

For Release Friday, December 12, 1941

Public Found Taking Realistic Attitude on Japanese-American Relations

Evidence Indicates Voters Wanted Stronger U.S. Policy At Least Two Years Ago

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PRINCETON, N. J., Dec. 11.—With the outbreak of war against Japan, one of the pertinent questions of interest is this: Did the common people of the United States make a realistic appraisal of Japanese-American relations as those relations developed over the past few years?

In matters relating to defense and foreign policy the point is sometimes made that public opinion is of less importance than in matters of domestic concern, because the public is not familiar with all the facts behind diplomatic moves. Now that war has finally come, it is possible to evaluate objectively the views of the common people regarding Japan, as revealed in some 40 surveys by the American Institute of Public Opinion over the last six years.



Such an analysis indicates that the public has consistently during the past two

years favored stronger measures against Japan than any put into effect previous to the summer of 1941.

In the summer of 1939—after the Chinese-Japanese war had been in progress two years, but before the general war broke out in Europe—an overwhelming majority of voters, 82 per cent, were in favor of a strict embargo on the shipment of war materials to Japan. By October, 1940, the embargo sentiment had increased to 90 per cent. It was not until ten months later that the United States government froze Japanese credits and put a strict embargo into effect.

WAR RISK

Moreover, ever since July of this year a majority of voters have been in favor of taking definite



steps to curb Japanese expansion even if it meant risking war. This sentiment increased sharply when the Japanese invaded Indo-China in July. From that moment Institute surveys found two-thirds or more of the American people willing to take the risk of war in order to stop Japan from becoming more powerful.

The week before war broke out, the vote stood at 69 per cent in favor of curbing the Japanese at the risk of war, 20 per cent opposed and 11 per cent undecided.

TREND OF OPINION

The public's desire for stiffer measures did not develop in the early days of Japanese expansion. When the Japanese-Chinese war

broke out in 1937, the majority of voters, surveys showed, were not willing to take sides. Even after the war had been going on for several months, the Institute found 55 per cent saying they were "neutral" or without a choice regarding the outcome of the war between China and Japan.

From this early attitude of indifference the country was soon jolted by a sequence of events which brought the Japanese threat closer to American interests. Japanese forces moved deeper into China, bombed the United States gunboat Panay, signed a pact with the Axis powers, moved nearer the Philippines, threatening the great rubber, oil and mineral resources of the South Pacific, and finally invaded French Indo-China.

In less than two years from the outbreak of the Chinese-Japanese war a substantial majority of Americans came to favor a boycott of Japanese goods, and in addition, a strict embargo on war shipments to Japan.

Although the particular time and place of the outbreak of hostilities came as a surprise, war with Japan was not unexpected by the public.

Only last week the Institute completed a survey which showed that among persons who had given any thought to the possibility of war, a substantial majority felt that some clash was inevitable in the near future.