

[Note: I may want to substitute the latest *Sources* edition as the source citation.]

[Japan Society-New York: Documents Project. (1930-1945, Economics)]

**[Document 58]: “God wills it.” Hishimoto Kingorō, “The Need for Emigration and Expansion,” in his *Speeches to Young Men*, 1929.**

We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people packed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against her?

It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door.

It may sound dangerous when we speak of territorial expansion, but the territorial expansion of which we speak does not in any sense of the word involve the occupation of the possessions of other countries, the planting of the Japanese flag thereon, and the declaration of their annexation to Japan. It is just that since the Powers have suppressed the circulation of Japanese materials and merchandise abroad, we are looking for some places overseas where Japanese capital, Japanese skills and Japanese labor can have free play, free from the oppression of the white race.

We would be satisfied with just this much. What moral right do the world powers who have themselves closed to us the two doors of emigration and advance into world markets have to criticize Japan’s attempt to rush out of the third and last door?

If they do not approve of this, they should open the doors which they have closed against us and permit the free movement overseas of Japanese emigrants and merchandise. . . .

At the time of the Manchurian incident, the entire world joined in criticism of Japan. They said that Japan was an untrustworthy nation. They said that she had recklessly brought cannon and machine guns into Manchuria, which was the territory of another country, flown airplanes over it, and finally occupied it. But the military action taken by Japan was not in the least a selfish one. Moreover, we do not recall ever having taken so much as an inch of territory belonging to another nation. The result of this incident was the establishment of the splendid new nation of Manchuria. The Powers are still discussing whether or not to recognize this new nation, but regardless of whether or not other nations recognize her, the Manchurian empire has already been established, and now, seven years after its creation, the empire is further consolidating its foundations with the aid of its friend, Japan.

And if it is still protested that our actions in Manchuria were excessively violent, we may wish to ask the white race just which country it was that sent warships and troops to India, South Africa, and Australia and slaughtered innocent natives, bound their hands and feet with iron chains, lashed their backs with iron whips, proclaimed these territories as their own, and still continues to hold them to this very day?

They will invariably reply, these were all lands inhabited by untamed savages. These people did not know how to develop the abundant resources of their land for the benefit of mankind. Therefore it was the wish of God, who created heaven and earth for mankind, for us to develop these undeveloped lands and to promote the happiness of mankind in their stead. God wills it.

This is quite a convenient argument for them. Let us take it at face value. Then there is another question that we must ask them.

Suppose that there is still on this earth land endowed with abundant natural resources that have not been developed at all by the white race. Would it not then be God's will and the will of Providence that Japan go there and develop those resources for the benefit of mankind?

And there still remain many such lands on this earth.

**Source:** Hashimoto Kingorō. "The Need for Emigration and Expansion," in Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore De Bary, and Donald Keene, eds. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. II. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, 289-291.

### **Context.**

Explanations for Japan's aggressive turn in the 1930s are manifold, but few are more persuasive than the economic factors. Japan was hit hard by the Great Depression, and while it recovered more quickly than most of the Western powers did, the economic disaster had a profound impact on the Japanese psyche. When Western nations imposed protectionist tariffs and cut back on the purchase of Japanese goods, people like Hashimoto Kingorō, one of the founders of the ultranationalist Cherry Blossom Society, concluded that Japan was being unfairly shut out of world markets. Like-minded officials decided that the time had come for Japan to develop its own autarkic (self-sufficient) economic empire, so that it would not be dependent on an unfriendly Western economic system. And that would entail the control of more territory. Paralleling the economic concerns was popular resentment of the American decision in the Immigration Act of 1924 to prohibit all Japanese (and Chinese) from immigrating to the United

States. Not only were people angered by the legislation, many of them feared that, with the possibility of emigration closed, Japan was too small to support its growing population, which had more than doubled, to 71 million, in just six decades. One result of these fears was the kind of expansion in Manchuria and China that Hashimoto defends in this speech to young men.

### **Questions.**

1. Critique Hashimoto's opening argument about Japan's problems with over-population: both the contention that Japan *was* over-populated and the analysis of ways to deal with the problem.
2. State in your own words Hashimoto's understanding how the Westerners' justified their own imperialist expansion. Evaluate his appropriation of that line of reasoning for Japan.
3. What does the "oppression of the white race" mean to Hashimoto, and why does it matter to him so much?

### **Terms.**

*Abrogation of commercial treaties.* Hashimoto had in mind the way the United States had begun curtailing various economic relationships with Japan after Japan went to war with China in 1937. In July 1939, for example, the United States had abrogated its commercial treaty with Japan.

*Manchurian Incident.* On September 18, 1931, Japanese army officers masterminded an explosion on the Trans-Siberian Railway tracks near Mukden (Shenyang), blaming it on the Chinese. Although they did this in defiance of their own government, the incident led to Japan's direct takeover of Manchuria. A year later, Japan turned Manchuria into the state of Manchukuo, which was formally independent but under complete Japanese control in reality.