

K.K. Kawakami - “The Problem of Japan: A Japanese View,” November 1921

The following comes from an article which appeared in the American journal The Nation in November 1921. Kiyoshi “Karl” Kawakami (1873-1949) was a Japanese journalist who covered American affairs for several important Japanese newspapers. He was also a frequent contributor to U.S. magazines and newspapers.

It must be remembered that the Caucasian nations are always on the alert to exclude outside enterprises, and especially those of non-Caucasian peoples, from the territories they control. Even where they profess to follow the principles of free trade, they set up a barrier against non-Caucasian immigration. Moreover, by reason of their priority and their accumulated wealth, they have so firmly entrenched themselves that outsiders, most of all non-Caucasian outsiders, find little chance to launch new enterprises in competition with them.

But it is not only the question of land shortage and overpopulation that weigh heavily upon Japan. Equally depressing is the fact that she has not within her own confines adequate mineral resources essential to modern industry. She depends almost entirely upon foreign countries for iron ores. Of coal she has little that can be used in the steel industry. But the most serious handicap is the lack of petroleum, a material which is becoming more and more important in transportation and in manufacturing industries. If you watch the chessboard of European and American diplomacy, you cannot fail to see how each nation is trying to outwit the other in gaining control of oil resources in different parts of the world.

It is obvious that to great Powers of the West have accumulated more land than they should rightly own—than they can hold without doing injustice to the smaller nations, which find themselves in sad plight, due to the impossibility of finding room for their surplus population. The injustice of holding such vast territories would not be so obvious if they were to recognize, in favor of the small nations, the principle of unhindered immigration and of unrestricted enterprise within those territories. It is when they adopt a hide-bound policy of exclusion that they become a menace to the welfare of the human race.