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Wind Over Sand

THE DIPLOMACY OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

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2. Roosevelt v. Japan

Today, when the Soviet Union routinely occupies neighboring territory under cover of the Brezhnev Doctrine, it is important to recall why democratic leaders reacted so violently when Japanese troops returned to mainland China in 1931. For nearly two decades following World War I, there existed a compelling treaty structure, one which involved the United States on the theoretical if not the practical level. There was, at the same time, a moral mandate embodied in the League of Nations. This served to freeze international boundaries even as firm hope persisted for the eventual liberation of subject peoples everywhere. Empires might have succeeded for the moment in withstanding increased pressure for change, but so far as Hoover and Stimson were concerned, they had no claim on the future and there were to be no further occupations or annexations. Roosevelt, in particular, clung to the Wilsonian ideal of self-determination.

Equally to the point is a sense for Tokyo's unique outlook. Whenever Japan's case for involvement in Manchuria is presented, it is likely to be in the form of caricature. This chapter will therefore begin by laying out a body of data, some of it familiar, much of it unfamiliar, with an eye to the need for greater balance and objectivity.

The first item for consideration may be simply stated: Japan, unlike the United States, was a conspicuously dependent nation. In the years after 1905, she had come to rely upon Manchuria as an absorptive blanket for her burgeoning population and intensive capital development. The exchange of raw materials for finished goods benefited both sides at a time when the door to British, French, and Dutch preserves remained firmly shut. Equally important, Manchuria was the only place in the world available for emigration from Japan at a time when

her census registered an increase of 30 million in thirty years. From Manchuria came 50 percent of her food and pig iron, and while a full third of Manchuria's coal crossed the Yellow Sea to Japan, several billion yen and some one hundred thousand persons traveled in the opposite direction. It is no exaggeration to say that Manchuria was more closely linked with Tokyo than with Peking. More than half the population of Dairen was Japanese by 1930, and because Tokyo depended so heavily upon the mainland, she could not tolerate the kind of treatment Mexico had meted out to American businessmen. Forty percent of her exports were subject to Chinese boycott, and in any trade war between an industrial and agricultural society no one doubted which of the two would be the more vulnerable.[1]

In strategic-military terms, Tokyo feared the long arm of Moscow. Two wars and two hundred thousand lives had gone to halt Russian penetration of Manchuria and Korea, yet the danger lingered. In 1912, Czar Nicholas II had drawn the Mongols into an agreement recognizing Russian hegemony, and by 1931 Outer Mongolia had been sovietized.[2] During the next few years, as the Kremlin infiltrated Sinkiang Province and made a dramatic industrial recovery, the Red Army began to expand. Plans were laid to double-track the Trans-Siberian Railway. Stalin projected a munitions plant and other installations in the East at the same time that he poured troops and supplies into sensitive border areas.[3] China, meanwhile, was sunk in chaos, a vast power vacuum into which Soviet leaders were presumed ready to move as soon as opportunity beckoned. Japan had profited from Russian weakness to consolidate her influence in South Manchuria under agreements based on the so-called Twenty-One Demands. But when she took Shantung from Germany and occupied Siberia, outcries from the West persuaded her to withdraw, and Russia immediately mounted a new campaign for ascendancy.

Moscow's principal aim was to gain control of the Kuomintang (KMT), ruling body of the Nationalist party. Adolphe Joffe and Mikhail Borodin were sent to mold it along anti-imperialist and communist lines, and they achieved a large measure of success. With Russian help the Whampoa Military Academy was founded. Chiang Kai-shek, its future head, went to Moscow for training, and every Chinese division acquired a Soviet adviser. Russian leaders made political capital in 1924 by giving up their right to a Boxer indemnity and renouncing extraterritoriality. Then, after Sun Yat-sen died, Borodin helped en-

gineer the coup that brought Chiang to power, and Bolshevik General Blücher drew up his grand plan to eliminate Chinese warlords and curb Japanese aliens. Soldiers marched behind plainclothes propagandists who handed out literature extolling Sun and Lenin. Even though Chiang repudiated communism, shucked off Soviet control, and married a Christian, Japanese qualms persisted. Red China went underground, retreating to Hunan and Kiangsi provinces, but when Nationalists clashed with Russian forces between 1929 and 1931 they were badly beaten. Communist leader Mao Tse-tung, after setting up a Chinese-style Soviet republic in Kiangsi Province, rallied fellow communists to march eight thousand miles to the safety of Yenan. Chiang controlled no more than eight out of twenty-four Chinese provinces, and thereafter communist armies gradually gained in strength under the influence and funding of Moscow. By December of 1941, Russian credits to the Chinese came within a hair's breadth of equaling the total outlay of all Western countries combined.[4] This is a fact worth remembering.

Throughout the period under consideration, Japan laid claim to a Monroe Doctrine of its own, while the United States never ceased to deny it on the ground that Tokyo, unlike Washington, aimed at political and economic control. On the other hand, when the situation is viewed from the perspective of the Japanese foreign office (the Gaimusho), Washington exercised de facto control over a large portion of hemispheric commerce, giving it an effective voice in politics. By comparison with Tokyo, it was considerably less dependent on foreign trade and, with its naval base at Guantanamo Bay, much less threatened militarily. Latin America depended heavily on trade with the North, but the United States enjoyed virtual self-sufficiency. Washington, in other words, seemed to exercise preponderance without need, whereas in the Orient it was the exact opposite which obtained. There, Great Britain, as much as any nation, dominated China's economy in the 1920s and 1930s, and this made no sense to Tokyo, whose ties with China constituted 24 percent of her overall trade as compared with only 1.6 percent for London. Japan had sunk 82 percent of its foreign investment capital into China and Manchuria as opposed to only 6 percent for Britain.[5]

As regards morality, the picture might have been somewhat different if, in addition to Russian, British, and Japanese rivalry, there had existed some immediate prospect of Chinese control. Moreover, if Japan's proclamation of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere lacked something in the way of legitimacy and legal foundation, Tokyo could recall that American pretensions at the time of John Quincy Adams had elicited nothing but incredulous scorn. On the same side of the ledger, China tended increasingly during the 1920s to exploit the restraint exercised by Japanese Foreign Minister Baron Shidehara.[6] Incidents multiplied, some minor, some less so. American naval vessels were attacked thirty-seven times within a few months in 1927 by Chinese troops. The Gaimusho, for its part, counted three hundred cases pending against China by 1937.[7]

The main source of complaint, other than chaos and boycotts, was that China aimed at destruction of Japan's vital interest in the South Manchurian Railway by constructing parallel lines and a new terminus threatening Dairen. In theory, Japanese nationals were entitled to lease land inside and outside the railway zone in Manchuria. Yet in practice, Chinese officials made it hard to do so. An ordinance passed in 1929 by the Mukden government barred the sale and lease of land to aliens even though the right to buy and lease was secured by the Sino-Japanese treaty and notes of 1915. Although the Chinese claimed that various agreements with Japan had been signed under duress and were therefore null and void, not all observers could agree. It is instructive to note that two American ambassadors, both of them stationed in China, not to mention Washington's envoys to Tokyo, sided with Japan. John Van Antwerp MacMurray and Nelson T. Johnson both testified to China's impotence and turpitude. Both felt Japan's position strong enough on moral as well as military grounds to warrant a hands-off policy on the part of the United States. Johnson vacillated in his judgment and changed course when it became expedient, but MacMurray wrote a brilliant book-length memorandum in 1935 which apportioned most of the blame to China. Even Ambassador Joseph Grew, a Stimson appointee and no friend to Japan's military solution, admitted that China had shirked elementary obligations and failed to rectify "chaotic conditions in Manchuria."[8]

Japan took matters into her own hands in 1931 when she encouraged Manchuria to assert a claim to formal nationhood under the name of Manchukuo. Tokyo was not deterred by the League's Lytton Commission, which held Manchuria to be "unalterably Chinese," for this could be true only in the most literal sense. Manchuria's identification with China proper had never been closer historically than the bond between

England and Ireland, except that no Irish invaders ever ruled England as the Manchus did China. It was to keep "barbarians" such as the Manchus out of China that the Great Wall had been completed in 204 B.C. Manchus breached the wall in 1644 to bring an end to the glittering Ming dynasty, and for the next three hundred years (1644–1912) they ruled China. The Chinese were subsequently forbidden to emigrate to Manchuria, which, though now a part of the Chinese empire, remained semiautonomous. It would continue to remain so after the revolution. During the 1920s, warlord Chang Tso-lin flew a five-barred flag rather than the white sun of China. Retaining his own ministries and collecting his own taxes, he paid no revenue to China. Occasionally, he fought Kuomintang forces to ensure that Peking would exercise power only in the realm of foreign relations, and this arrangement continued under his son, Chang Hsueh-liang. Only when the latter showed signs of joining Chiang and Mao to appropriate Japanese property did Tokyo step in to secure the area from Chinese dominion. In a certain sense, then, Japanese intervention resembled French aid to the American Revolution. Manchurians and Americans had both been accustomed to a large measure of independence before achieving it in name. Symbolically, Pu-yi, first emperor of Manchukuo, had been the last emperor of China.[9]

John Hay, architect of the Open Door policy, had accepted Manchuria as beyond the domain of the Chinese empire in the same way that Theodore Roosevelt stressed its importance to Japan and spoke approvingly of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine. And because Manchuria had never been a fully integrated part of China, Japan made it clear when she signed the Nine-Power Treaty that she had no intention of applying its precepts to Manchuria or Inner Mongolia.[10]

Ethnically, it is true, Manchuria was Chinese. Nevertheless, twenty-one out of twenty-eight Sino-Manchurian families had settled there before 1885, and those who came later assimilated quickly, happy for a chance to escape the turbulence of their native land. Here, then, is another similarity between 1937 and 1776. Most Americans were British by descent, just as most Manchukuans were Chinese, yet this did not diminish their native patriotism. In neither case was blood the determining factor. New arrivals from China would fight alongside native Manchus and 750,000 Japanese residents with limited support from Tokyo. Indeed, separatist sentiment could be observed even in the province of Jehol (just north of the wall and not a part of Manchukuo as originally defined). In one of the first messages that Hull received as

secretary of state, Ambassador Johnson informed him that Japan had widened the area it controlled *with the cooperation and goodwill of local residents:* "Chinese population of Jehol, hostile to Tang Yu-lin [a Chinese general], aided and welcomed Japanese attack on him." The American consul general at Tientsin added that Chinese regular troops, as well as a number of Chinese officials, were said to have gone over to the side of insurgent forces during the campaign. Understandably, Ambassador Grew, who was stationed in Tokyo, assumed the existence of a genuine separatist movement in North China apart from any aid rendered by Japan.[11]

The residents of Manchuria, forced to choose between an economically inviting Japanese hegemony and the kind of Russian or Chinese occupation which they had resisted for centuries, naturally chose the former. Nor were they disappointed. The new government wrought instant miracles in the realm of taxation, currency, and justice. Foreigners acquired the right to own property; bandits bowed to the law; graft all but disappeared; roadbuilding and other public works flourished. In short, what the Lytton Commission declared impossible had come to pass. By 1934, Grew could report that Manchukuans were living "with a considerable degree of contentment," and North China, if subjected to disturbances, might well unite with Manchukuo "without force of arms." Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Tang Yu-jen admitted that Japan had no need to send troops into North China to induce separation; it needed only to "supply arms to discontented elements." A month later, Johnson cabled that the northern provinces no longer had any real connection with Nanking, Chiang's capital, and that if fighting developed, it would pit Chinese against Chinese. Maryknoll Bishop James E. Walsh noted on a trip to the Far East in November 1938 that "peaceful Manchukuo is not such a misnomer as many tend to believe."[12]

This, in a nutshell, was the view held by Tokyo. It was also the view reflected in firsthand reports received by the State Department and White House during 1933 and 1934. Based on the evidence, it is hard to refute. But for a variety of reasons it did not strike home at the time, and the consequences of such misunderstanding were vast. One fear persistently voiced in Washington related to the future of American business. When Japanese leaders cited the war and Roosevelt's unneutral support for China as the source of most of the difficulty encountered by American firms in Manchukuo, skeptics refused to listen. Tokyo had no

way of proving that she would not some day slam the Open Door and that monopolies set up to serve the need of the Japanese army would not be maintained in the aftermath of a peace treaty. There can be no doubt that American businessmen were gradually being squeezed out of certain areas by Japanese competition, whether as a natural result of Japan's proximity and entrepreneurial skill or of less tangible political factors. On the other hand, not a few agreed with Frank Williams, the American commercial attaché in Tokyo, who believed that American capital would have considerable opportunity once the war ended. Many American businessmen in China actually favored Japanese suzerainty as reflected in the 1935 report of the National Foreign Trade Council. What is remarkable is that despite Japan's inherent ability to undercut prices on many American lines of merchandise, despite the fact that most residents of Manchukuo's chief port were Japanese, and even though the United States gave moral and financial support to a country with which Japan was at war, American trade with Manchukuo actually tripled in the period 1932 to 1940. The war turns out to have been a crucial factor just as Tokyo said it would be. The outbreak of hostilities in 1931 hampered American trade substantially, but when peace returned the following year, it settled back to a healthy rhythm. The years 1932 to 1936 were good ones, and the period immediately thereafter was beginning to give promise of a dramatic increase when renewal of all-out hostilities commenced in 1937. Even so, the Open Door was not in serious jeopardy until mid-1938, and American exports to China were not affected in either 1938 or 1939.[13]

Had economic considerations been paramount, it is by no means certain that the United States would have sided with China. Forty-eight percent of U.S. exports to the Far East and 21 percent of all imports were to or from Japan, and the Nipponese, who bought more from the United States than from any other country (yielding only to Canada and Britain as America's premier customer), found their best customer in America. All in all, the United States had twice as much capital invested in Japan as in China and three times as much trade, along with a favorable trade balance.[14] What strikes the student of history is that here, as in other situations involving war and peace, trade statistics were not the decisive element. Every American village and town knew by 1933 that Japan had defied the League and run afoul of world opinion. Manchukuo's declaration of independence in 1932 was followed by Japanese firebombing of Shanghai and a bloody amphibious invasion that not only claimed an

enormous number of civilian lives but impinged on American interests. Furthermore, the Chinese behaved like a company of heroes, sacrificing more men against greater odds than French forces had done at Verdun.

The editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* remonstrated to Britain's Lord Lothian that Americans were getting "a very crude impression of Japanese recalcitrancy." Lothian concurred, finding Americans as a whole disturbingly uninformed on the Far East. London's *Contemporary Review* estimated that the United States was biased about ten to one in favor of China. After the Lytton Report called for Tokyo's withdrawal, prompting Japan to withdraw from the League, China had paid its dues, long overdue, and Russia, just as piously, had joined. Less clearly etched on the American mind was the story of Chinese outrages, admitted by Lytton, and the history of Manchurian separation from China, which the Lytton Commission went on record as wishing to preserve. Glimmerings of the Japanese view there were. Roy Howard, head of the Scripps Howard chain of twelve hundred newspapers, visited Japan in the summer of 1933 and published a positive report. Roosevelt, he suggested, should recognize Manchukuo and liberalize immigration policy to remove the stigma attached to Japanese nationals. The United States would also be wise to build its fleet on the theory that power, not logic, was the prime determinant in international relations. Media czar William Randolph Hearst came out with a similar view. At the same time, there were powerful voices in opposition. *Time* magazine refused absolutely to credit Tokyo with any success, even in the business of suppressing Manchurian bandits, and when the Roosevelt administration opted for a policy of inertia, the Howards and Hearsts were heard no more.[15]

Cultural ties played a role as well. For twenty-five years after the Revolution of 1911, Americans held considerable sway over certain sectors of Chinese life. From every pulpit came the message that China aspired to democracy and a knowledge of the Christian God. Sun had been raised in Honolulu. And was it not natural that the world's oldest republic should feel a kinship with the world's youngest? In 1938, Generalissimo and Mme Chiang, both practicing Christians, announced the lifting of the traditional ban on teaching Christianity in the schools. There were three times as many American missionaries in China as there were in Japan with three times as much investment in schools and churches. In addition, if the term "missionary" can be stretched to include close relatives of missionaries as well as Ameri-

cans teaching school in China, it encompassed some of the most influential leaders of opinion: Congressman Walter Judd, publisher Henry Luce, writer Pearl Buck, and two chiefs of the Department of State's Far Eastern Division, E. T. Williams (1914–18) and Stanley K. Hornbeck. American investors ranged from the YMCA to the Ivy League. Peking, Yenching, and Tsing Hwa universities, as well as the large Peking Union Medical School, had all been founded with Rockefeller funds. American administrative boards controlled Nanking University, Ginling College for women in Nanking, Shanghai University, and American University near Foochow City; nor does this take account of Chinese universities in Canton, Chengtu, and Tsinian and a great many middle schools and hospitals. The national universities were heavily staffed by scholars who had studied in America. Hu-Shih and Chiang Mon-lin, two stars of the Chinese literary renaissance, studied under Professor John Dewey of Columbia University, who traveled to China in 1923 to help develop a national education scheme. Mme Chiang, along with her brother, T. V. Soong, and her brother-in-law H. H. Kung, graduated from Wellesley, Harvard, and Yale respectively. St. John's University in Shanghai, under the presidency of an American, Dr. Hawks Pott, turned out a steady stream of social and political leaders; and for a short while Chinese universities had "credits," "semesters," "campuses," "programs," and "recitations."[16]

It was nearly inevitable that this Americanization of China would beget a corresponding Chinafication of Washington. Although Hull's views must be discounted since he played a secondary, if not tertiary, role in the shaping of Far Eastern policy, it is safe to say that he never showed the slightest sign of understanding, or even of wanting to understand, Japan's dilemma. Closest to the president stood Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, who dismissed Japan's grievances out of hand and vouched for the efficacy of economic sanctions down to the eve of Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, Under Secretary of State Welles, who entered Morgenthau's camp in 1938, served as a bridge between the State Department and the White House. As such, he had to be more guarded in his assessment, especially since the chief of the Western European Division, J. Pierrepont Moffat (Grew's son-in-law), took a relatively tolerant view of Japanese moves and favored a hands-off policy. According to Moffat, American interests did not warrant the risk of war. Even if Japan were defeated, her place would only be taken by the Soviet Union. Leaning toward Morgenthau and eventually prevailing in the competition for Roosevelt's ear was Stanley K. Hornbeck, chief of the Far Eastern Division at State. After earning his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin and teaching for five years in China and Manchuria, he had gone to Harvard as a professor and then to Versailles as one of Wilson's advisers. Fluently self-assured, he once replied to the accusation of being anti-Japanese by observing that this was "a good deal like saying that parents and teachers . . . are partial in favor of good boys and biased against bad boys . . . Chinese delinquencies are comparatively petty and for the most part those of inefficiency and ineptitude." As for his advice on how Tokyo might best be contained, he told Roosevelt to act in such a way that "nature may be allowed to take its course." The "flood tide" of Japanese expansion would come and the "ebb" would follow.[17]

Hornbeck left his post in late 1937, but only to become an intimate adviser to Roosevelt, and his replacement, Maxwell Hamilton, never departed substantially from the line laid down from above. Hamilton had served as a consular officer in China. This left only five influential individuals whose stand on the Far East coincided with that of Moffat: William Bullitt, Hugh Wilson, Colonel House, Joseph Grew, and Francis B. Sayre.[18] Since Bullitt and Wilson were kept on for their expertise in European affairs, the burden of providing advice fell upon House, Grew, and Sayre.

Few figures could be as dissimilar as Grew and House. While one kept a voluminous "diary" intended for official eyes, the other nursed a passion for anonymity, going out of his way to conceal his role during the Hundred Days and staying almost entirely out of sight down to his death in 1938. Of the two, House remains the more obscure as a presidential adviser even though he probably exercised greater influence. As elder statesman of the Democratic party, he had a voice in Roosevelt's appointments and corresponded not only with the president but with Long in Rome, Straus in Paris, Cudahy in Warsaw, and Dodd in Berlin. He heard regularly from Bingham in London; indeed, he helped him hold his job in 1936 and 1937.[19] Roosevelt introduced House to members of the diplomatic corps, included him in the discussion of sensitive issues, and in 1935 wrote him, "I do wish we had someone to fulfill the splendid missions which you carried out in Europe before we got into the war—but there is only one you and I know of no other."[20] House introduced FDR to Arthur Murray and received such visitors as Lord Lothian, Austen Chamberlain, and George Lansbury. Among the Japanese guests whom he entertained were Yosuke Matsuoka; Count Kabayama, close

friend of both emperor and prime minister; Shigeru Yoshida, minister to Great Britain; and Prince Konoye along with his college-age son. He also heard from Count Makino, lord keeper of the privy seal, father-in-law to Yoshida, and an old friend from Paris Peace Conference days.[21] In short, House acted as Japan's main channel to the White House, passing on ideas and delivering letters.[22] Nor did his lobbying end here. He granted interviews to Japanese journalists and availed himself of the American press to publish his views on the Far East at the suggestion of the Japanese ambassador. In January of 1938, he was quoted in Tokyo newspapers as having said without rancor that Japan was "determined to gain hegemony over Asia."[23]

House's counsel was far from decisive. He could not compete with Hornbeck, and his power base shrank somewhat at the end of six months with the dismissal of protégé Raymond Moley. Postmaster General James Farley spoke of him as a remote figure who received no more than the outward signs of respect owing to a distinguished career in the past. This judgment, however, would appear to be well shy of the truth. Once, in 1936, when George Messersmith happened to be in New York between posts as minister to Austria and assistant secretary of state, he received a phone call from House asking if he would care to stop by for a chat. Though he could think of no good reason to answer a summons by House, he not only made the visit but submitted to an hour and a half of probing questions on the European scene. Then came the punch: Roosevelt wished to nominate him as ambassador to the Soviet Union and would he accept? A surprised Messersmith hastened to explain that his wife could not abide Russia, and on this note the interview ended. Later, checking with friends who knew both House and Roosevelt, Messersmith learned that the aging colonel retained more influence than he had thought.[24]

If House was not "Roosevelt's strategic adviser," as one of his biographers has claimed, neither was he inactive. Had he been only one member of a larger group seeking to steer Roosevelt toward a more conciliatory course in the Pacific, he would be well worth mentioning, for the balance of advice between those favoring conciliation and those preferring coercion appeared quite even at first. It is interesting to note that soon after House died in 1938, Roosevelt shifted to economic sanctions. By the same token, in 1939, another of House's nominees, Assistant Secretary of State Sayre, was transferred from his seat of power in Washington to serve as high commissioner to the Philippines. Finally, a

year later, the last bastion of House power, J. Pierrepont Moffat, was detached from the State Department to head Roosevelt's embassy in Ottawa.

By contrast with the silence one encounters with respect to House, it is difficult to read any work on the period without finding continual reference to Ambassador Grew. He is portrayed as the voice of reason, a believer in meeting Japan halfway. Although he did not speak Japanese, he had spent ten years in Tokyo and was married to a woman who not only spoke the language but had passed her childhood in Japan and could trace her lineage to Commodore Matthew C. Perry, a local idol. Grew worked long hours, demanding as much of himself as he did of his staff, and through his unusually gracious manner and bearing he gained entrée to the highest circles of Japanese society. It was Grew who counseled delay in 1939, when Roosevelt began to move toward economic warfare, and he is well remembered for his advocacy of a Pacific summit meeting in 1941. Such a conference, he felt, could break the diplomatic logjam and enable Premier Konoye to carry Japan on a program of military retrenchment.

Like Nelson Johnson, Grew was unusual in being a Republican who continued to serve under Roosevelt, and he soon acquired a reputation for being furious with any American who ventured to criticize the administration. Both he and FDR had served on the Harvard *Crimson*. Each had an uncle in the China trade. Each played poker and devoured detective stories. And with their mutual faith in the power of personal ties and creation of a climate of trust, they preferred facts to ideas, regarded Europe as in a "mess," and felt the United States should keep its distance. Grew expressed instant or near-instant agreement with many other views of the Roosevelt entourage. These included opposition to any form of tangible cooperation with Britain, unwillingness to tolerate any increase in the Japanese naval ratio, and an opinion of the Japanese that can only be described as cliché. With his professional future still in question, Grew wrote Hull in 1933 that the Japanese were "war loving," "aggressive," "unscrupulous," and potentially "menacing." In 1934, he advocated a policy of economic sanctions certain to please Hornbeck and reported that the Japanese were out to conquer the world, with Guam included as a potential target on their list.[25]

Far more than is realized, Grew's views were in a state of constant flux. One moment, he would praise Japanese courtesy, while the next, he would describe it as a veneer masking deceit. In one place he stated that

Japan was in the grip of an elite and unrepresentative group of militarists; in another, he suggested the country was united, with all groups agreed on basic aims. In still a third communication, he espoused both points of view at once. In 1936, he preferred a policy of accommodation, but by 1938 his mood had shifted, along with administration plans, to the negative. With each turn of the White House weathervane, Grew made a turn of his own. From the initial letter to Roosevelt, in which he recalled their common background of Groton and Harvard, to his letter of 14 December 1941, in which he wrote, "Dear Frank . . . you are playing a masterly hand in foreign affairs," his response to the exigencies remained constant. It also suited his ambassadorial taste to purchase a Scottie dog resembling Fala, the famed White House terrier.[26]

Returning, however, to the balance of opinion on Far Eastern questions, one cannot avoid the president himself. Aside from the stricter, more authoritarian cast of Japanese society, which could scarcely have been congenial to a man with his political leanings, FDR never had an opportunity to know the Japanese as he did the Chinese. During his childhood, he made frequent visits to Algonac, home of his beloved grandfather Delano, who had spent thirty-three years in China as a private merchant and United States consular representative. Algonac resembled Hyde Park in its landscape as well as furnishings, which included a Buddhist bell, Chinese trees and shrubs, and paintings of the Delanos by a Chinese artist friend. Roosevelt's mother, Sara, who lived in Macao before her marriage, had collected stamps from Hong Kong and Peking, which eventually formed the nucleus of her son's rich collection. Then, too, other Delano relatives not only built the first Chinese telegraph and established the first regular steamship service on the Yangtze but brought back the first treaties between Peking and Washington. Three aunts could speak firsthand of a proud people who chafed under Japanese occupation, Aunt Annie having lived in China for five years, Aunt Doe for thirty, and Aunt Dora, one of Sara's closest friends, for thirty-five.[27]

So far as one can tell, Roosevelt never experienced any feeling toward Japan other than revulsion. He liked to recall that in his grandfather's time, "European and American traders regarded Chinese employees as essentially honest, whereas . . . Japanese employees were not so rated." From Groton, he reported to his parents that a guest speaker had run down the "poor Chinamen" a little too much and thought too much of the Japanese. Later, on his honeymoon cruise, he conversed with several

"Japs" but found to his displeasure that he was giving more information than he received. Foreigners who conferred with him during the Hundred Days made it a point to note that Japan was his great "preoccupation." And this should not be surprising. The sum of his wisdom, as expressed in an interview with Stimson, came down to a story about a Japanese student at Harvard who had allegedly told him of Japan's plans for the conquest of Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand. From the start of his presidency, he determined to keep Japan from increasing her naval strength relative to the United States and refused to associate himself with liberal criticism of racist features in the immigration law. Just as he pressed Britain and France to renew their preinaugural pledges of opposition to the floating of Japanese loans, pledges given to Bullitt, he instructed Davis to engineer an Anglo-American embargo on arms to Tokyo.[28]

Naturally, none of this entered the ear of Japanese visitors who sat upon the "black leather couch." Roosevelt was about to follow a zigzag course based upon fluctuations of opinion at home and abroad. Grew intimated to the Gaimusho that although the United States would continue to pay lip service to the Stimson Doctrine, the two countries could agree to disagree. Roosevelt, too, sounded reassuring at first. He discussed the Far East with Colonel House and on 31 March 1933, flying in the face of Stimson's advice, opened the executive mansion to Yosuke Matsuoka. Matsuoka had just led his delegation out of the League and was telling reporters that American naval units in the Pacific posed a threat to his country, yet FDR described his talk with the Japanese envoy as "very friendly" and permitted him to broadcast a farewell message to the American people. A cascade of protest letters fell upon the White House, but the president still held out official hope for rapprochement. After meeting four times with Viscount Ishii between 24 and 27 May, the most he would do to even the balance was to issue a statement with T. V. Soong on behalf of peace with China, one that could be taken with a grain of salt as it was completely pious.[29] Four days after the last of the Roosevelt-Ishii conferences, Peking signed the Tangku Truce, which granted Japan a legal basis for stationing troops north of the Great Wall. This truce was often cited as a charter for future Japanese encroachment notwithstanding Roosevelt's announcement of a $50 million credit to China. Chiang would have to wait four years for another financial fillip.

According to press accounts of his talks with Ishii, FDR endorsed the idea of a Japanese-American arbitration treaty; he also entertained the

idea of a nonaggression pact and encouraged the prospect of a commercial treaty. At the same time, the White House issued puzzling denials. Tokyo insisted that Ishii had received broad assurances from Roosevelt, but such assurances were disavowed by Hull during talks in London.[30] Roosevelt himself gave the impression of being unconcerned. He permitted the commander in chief of the Asiatic Fleet to visit Tokyo and accept a cordial greeting. In addition, Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, former president of the House of Peers, met no objection from Washington when he embarked upon a goodwill voyage to the United States and spoke in a radio braodcast of "our friendly feeling toward America." Contributing to the atmospherics, Japanese Finance Minister Takahashi issued a statement defending America's part in the London Economic Conference. And in October, Hornbeck discussed an arbitration treaty with Ambassador Katsuji Debuchi, with Ishii quoted on his return to Japan as being much in favor of it. The White House then lapsed into Delphic silence until November, when it suddenly announced plans for recognition of the Soviet Union. This was chilling news to Tokyo, however much it may have been offset by the announcement that America's Pacific Fleet, after three years in the Pacific, would soon steam eastward. And to add to the mystery, it became known that Roosevelt intended to go to Hawaii during the summer of 1934, presumably to hold talks with Japanese leaders. This, surely, could be taken as a sign of encouragement.[31]

FDR now authorized a reprinting of his friendly 1923 article "Shall We Trust Japan?" and made a point of conferring with Clark Howell, an old friend and editor of the *Atlanta Constitution.* For his help in the campaign of 1932, Howell had been offered a variety of ambassadorial posts, and because of his interest in Japan he retained influential contact with leaders of opinion on both sides of the Pacific. The purpose of his Thanksgiving visit with Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia, and subsequent train ride to Atlanta at the side of the president was to present Japan's case and test the temperature for negotiation. It could be assumed that he would relay whatever he heard to Tokyo, and what he heard turned out to be highly significant: the president would not only receive the offer of a nonaggression pact from Japan, he would *welcome* it. Two months later, Howell informed Roosevelt that the State Department, Hornbeck in particular, was biased against Japan. According to Howell, the White House should therefore deal with a special envoy from Tokyo in the person of fellow Harvard alumnus

Otohiko ("Otto") Matsukata. The president replied that he would be "delighted" and set the Department of State busily to work drafting a nonaggression pact.[32]

Tokyo, understandably optimistic when one of Hornbeck's hard-line speeches was airily dismissed by Grew, decided to turn the eightieth anniversary of the Perry treaty into a diplomatic tour de force. On 26 January 1934, the Pacific Club of Tokyo, of which FDR was honorary president, tendered him an invitation to visit Japan en route to or from Hawaii. Well-known figures such as Admiral Ryozo Asano began to embark on goodwill missions to the United States. On 1 March, a transpacific radio program was produced in Tokyo featuring conciliatory speeches by Viscount Ishii and Ambassador Grew, along with the reassuring voice of Japan's new ambassador, Hiroshi Saito, and that of former American envoy to Japan Roland Morris. Grew's remarks on friendship were published and, since it now seemed likely that Matsukata and Saito would be able to clinch a general settlement, it was said that, as a crowning touch, the highest noble of the land, Prince Konoye, would visit the United States after consulting with his prime minister and cabinet.[33]

Few observers were as realistic as France's ambassador to Japan, who remarked that the Gaimusho was pressing its suit in such fashion as to lose prestige, if not dignity. Roosevelt, who, as we shall see, was allowing expectation to rise far above the level of intended satisfaction, received Matsukata cordially on two separate occasions and signed the Tydings-McDuffie Act signaling an obvious American retreat from the Far East. Hull followed up by writing a warm letter to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce commending the Perry celebrations and by implication encouraging Foreign Minister Koki Hirota to suggest additional means of strengthening ties of friendship. Thus, Chinese leaders looked on in stupefied fashion since there was nothing as yet to indicate that Roosevelt would deny Matsukata's request for a third visit or that the nonaggression pact discussed with Howell would perish under Hornbeck's pointed pen (it was later offered in the harmless form of an arrangement to include China and the Soviet Union).[34]

Similar ambivalence marks the manner in which Roosevelt dealt with the Amau Declaration. On 17 April, Eiiji Amau, spokesman for the Japanese foreign office, warned all foreigners to stay clear of China, which he described as a region of special importance and responsibility for Japan. While the League continued to channel substantial aid to

Chiang with the backing of the United States, American aircraft and flying instructors poured into China, and Colonel Jouett, formerly of the United States Air Force, graduated hundreds of Chinese air cadets from the academy he helped to found. Increasingly, Japan's vulnerable urban population lived in fear of American bombs, while Washington was accused of building air bases in areas of China which posed an immediate threat.[35] Roosevelt's response to Amau was at once milder than Ambassador Johnson would have wished yet firmer than suggested by Hamilton. Making straight for the middle, as was his custom, he expressed frank disapproval in an *aide-memoire* while conveying an air of tolerance to the press. Hull, for his part, urged reporters to refrain from writing stories antagonistic to Tokyo and counseled Grew to emphasize the "good neighbor" side of American diplomacy. In this sense, American reaction to Amau proved to be more forebearing than that of the British. On 22 and 23 April, despite remarks by the chief of the Japanese navy widely interpreted as an attack on the American navy, one hundred ships of the Pacific Fleet transited Panama en route to New York. Even more indicative of American tolerance, nothing was said or done to deny reports that FDR planned to rendezvous with Japan's prime minister in Honolulu. On 17 April, the day that Amau spoke, such a plan was announced by the Agence Economique et Financiere as having been confirmed by Tokyo, and anticipation was permitted to mount during the coming weeks.[36]

When the equalizer arrived, it came in the form of a series of shocks administered face to face. Hull met Ambassador Saito three times in private, once at the latter's office and twice at his own apartment. The ambassador renewed his plea for a doctrine of two spheres whereby the United States would keep hands off the western Pacific in return for a guarantee of the Open Door and a pledge of Chinese territorial integrity. Hull not only rejected the proposals; he went on to suggest, none too subtly, that two thousand bombers could now fly from many of the capitals of western Europe to London, blow that city off the map, and return. Because the United States made no secret of constructing air bases on the Aleutian Islands, as well as aiding the Chinese in similar construction of their own, there could be no doubt as to what Hull, and therefore the president, had in mind. Roosevelt congratulated Hull for his "magnificent position," and Secretary of the Navy Claude Swanson blustered that if Japan did not accept a continuation of her inferior naval ratio, the United States would respond in kind.[37]

Swanson's threat drew a swift rejoinder from the Japanese press, and the *Washington Post* criticized the administration for "drifting into naval rivalry." Once again, the president reversed course—or so it appeared. On 8 June, he received Konoye at the White House and, according to his visitor, said he would welcome a meeting with Hirota and other Japanese officials if the talks could be set for Hawaii along the route of his summer cruise. At this juncture, Japanese newspapers seized upon the conference idea, referring to a Roosevelt-Hirota meeting in Hawaii as not only desirable but probable, and Hirota declared that if invited to Honolulu he might accept. Just as Konoye's presence in America reflected Japanese trust in Roosevelt's word, surely the fact that the Gaimusho permitted reports of a summit conference to be broadcast implied confidence that such an event would materialize. Suddenly, however, the White House veered off, insisting that if Tokyo did not drop the idea at once, Roosevelt would have to issue a public denial—his cruise was solely for rest and relaxation.[38] And so it went in the classic pattern of all that transpired between Washington and Tokyo down to the morning of 7 December 1941.

Almost certainly, Roosevelt made an offer similar, if not identical, to the one described by Konoye. He had been invited to visit Japan not only by the Pacific Club but also by the Pan Pacific Association (most likely, also, by Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, one of the foremost Japanese princes and a ranking member of the last Shogunate family). Although there is no definite proof that he intended to go the full distance, he did plan to hold a conclave at Hawaii to discuss the Far East, and he expected to be joined in this conference by Grew and Bullitt.[39] It is also clear that Ambassador Saito, who accompanied Prince Konoye to the White House, was asked by the president when he expected to sail for Tokyo. Roosevelt suggested that Japanese and American officials might arrive in Hawaii at about the same time. Indeed, FDR admitted as much to Assistant Secretary Phillips when confronted with the awkward fact that newspapers in Tokyo, Geneva, and London were speaking of a summit parley between himself and the leadership of Japan.[40] How much of the offer as reported by the media was intimated, how much explicit, and how much misunderstood may never be known. What is important is that Roosevelt created the impression of an honest offer without actually giving one and proceeded to rub salt into an open wound. Great must have been the consternation in Tokyo when reports circulated to the effect that Japan had renewed its offer of a

bilateral nonaggression pact. According to Reuters News Agency, the proposal had been rejected by Senator Key Pittman. Tokyo feigned surprise that any such arrangement should be thought necessary between two friendly countries. Nevertheless, no small amount of damage had been done, and Roosevelt did little to ease the pain. On the contrary, after reaching Honolulu, he alluded publicly to American air bases in the Aleutians and American support for Chinese airpower; he then went on to praise the efficiency of the Pacific Fleet, due to return to its base at Pearl Harbor. Such remarks were labeled "insolent" by General Kunishige Tanaka, president of Japan's retired military officers' society.[41] In August, the president gave a tea for Prince and Princess Kaya, relatives of the emperor, but this gracious event represented only the afterglow of a dead flame.[42]

Once again, the French embassy in Tokyo furnished an accurate reading: the affair smacked of "genuine deception, if not a certain humiliation."[43] Prince Konoye's fall from power a few months before Pearl Harbor was dramatically paralleled by the downfall of the Saito government on 4 July 1934.[44] In both instances, as we shall see, Roosevelt held out hopes which he had no intention of satisfying, and in each case, American rhetoric, along with American action, was perceived as inflammatory. A dangerous current arose in the Orient which swept rapidly across the Pacific. Tokyo's new government announced its intent to abrogate the London Naval Agreement of 1930, which bound it to the inferior naval ratio of seven to ten, and Finance Minister Korekiyo Takahashi criticized the New Deal for shortening the work week: "What any nation needs now is more work, not less."[45] Japan was beginning to take off the gloves. As part of what can only be described as a dress rehearsal for 1941, the vicar general of Maryknoll, Reverend James M. Drought, lodged two complaints: one with the president of the American Foreign Policy Association to the effect that American opinion appeared biased against Japan; a second with the Department of State urging that more thoughtful consideration be given to Japanese-American détente in the form of naval parity, reciprocal commercial treaties, and a nonaggression pact. In 1934, as in 1941, important Japanese proposals were sidetracked while the United States made unfathomable gestures. On 19 June, just after the Hull-Saito talks had ended in stalemate, Congress approved the Silver Purchase Act, which Roosevelt had recommended and which sent the Chinese economy

into a nose dive. A week later, Hornbeck offered Saito a new consular convention.[46]

It was not only that Roosevelt turned aside substantive compromise as a consequence of having little intellectual or moral commitment to a specific strategy. He went a step further in barring the way to others. Britain and the Soviet Union were both prepared to recognize Manchukuo and sign a nonaggression pact with Japan, but they refrained from doing so out of fear of giving offense to those in high places along the Potomac.[47] When FDR heard of British efforts in the summer of 1934, he let it be known that if they were "even suspected of preferring to play with Japan to playing with us," the United States would go over their head and appeal to Canada and the Dominions. England's first concern being Germany—her desertion of the League, rearmament, and pressure on Austria—she naturally wished to minimize friction in the Far East. Roosevelt's answer was to ask her to build up her naval base at Singapore while counting on America to shoulder responsibility in adjacent areas. He would even help to contain Hitler, he promised, in return for British moral support in the Far East. As reported by France's ambassador in London, the American government had promised to do all it could, in consonance with public opinion, to have the country join to the maximum degree in a system of Anglo-French guarantees. Ambassador Bingham was saying that it should not be impossible for the United States to "participate in rigorous economic sanctions which would isolate Germany completely and condemn her to a precarious situation should she violate her agreements."[48]

One other characteristic of Roosevelt's approach to Tokyo that appeared quite early in the game was his refusal to negotiate confidentially at the highest level. Japanese newspaper correspondent K. K. Kawakami informed his government that the only sure way to influence FDR was through direct personal contact. He and Viscount Ishii, who held a similar view, must have been impressed by the example of China's T. V. Soong going straight to the president and winning generous aid without recourse to Hull. As a result, Tokyo dispatched no less than nine goodwill envoys to America in the years 1933–34, including Prince Tokugawa, whom Under Secretary Phillips recognized as the foremost living Japanese. But the question remained: would Roosevelt receive these emissaries in good faith and negotiate *confidentially* at the *highest* level? The answer was a disappointing one, for although

Phillips advised FDR to see Tokugawa, although Hornbeck urged him to receive Admiral Nagano, vice-chief of the Naval General Staff, and although Roosevelt himself encouraged Tokyo to send Admiral Asano (who, like Matsukata, was a Harvard graduate), neither Phillips nor Roosevelt nor anyone else on top favored the kind of secret communication between Tokyo and the White House which the mission of such prominent goodwill envoys implied. Thus did the gentlemen from Japan arrive, one by one, only to be led over a carpet of thickly tufted words. Asano must have been astonished when his contact with Roosevelt amounted only to an hour-long tea in the presence of the president's wife. By the time an editorial appeared in the *Japanese Advertiser* suggesting that Tokyo was risking humiliation by overdoing its goodwill policy, the damage had been done.[49]

Roosevelt closed out the year 1934 with a final burst of contradiction. On the one hand, he sent Bullitt to Tokyo for a friendly ten-day visit and told Morgenthau that China had not changed very much in fifty years; it was still the mecca of "those people whom I have called money changers in the temple. . . . It is better to hasten the crisis in China—to compel the Chinese people more and more to stand on their own feet." On the other hand, he publicly excoriated Japan for her refusal to endorse the naval status quo. Colonel House, taken aback by the crudity of this tactic, objected to language that could "easily have been avoided by simply confining ourselves to the proposal that in the future, the Japanese might build what they liked, we reserving the same right and feeling certain that the friendship between the two countries was so close that it would be understood that there was no intention to compete." Because Japan sought parity, in part to assuage national pride, in part because anything else caused a "certain country" to look on her with contempt, Whitehall proposed a face-saving extension of the seven-to-ten ratio. London and Washington would agree to yield parity while having it tacitly understood that Japan would hold herself in check. Norman Davis, who represented the United States in these naval limitation talks, liked the scheme; Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, head of the Japanese delegation, also spoke warmly of compromise. And there were important precedents. Hoover, for example, had permitted Japan to go from a six-to-ten balance on all ships to seven-to-ten in minor categories and parity in submarines. The United States had also agreed in 1930 to delay completion of her heavy cruisers until after 1936 and to forego the desire for twenty-one 8-inch cruisers, settling for eighteen in return for a compensatory increase in 6-inch ships. Roosevelt, however, would not hear of extra cruisers for Britain and flatly ruled out Japan's insistence on equal status among the powers.[50]

Lord Lothian suggested that the United States should tailor policy to power and vice versa. While making judicious concessions to Japan, Roosevelt would be well advised to shore up America's fortifications and naval presence in the Pacific. Significantly, nearly every one of the president's advisers concurred on this basic point. Grew urged Roosevelt to build his navy to the 1930 treaty limit if he wished to avoid a Pax Japonica. Hornbeck called for a fleet "so strong that no other country will think seriously of attacking." And Hull offered to help by jogging Congress for the necessary funds. But the president fell silent. Instead of accepting Britain's offer of a contractual agreement to resist Japanese expansion, FDR rested content with recognition of Russia and told Lothian that "we should have to rely on the fact that our ideals and interests [in Britain and the United States] were fundamentally the same." Lothian spoke for a good many when he said, "I doubt whether this is enough."[51] It was *not* enough. Neither here nor anywhere else along the tortuous path leading to Pearl Harbor did FDR demonstrate a capacity to coordinate military and political factors in the interest of shaping a coherent and consistent foreign policy.

During the next four or five years, Roosevelt's policy became, if anything, more amorphous. He continued to stand in the way of a comprehensive settlement yet showed signs of softening. In outward appearance, if not in fact, his position changed appreciably. When Manchukuo won a measure of recognition by purchasing Russia's shares in the Chinese Eastern Railroad and by persuading Britain to send a trade mission, he was inclined to move his embassy from Peking to Nanking so that it would be easier for him to withdraw American garrisons at Tientsin and Peking and hence concede a greater degree of Japanese control. John Van Antwerp MacMurray bolstered Tokyo's position further by penning his celebrated memorandum, courtesy of the State Department, and Secretary of War George H. Dern sailed to Tokyo for a cordial reception.[52]

Meanwhile, Japanese inroads into North China were passing almost unnoticed. A slight hike in the tariff on Japanese goods and a "cotton" loan to Chiang seemed to be as far as the White House was willing to go. American members of the Olympic Committee voted for Tokyo as

host to the 1940 games, and when the Japanese ambassador to the Court of St. James's took the trouble to express his appreciation to U.S. envoy Robert Bingham, the latter assured him that there was "no anti-Japanese feeling in the United States normally except on the fringe of the western coast." Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita could honestly say, as he did in August of 1936, that relations with the United States were going "very well." They were indeed going well in the eye of the casual beholder. Roosevelt informed President Quezon that he would welcome an earlier date for Filipino independence, and later in the year, the cabinet heard him outline a plan for neutralizing all but a few major possessions in the Pacific. Since this proposal could be construed as consonant with the two spheres principle proposed by Saito in 1934, its significance lies less in the realm of practicality—it was vetoed by the chancelleries of Europe as well as by the State Department—than in the evidence it affords of American willingness to retrench militarily while appearing to trust Japan.[53]

Even Tokyo's decision to launch full-scale war against China in July of 1937 and its murderous attack on American and British gunboats the following December did not immediately alter the thrust of American policy. FDR's reaction to the outbreak of hostilities can only be described as supine, setting the stage for his weak response to Germany's challenge a year later. Why, he wanted to know, had American troops not been withdrawn from Peking and Tientsin as the White House had directed? It vexed him to think that his original judgment in this matter had been overridden. On 5 September, he announced that any citizen of the United States who wished to remain in China would have to do so at his own risk. When Admirals Yarnell and Leahy requested additional cruisers to protect American nationals against illegal search, he refused to send them. Instead, he halted nineteen American bombers on their way to China and prohibited merchantmen in government employ from carrying war matériel to China or Japan. Private ships were warned to proceed at their own risk, and Ambassador Johnson took shelter aboard an American gunboat, an act for which he was roundly condemned as doyen of the diplomatic corps. In October, after flirting with a "quarantine" of Japan, Roosevelt reversed course completely. Maxwell Hamilton brought out an official study on the feasibility of economic sanctions leaning heavily to the pessimistic side. Sanctions, Hamilton warned, would come too late; furthermore, the United States would have to take the lead and would

inevitably wind up bearing the brunt. Adding that public opinion was negative in this regard, he indicated in conclusion that a more "constructive" program would be needed to eliminate the cause of Japanese aggression. Totally antithetical to the idea of quarantine, this is the approach that actually characterized American policy before 1937 and for some time thereafter. Hamilton was promoted, and the president refused to approve anything but "minor restrictive measures" which would have to be "decided upon by other powers."[54]

While delegates to the Brussels Conference (3–24 November) were thundering against Japanese aggression at U.S. instigation, Roosevelt proceeded to extend a friendly hand beneath the table. To draw the sting from Davis's rhetoric and limit German diplomatic gains in the Far East, he sounded Tokyo on the idea of an American role similar to that played by Theodore Roosevelt at Portsmouth. This would have meant obtaining peace terms from China and Japan, announcing receipt of both declarations simultaneously, and introducing the adversaries as an impartial broker. When Eugene Dooman, Grew's chargé, conveyed FDR's offer "unofficially" to Sejiro Yoshizawa, director of the American Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Office, Tokyo was delighted. All parties, including the Chinese and British, proved anxious to invoke the example of T.R. Great, then, must have been Yoshizawa's amazement when, in the act of accepting Dooman's proposal of 15 November, he received an inscrutable rejoinder from FDR: Tokyo must not expect Washington to legitimize Japanese aggression. Undeterred, the Gaimusho took advantage of what seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to throw Roosevelt on the defensive and fend off a condemnatory resolution at Brussels. Was the United States, it demanded to know, behind the conference? Was it attempting to take the lead in humiliating Nippon? To all such questions, Dooman and Grew (who saw Hirota on 16 November) returned a polite no.[55] Roosevelt, amiable as ever, consented to see Otohiko Matsukata, who was returning as a goodwill envoy in the company of his brother Kojiro. After the brothers failed to appear, he granted them a second opportunity, then entertained Prince Konoye's son on his way to attend classes at Princeton.[56] "It afforded me great pleasure," he wrote Konoye, "to welcome on November 9 your son, Fumitaka, and to receive from him your letter of September 15. I was impressed by his address and bearing . . . I take it as a compliment to our country that his education is being entrusted to American institutions. I also wish to express my appreciation of your

cordial personal greetings and of your message of friendship . . . I heartily reciprocate your sentiments."[57]

Four days after the last of the Brussels sessions, when Kojiro Matsukata told Assistant Secretary Hugh Wilson that Dooman's proposal deserved serious consideration, Washington behaved according to what was rapidly becoming the custom. Grew introduced Hirota to the sympathetic MacMurray; Roosevelt invited Matsukata to meet with members of his family, but nothing further happened.[58]

It was at this point that Japanese aerial gunners targeted American and British gunboats on the Yangtze River. Neville Chamberlain, who was as perplexed as anyone else in the face of Roosevelt's inexplicable behavior, nevertheless hoped that Washington would at last join in a show of force. "It is always best and safest to count on the Americans for nothing but words," he wrote, "but at this moment they are nearer to 'doing something' than I have ever known them and I can't altogether repress hopes!" With a death toll of three and dozens wounded, the *Panay* became the first American ship ever lost to enemy aircraft, and there could be little doubt of Japanese intent. Crew members had submitted to on-board inspection the day of the attack; they had draped five-by-nine-foot flags over the vessel's awning and sides; the weather was clear. The only thing Chamberlain does not appear to have reckoned with was the inert state of American public opinion and, once again, the peculiar coloration of Roosevelt's diplomatic style. The isolationist Ludlow Amendment was about to come to a close vote in the wake of much disillusionment following upon Brussels, and FDR must have known that his countrymen could well recall incidents in the past which had been the fault of China. On 14 August, for example, there had been a shocking series of Chinese assaults on the International Settlement at Shanghai. Among the many hundreds of civilian fatalities was one Frank Rawlinson, who happened to be the best-known American in China at the time. Chinese fliers had then gone on the rampage a second time, killing two more Americans, injuring twenty-six others, and scoring several hits on the American flagship *Augusta* along with the merchantman *President Hoover*. In 1927, American naval vessels had been attacked thirty-seven times within several months by Chinese troops, and Washington had been sufficiently exercised by outbursts of Chinese xenophobia to bombard the city of Nanking. Public sentiment in 1937 ran seven to three in favor of

a withdrawal of American citizens from China as against the possibility of confrontation with Japan.[59]

Hill anticipated Britain's request for a joint protest and hastened to forward a unilateral American demand for apology, even before reports of the survivors had been received. Roosevelt, for his part, turned aside any idea of an Anglo-American naval demonstration, choosing instead to propose economic sanctions, which London again rejected in the absence of American military commitment. He also revived his idea of a blockade of Japan after the next "grave outrage." As outlined to Ambassador Lindsay, such an operation would interdict Japanese trade south and east of a line drawn from Hong Kong or Singapore through the Philippines to Alaska. Presumably, it would bring Japan to her knees in eighteen months without war. Lindsay, nonplussed, cabled the Foreign Office that these were the utterances of "a harebrained statesman" in his "worst inspirational mood." As was generally the case, those closest to FDR seem to have been divided on the issue with the result that he sent Captain Ingersoll to London for secret naval talks while disabusing Britain of any hope for united action in the near future. The most the United States proved willing to do was advance the date slightly on naval exercises already planned for Hawaii and send several cruisers on a goodwill visit to Singapore. In the meantime, FDR put the best possible face on a Japanese apology, speaking in his Christmas message of the need for international goodwill, and Ambassador Grew arrived at Hirota's home suitably wreathed in smiles.[60]

One question remains. There are few speeches in the twentieth century that have provoked as much controversy as Roosevelt's Quarantine Address of 5 October, which, in conjunction with its almost instant repudiation (6 October), laid the groundwork for the ensuing debacle at Brussels. Almost to a man, foreign commentators placed it in the context of domestic politics. They referred to the president's defeat on court-packing, as well as the summer's disquieting economic recession and the embarrassing attention being given to the Ku Klux Klan affiliation of Roosevelt's Supreme Court nominee, Hugo Black. According to British chargé Victor Mallet, FDR was attempting to draw a red herring across a Black trail. To be sure, Mallet's view has a ring of truth though one does not have far to go for an explanation in the realm of foreign policy. How, one must wonder, was Roosevelt to escape the consequences of an ignominious China policy if not by

sounding boldly decisive? How else was he to rebut charges of knuckling under to Hitler in his recent decision to fire Ambassador Dodd? Welles had assured the German ambassador on 1 October that Dodd's recall was imminent, and FDR, after urging Americans to leave China and appearing for the moment to defend Ambassador Johnson's feckless flight to the shelter of a U.S. gunboat, seemed to favor disengagement by the navy as well. Admiral Yarnell complained from the China station on 22 September that a withdrawal of the fleet would bring "great discredit" upon his service and that American nationals not in direct danger should not be expected to abandon their livelihood.[61]

There is, of course, the possibility that Roosevelt had some specific plan in mind when he used the word "quarantine." This is a consideration we shall take up presently. The president may also have overestimated the power of words, a theory that will form part of the concluding analysis in Chapter 7. Most likely, however, he was responding on 5 October to a broad combination of stimuli which included an insistent clamor of voices from abroad.

It is well to bear in mind that the White House had come under intense pressure from London, Geneva, and other foreign capitals to do something constructive. Prior to the renewal of Sino-Japanese hostilities, when Whitehall called upon Roosevelt to join in applying leverage on Japan and China to settle their differences peacefully, he had been averse. Later, after fighting broke out, he offered his good offices at least three times, only to be rebuffed.[62] During July, August, and September, London and Paris pressed him repeatedly to participate in a joint offer of good offices or a show of naval strength. Indications are that *he rejected no less than ten British appeals during the period July through November*, and before the end of the year the figure would rise to a dozen or more.[63] As a practical politician he did not relish the prospect of making common cause with Downing Street, and so he replied that he would prefer to act in concert with other peace-loving nations. He would consider a move to obtain League condemnation; if necessary, he would join in economic sanctions. In July, he told Clark Eichelberger of the League of Nations Association that he wanted to propose an economic blockade of aggressors, and when Ambassador Bingham sounded the British on a boycott of Japanese trade, he assured them that the president's hands would not be tied by the Neutrality Act. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden agreed in principle to economic sanctions but only on condition that Roosevelt pledge military aid in case of war. Significantly, Roosevelt was not prepared as yet to offer such a commitment.[64] Still, London persisted. Stimson, in his book *The Far Eastern Crisis* (1936), had made a compelling case for Anglo-American sanctions, and Interior Secretary Harold Ickes heard the president say in September that aggressor states should be isolated by having their trade links cut.[65] Thus it was that at the very time the State Department was preparing to draft a fresh reply to Whitehall on this very question, FDR sounded the tocsin in Chicago.[66]

By October, Britain's foreign secretary was coming under heavy pressure. Eden's ambassador to China had been shot, and the archbishop of Canterbury was scheduling a mass protest rally for Royal Albert Hall on 5 October.[67] What better salve for popular indignation than official recourse to the League? And was it not a byword among diplomats that the shortest road to Washington lay through Geneva? Had Assistant Secretary of State Hugh Wilson not indicated that the United States would welcome League action? Had Roosevelt not discussed such a course with Josephus Daniels during the previous summer just before Daniels's departure for Europe?[68] And had Wilson not written Norman Davis on 24 September that he wished the League would move toward a nine-power conference? The only question in Wilson's mind was how to bring such a meeting about "without becoming a spearhead in this movement and having responsibility for making proposals. . . . We have avoided initiating through this entire thing."[69]

The nub of the problem for Downing Street was that while Roosevelt might inspire the League to take action along economic lines, he would refuse any military guarantee and thus would take credit for proposing sanctions England could not endorse.[70] It was, in effect, a dead-end street, and so it would remain until the fall of 1940, although no one could know this at the time. Hope sprang eternal in Europe, pressure on Roosevelt continued to mount, and he must have felt an almost irresistible urge to cooperate, not only for the reasons mentioned above but also because he loved to lead and could see plainly that events on the international level were passing him by. He had tried to mastermind a solution to the problem of German revanchist goals, but it was Prime Minister Chamberlain who took the lead. Lord Halifax was due to visit Hitler in November, and the French planned to send a high-level delegation to London.[71] Italian submarine attacks on neutral shipping had been eliminated without U.S. involvement by collective action on the part of the major powers meeting at Noyen.[72] On 1 Sep-

tember, Bernard Baruch was perfectly in earnest when he confided to British officials that Roosevelt wanted a share of the leadership in Europe and that, in return, he was prepared to offer support for British policy in the Far East along with trade concessions and a liberal debt settlement.[73] By now, Roosevelt knew that if he wished to lead, or even give the appearance of leading, he must do so through the League. In sum, Geneva provided a handle for all parties concerned. To Roosevelt, it furnished a means of sharing the limelight; to Europeans, it offered hope that Washington might at last be induced to make a firm military commitment. And so, when the French, Belgians, British, and Chinese all requested a sign that Washington was prepared to offer meaningful cooperation under the terms of the Nine-Power Treaty, the president gave such a sign.[74]

On 5 October, while in Chicago en route home from a political tour of the West, he warned: "The epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading . . . and when an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease." Such words were not only arresting; they were marvelously well timed. Observers at Geneva knew that the League stood on the verge of ordering some form of concrete action against Japan. Two weeks earlier, a delegate from the United States had begun to sit as a silent member of the Advisory Committee. Roosevelt had also accepted a seat on the subcommittee dealing with Pacific affairs. Australia and Britain had introduced resolutions calling for a nine-power conference, and China was hoping to win support for a resolution aimed at containing aggression through collective economic measures. Roosevelt's words, cabled to Geneva six hours ahead of delivery, struck home at precisely the right moment. China's resolution won the day, and on 6 October the League Council invited the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty to convene a special conference (Brussels).[75]

Clever timing had long been a hallmark of the Roosevelt style. On 16 May 1933, he had appealed to the leaders of the world just before Hitler was scheduled to address the Reichstag. Germany had thus appeared to act in response to an American initiative. Two years later, with the Ethiopian crisis at white heat, he proclaimed his "moral embargo" on the very eve of League action. In 1937, he again succeeded in grasping the mantle of leadership, nimbly avoiding isolationist charges of being a tail to the League kite. In both 1935 and 1937, his aim was the same: to avoid risk by remaining in the company of four, five, or six prominent governments.[76]

Unfortunately, it must also be recorded that on 5 October 1937, as on 4 October 1935, FDR encouraged the League to embark upon a program which, in view of the underlying American position, had no real chance of success.[77] This was dramatically underscored when Roosevelt, speaking before klieg lights to an eager group of reporters on the following day, 6 October, refused to allow that the word "quarantine" implied a policy of coercion. His speech, he insisted, might even add up to "an expansion of neutrality." To Ernest Lindley, who questioned him rather sharply on the point, he replied insouciantly, "Put on your thinking cap, Ernest." Ever since, a host of historians has put on the thinking cap, and taken it off again, without forming any reasonable consensus. Some have argued that FDR did not really back down since he had never settled upon a definite course of action. Few, however, would deny that he gave the impression of retreat.[78] In any case, one thing is certain. Real or imagined, his volte-face demoralized interventionist forces everywhere. Almost immediately, the American press swung from a posture of neutrality to one of doubt, and by 10 October, Hearst felt the time had come to launch an antiquarantine campaign. American opinion began to lean seven to three in favor of nonintervention, and France and Britain were bound to be mightily disappointed by what they took to be a false start.[79] An open coffin lay waiting for the Brussels Conference.

Given the history of Roosevelt's refusal to buttress sanctionist measures with military muscle, British statesmen could not be expected to take the Chicago speech seriously once doubt began to arise as to Roosevelt's intent. Eden dismissed it with a few perfunctory words to his constituents and when asked about it in Parliament replied offhandedly that he had already dealt with the matter. Roosevelt wrote his friend Murray that he had hoped for "a little more unselfish spine in your foreign office!" But in British eyes, the spine that needed stiffening was the president's own. When Chargé Mallet asked Welles on 12 October to tell him what was contemplated under the rubric of "quarantine," Welles replied that Roosevelt had nothing particular in mind. Two days later, Mallet returned to the chargé only to be informed by the under secretary that if His Majesty's government did not know what the word "quarantine" meant, it certainly should: the president was not likely to be "unaware of what he intended to state in an ad-

dress of that high importance." Mallet promptly changed his tune at this point, assuring Welles that "of course, the British Government had no misconception." On 19 October, when Eden tried to elicit a more precise meaning from the American embassy in London, Bingham simply told him that any attempt "to pin the United States down to a specific statement as to how far it would go and precisely what the President meant . . . was objectionable and damaging." Several weeks later, a fourth British probe directed at Welles produced the observation that "contingencies" such as the need for military force "were remote and should not be considered at this time."[80]

There can be little doubt that FDR was considering a wide range of options. But just how serious he was about implementation or how expert at following an idea to its logical conclusion is another matter. To Cardinal Mundelein, he had broached the possibility of diplomatic ostracism, which would involve severance of ordinary communications with Japan. Only the possibility. He was also partial to the idea of a world conference for the promotion of disarmament, free trade, and reform of the Versailles settlement. Only three days after the Quarantine Address, work began on the Welles Plan; likewise, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the president considered a league of armed neutrals, collective neutrality as outlined by the American delegation at Buenos Aires, and the possibility of prevailing upon nations to close their ports to Japan and refuse financial assistance. Last but not least, he gave some thought to a naval blockade as suggested to Lindsay during the *Panay* and *Ladybird* crises. Twenty-five years earlier, serving as assistant secretary of the navy and faced with a similar war scare in the Pacific, Roosevelt's instinct had pointed in the same direction. The glamour inherent in this notion of blockade seems never to have faded. During the summer of 1937, he pored over nautical maps and ordered a report on the history of blockades, all with the approval of his chief of naval operations, Admiral William Leahy. Three years later, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox would tell Fleet Commander Admiral James O. Richardson that the president wanted to blockade Japan in case of an attack on the Burma Road. Just as Richardson reported the fleet ill prepared in 1940 for such an operation, most American and British strategists gave the plan short shrift in 1937. Hull and Welles discouraged it, while Bullitt wrote FDR in disgust: "I never believed you were about to mount a white charger." None of this ever became clear to Chamberlain, but it helps to explain Roosevelt's retraction on 6 October.[81]

As regards public response to the speech, historians have been of two minds. Roosevelt himself wrote that reaction seemed as good as could be expected. Hull, on the other hand, referred to it as politically disabling. In reality, both appraisals were probably correct, allowing for Roosevelt's unique style of operation. Editorial comment and White House mail sided substantially with the president. Church groups and organized labor stood solidly behind him, too. However, a small segment of the press, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Wall Street Journal*, voiced disapproval. Hugh Johnson, a former White House aide and Scripps-Howard columnist, took up the cudgels, as did six major peace societies. Leading members of Congress, including the powerful senators Gerald Nye of North Dakota, Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, William Borah of Idaho, and Hiram Johnson of California, growled audibly; there was even talk of impeachment.[82] In short, the response was mixed, and to a consensus politician, one who rarely flew in the face of vocal minority opinion, this alone would have been sufficient to give pause.

Roosevelt's turnabout can also be viewed as part of a familiar syndrome. Whenever he moved against tolerable opposition, he did so by degrees. Each advance into enemy terrain was followed by a calculated retreat. In 1933, for instance, he requested discretionary power to impose trade sanctions, but when faced with vociferous dissent from a handful of senators, he canceled the drive only to resume it at a later date. The same holds true for his campaign to persuade the Military Affairs Committee that America's frontier was on the Rhine. One is also reminded of his "unlimited national emergency" speech of 27 May 1941, which he took back at a press conference the next day despite telegrams running 95 percent in its favor. Implying the need for convoys, he insisted that American supplies must reach Britain: "It can be done; it must be done; it will be done." Nonetheless, within hours, under heated interrogation, he announced that there would be no convoying and no request for revision of the neutrality law after all. Neither Harry Hopkins, his intimate adviser, nor anyone else could fathom it. Other examples can be found, but suffice it to say there was a chameleon quality about Roosevelt, which, if it be accounted one of his more potent weapons, was also an abiding weakness.[83]

All things considered, the fact that FDR delivered the Quarantine Address when he did and with all its attendant circumstances should come as no surprise. There were a great many reasons for his doing so

and only one powerful factor militating against. Had he known the damage that could come as a result of championing an impractical scheme and throwing American weight behind a plan he was not prepared to execute, he might have acted differently and avoided the unseemly spectacle of an international conference with nowhere to go.

Those who suspected that the president would regard the Brussels Conference as a mere sounding board to agitate world opinion had their worst fears confirmed. Chief American delegate Norman Davis not only prevailed upon a reluctant Eden to join in proposing peace plans which he knew would most likely be rejected by Tokyo; he insisted on sending Japan a second public invitation to attend the conference, again with the outcome a foregone conclusion. French Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos suggested that one invitation and one refusal were enough, but Davis was not to be denied; a second invitation went out only to be spurned as rapidly as the first. Instructed to seize upon any opportunity to discredit Japan in the eyes of the world, he told reporters that in dealing with a bully, one had to be firm; the United States was "prepared to uphold law and order with its entire fleet." As may be imagined, this created something of a sensation, but when approached by the French and British for reassurance that his country was indeed prepared to fight should sanctions lead to war, Davis declined. Such waffling prompted Sir Robert Clive to deplore the diplomacy of homiletics and Saburo Kurusu, Japanese ambassador to Belgium, to assert that such tactics would simply open the door to German inroads. Still, as the conference drew to a close, Davis continued to score verbal points. From the few delegates who remained, he wrung a strongly worded declaration of adjournment, and had he had his way, the conference would have sent Tokyo an embarrassing list of questions.[84]

What is surprising is that the Brussels conclave lasted as long as it did. On opening day, eight out of ten delegations, already in a mood of sullen gloom, wished to go home. Eden longed to return to London, while Delbos, along with Belgium's Paul Henri Spaak, favored immediate adjournment. Delbos, Roosevelt's most outspoken critic, may have had an inkling of Washington's sub-rosa feelers to Japan. In any case, he wanted no keynote speeches and accepted the American preference grudgingly. Davis's hollow rhetoric met with exposure at the hands of the same French editors who had panned Roosevelt during the London Economic Conference of 1933. Press correspondents, for lack of anything better to do, reportedly bribed a streetwalker to accost Eden as he emerged from one of the meetings.[85]

Caprice seemed by far the most consistent feature of American leadership. Before sailing for Europe, Davis had gone to Hyde Park and he thought he knew what was expected. Nevertheless, Secretary Hull disallowed his opening speech at the last moment, forcing him to postpone and revise it. After encouraging delegates to expect an imminent move by Roosevelt to achieve revision of the Neutrality Act, something which never came to pass, Davis wound up proposing a whole series of measures which the White House repudiated. They included nonrecognition, a ban on loans to Japan, a boycott of Japanese exports, revision of the Neutrality Act, the arming of China, and concerted American, British, and French fleet action in the Pacific. Just as Davis was beginning to take the wraps off Roosevelt's program, the Hearst papers erupted, and Hull cabled that "none of the measures envisaged should be proposed by the United States." On direct appeal to Washington, Davis found that the president had indeed undergone a change. Stunned, he could only tell Hull: "I bow before your judgment." Eden then wanted to know, since there would be no backing from the White House, what use there could possibly be in asking the conference to use the sort of language FDR had in mind. Davis could give no answer. "For a whole minute," Eden recalled, "his brain ceased to function."[86]

Compounding the performance of Roosevelt's chief envoy was an embarrassing interchange between the president and Jules Henry, France's chargé d'affaires in Washington. Roosevelt had the temerity to suggest that Frenchmen were behaving like "scared rabbits" in yielding to Japanese demands for a shutdown of Chiang's supply route through Indochina. When Henry asked him how Paris could be expected to resist Tokyo without a concrete offer of American support, the president replied, rather grandly, that French fears of Japan were exaggerated. Moral considerations should come first, and "was it not understood in France that a Japanese attack on Hong Kong, Indochina or the Netherlands Indies would be regarded in the same way as an attack on the Philippines?" Referring specifically to an attack on French Indochina, Roosevelt assured Henry that "our common interests" would then be "threatened" and "we would have to defend them together" ("dans cette éventualité, nos intérêts communs seraient menacés et nous aurions à les défendre ensemble").[87]

Davis, queried on what the president had meant to say, replied that it

was too early to tell just how the United States might react. When the French produced Henry's report of the conversation, Davis explained that in a democracy it was impossible to make advance commitments. Bullitt was then asked to clarify who spoke for the United States, Davis or the White House, and when he requested instruction from the State Department, Under Secretary Welles cabled that Roosevelt had merely told Henry that acts of aggression would have worldwide repercussions which would obviously affect the United States but that war was such a remote contingency he did not think it should be discussed. In no case had the president given any impression "directly or indirectly as to the possible extension of . . . the American fleet." To add to the confusion, Welles gave Henry a pledge almost as strongly worded as the one Henry had reported receiving from Roosevelt: "If the possessions of the powers in the Far East were the object of a Japanese attack, there would result a world situation to which the United States would not be able to remain indifferent."[88]

France was not reassured. She could not afford the luxury of relying upon words in place of action. And so China lost two lifelines, one through Indochina, another through the Portuguese port of Macao. An angry Premier Chautemps felt the need to unburden himself to Bullitt:

> Look here . . . what I cannot understand is that you Americans from time to time talk as if you really intended to act in the international sphere when you have no intention of acting in any way that can be effective . . . I should infinitely rather have him [FDR] say nothing than make speeches, like his speech in Chicago, which aroused immense hopes when there is no possibility that in the state of American opinion and the state of mind of the Senate he can follow up such speeches by action. Such a policy on the part of the United States merely leads the dictatorships to believe that the democracies are full of words but are unwilling to back their words by force, and force is the only thing that counts today in the world.

Henry showed more understanding. He had known Roosevelt since World War I and, as he informed Delbos, "It happens sometimes that the President, whose impulsive temperament you recognize, expresses himself in terms which exceed his thought . . . he gives the impression occasionally of wanting to transform into action certain intentions that he holds one moment but which he is forced to abandon thereafter . . . I recall several examples: the economic conference; the debts; the project for a meeting of heads of state, etc."[89]

Regardless of explanation, the Brussels meeting ended the way it began, as an exercise in futility. A candid Kurusu told American reporters that the Roosevelt administration could not stand behind Davis without congressional support, and since this was something he did not have, Davis would be instructed to "close down with some more resounding phrases." China's delegate, Wellington Koo, did not hesitate to say that his people felt betrayed; the United States, unlike Britain, had not acted the part of a true friend. As for Delbos, who had never reconciled himself to the idea of a world conference without American military commitment, he refused to join in drafting the concluding statement. Finally, Italy's chief delegate echoed Mussolini's impression of the London Economic Conference four years earlier, insisting that Brussels had been "entirely superfluous from the beginning." The delegates drifted away, one by one, until Davis was left virtually alone on the last day, trying as best he could to put a positive face on what had taken place. It made a poignant picture, this lonely figure from Tennessee, who had served his country as assistant secretary and under secretary of state, who had never been highly regarded by Europeans (Chamberlain called him "detestable"), now about to return home to direct the Red Cross. Davis was not the only one, however, to suffer from the pall cast by Brussels. Anthony Eden, Robert Vansittart (Britain's permanent under-secretary), and Yvon Delbos all found themselves out of office within a few months.[90]

Another effect of the Brussels Conference may be measured in terms of shifting national allegiance. The Japanese quickly began to show signs of resenting France's presence in Hainan and the Paracel Islands. Thus Tokyo now called upon Berlin to monitor her talks with China. Even before the conference ended, Italy, having acted as custodian for Japanese interests, joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, which put an end to German isolation and set in motion a movement foreshadowing the Tripartite Pact of 1940. Furthermore, coinciding with this growth of German prestige, one could detect a corresponding decline in respect for the United States. During the scramble to apportion blame for what had happened in Belgium, most leaders pointed an accusatory finger at Washington.[91] Having indicted France for cowardice in Indochina, Roosevelt could only appear inconsistent when he resisted Anglo-French pleas for military backing.[92] He suffered further loss of face owing to the fact that Eden had told the House of Commons that American leaders were responsible for choosing Brussels as a site. Technically, this was true; Britain preferred the Hague.[93] But the Lon-

don and Tokyo press latched onto it as proof of American responsibility for conference results. By the time Eden explained himself, few cared to listen. American delegates spent a good deal of their time disowning responsibility, both for the conference and for its impending failure.[94]

What, then, is to be said regarding the larger picture? Before carrying our discussion of American-Japanese relations into the watershed period 1938–40, there are certain fixtures of the diplomatic scene worth noting. One theme which spans a full range of events from 1933 to 1941 is that of diplomatic dualism, the discrepancy between what Roosevelt said and what he thought, between what he promised to do and what in fact he did. It was not unusual for him to pursue contrary lines of policy simultaneously and to alternate between several lines of strategy. Although there were two schools of thought on Far Eastern policy, both within the State Department and within his immediate circle, FDR's personal leaning was toward China, and this served to nullify any positive move made by American officials in the direction of Japan. At the same time, he was neither prepared nor anxious to become actively committed to either side, at least initially. When pressure from Europe mounted for concerted action against Tokyo, he refused to go beyond rhetoric, and his harsh-sounding words meant little when accompanied by subtle, behind-the-scenes gestures of friendship. Beyond this, there was the public image he chose to cultivate, which, by contrast with his equivocal diplomatic posture, never varied. To the people at home, he was always an uncompromising foe of autocracy and aggression.

In the next chapter, we shall have occasion to observe how presidential rhetoric assumed a force of its own. It would not be long before Congress would press for forthright action, perhaps as Roosevelt had always known it would. Capitol Hill would vote economic sanctions that proved to be too stringent for British or French approval in the absence of a definite American military commitment. And so it was that FDR found himself out of step. By late 1940, it was the United States which was taking the lead against Japan, though never without a strong and debilitating undercurrent of domestic dissent.