupulousness and Japanese obsession with communism that propelled the two distant nations to cross paths. That the first act of collaboration between militarist Japan and Nazi Germany emerged as the Anti-Comintern Pact should therefore surprise no one.


²⁶² “Germany supports parliamentarism,” Japan Times, 10 March 1933, p. 8.
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