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Wind Over Sand
THE DIPLOMACY OF
FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

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THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA PRESS
Athens and London



3. Saito's Ashes

SUCH traits as ambivalence and prevarication, which by 1938 had become a regular feature of presidential policy, invited the Japanese to pursue a counterpolicy of divide and conquer. This carried with it the long-term risk of war. But Otohiko Matsukata, stressing his country's love for America, along with its alleged antipathy to Britain, sounded the State Department a second time on Dooman's tender of good offices. Welles, Grew, and Wilson all took refuge in bland generalization regarding the terms of the Nine-Power Treaty, but Colonel House was quoted by *Nichi Nichi* as saying that Far Eastern problems should be settled without outside interference.¹ Three American cruisers sailed for Singapore even as American garrisons withdrew from North China. Tokyo thus remained in a state of limbo, unable to divine what meaning, if any, could be found within such a welter of contradiction. In December, after Premier Konoye had proclaimed a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and called for a "new order" of economic cooperation and joint defense against communism, Roosevelt opted for a \$25 million loan to China. Two months later, however, in a novel display of friendly feeling for Japan, Mrs. Roosevelt made an unprecedented personal call on Mrs. Saito. Even Roosevelt's final decision to grant a generous loan to China appears to have been something of a compromise. Morgenthau gave it strong support and Hornbeck welcomed it as the first move in a "diplomatic war plan" to include denunciation of treaties, repeal of the Neutrality Code, retaliatory tariffs, embargoes, and fleet movements. In the opposite camp, as usual, stood Secretary Hull, representing a powerful group within the State Department that was adamantly opposed to the loan. What happened is that while Hull was away on a visit to Lima, Peru, Acting Secretary Welles offered Morgenthau his backing in return

for Treasury Department acquiescence in a plan for Cuban economic recovery, and predictably the president “split the difference” by adopting the loan without reference to Hornbeck’s “war plan.”²

This may have seemed a small step at the time. Yet Roosevelt’s decision to support Morgenthau, however incrementally, marked a signal development. In effect, the White House was now taking steps aimed at controlling external events not by the traditional balancing of power against power but by a gradual tightening of America’s purse strings. Economic sanctions, sans military commitment, had long been a staple of New Deal thought (more of this in the concluding chapter), and this time the president would not allow the coolness of Downing Street to dissuade him. After Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir John Simon rejected Morgenthau’s proposal in December 1937 for an Anglo-American freeze on Japanese assets, the treasury chief was authorized to set up a department of economic warfare, and it is from this crucial intersection that the entire future of American Far East policy may be plotted.³

Public opinion, congressional sentiment, and best-selling books were all in agreement—so much so that if one were not certain of the president’s mind, it might seem that he acted less out of conviction than out of a desire to keep pace with the times. Freda Utey had argued in her best-selling *Japan’s Feet of Clay* (1937) that sanctions would not lead to war, and while AFL and CIO conventions voted to boycott Japanese imports, six hundred delegates of the American Student Union at Vassar participated in a mass burning of silk stockings. It was a movement popularized by such journalists as Edgar Mowrer and John Gunther, who held that Japan was “running amuck.” As a result, Roosevelt was prepared by the summer of 1938 to make his fateful call for a “moral embargo” on aircraft sales and the extension of credit to Japan. With the passage of time, American companies would refuse to fill Japanese orders, Du Pont would decide not to supply munitions to either side, and a cry would arise in Congress for additional measures to divorce the American economy from Japan’s war. With opinion polls showing 75 percent favoring an arms embargo and 66 percent a boycott of Japanese goods, a majority of the Foreign Relations Committee led by Senator Pittman would set out to persuade the administration to abrogate its commercial treaty with Japan and clamp an embargo on all trade.⁴

Journalist Walter Lippmann, speaking from hindsight, lamented that

“the administration, which knew better, acquiesced in this utterly unstatesmanlike policy of challenging Japan in Asia while we were forbidden to support the allies in Europe.” Whether the White House really knew better is a moot point. There can be no question, however, that Roosevelt set his face like flint against any meaningful form of compromise. If, by Breckinridge Long’s estimate, Hornbeck was conducting his own private war against Japan, the same could be said of the administration generally. The idea that Nature should be left to take its course underwent slow metamorphosis in the years 1938–40. White House counselor R. Walton Moore and John Carter Vincent at State, not to mention Hull, Welles, and others, were all agreed that Nature needed a prod; the nation must act. Such dissenters as Moffat, Wilson, and Bullitt no longer had Roosevelt’s ear, and Grew, though still inclined to a policy of noninterference, thought better when his son-in-law Moffat warned that such views were out of joint. Sanctions now had the support of Congress and people alike, and Roosevelt contributed all he could to a tide that would soon carry him to the point of hard steel. In two years, Gallup polls would show 80 percent in favor of an embargo. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle would soon be noting in his diary that “the plan is to go on gently turning the economic screws. . . . Our policy is to keep up a continuing pressure until they stop their foolishness in China.” Hornbeck admitted that Japan, “under the urge of certain shallow-minded” military people, might shake hands with Germany and Italy. So be it, for if Japan ever gained the upper hand in China she would be free to carry out aggression in other areas, which might prove fatal to the British and Russian position vis-à-vis Hitler.⁵ As war clouds gathered over Europe in 1939, Roosevelt’s refusal to meet Tokyo halfway troubled London and Paris exceedingly, for on each occasion when he seemed to be about to reconsider, there would come an unaccountable stiffening.

Perhaps the most dramatic instance of the two stools policy relates to the death of Hiroshi Saito, Japan’s ambassador to the United States. As the youngest head of mission in Japanese history, age alone would have endeared him to an administration proud of its youthful vigor. With the sprightly air of a college freshman, he promised complete candor and refused to attend the exclusive preview of a film he himself had produced on grounds that it would be accepting special privilege. After twenty-eight years in America, he reputedly knew the difference between a Texas leaguer and an infield hit. People marveled at his im-

peccable command of slang. Reports circulated of his yen for scotch whiskey. He even played poker with presidential secretary Marvin McIntyre. Although his proposal for a nonaggression pact won few converts, he inaugurated a period of greatly lessened tension. Indeed, such was his charm that when he died in February of 1939, after an ambassadorial term of five years, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to enter an obituary in the *Congressional Record*.⁶

This was the setting in which FDR, on 1 March, decided to carry out a State Department recommendation that Saito's ashes be returned to Japan in a large funeral urn aboard an American battle cruiser. The Gaimusho had shown similar consideration on the death of American ambassador Edgar Bancroft; but Bancroft, unlike Saito, had died in harness. FDR made his decision on the heels of Japanese occupation of Hainan Island and went ahead despite Tokyo's bold announcement on 31 March that it intended to occupy the Spratly Islands. Besides being claimed by France, the Spratlys were well within striking range of the Philippines, Borneo, Vietnam, and Singapore. Grew was not exaggerating, therefore, when he called Roosevelt's gesture an act of "unprecedented courtesy, honor, respect, and friendship."⁷

With one voice, Tokyo hailed it as a graceful act, a sign of America's desire to restore good relations. It was discussed in the House of Peers. Every metropolitan paper but one gave it an editorial. On 19 March, in a transpacific broadcast, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Setsuzō Sawada thanked Americans for a rare mark of kindness to Saito's widowed mother, consoling her for the loss of her last remaining child: "Surely this is a reflection of the tender regard in which your President holds his own mother." A few days later, the United Press predicted that the crew of the battle cruiser *Astoria*, led by Captain Turner, would be given the greatest reception ever accorded a visiting naval delegation. Scores of entertainments were planned. Gifts for officers and men accumulated at the embassy. One Osaka merchant presented Grew with twenty pearl necklaces for senior officers' wives.⁸

Suddenly, in the midst of this happy scene, came a veritable bolt from the blue. Washington ordered Grew not to accept any unusual entertainments or gifts. Naturally, the ambassador was mortified. Without being consulted, he was bidden to ask a highly intelligent and sensitive people to curb its generosity. He could only remind Hull that the *Astoria* was expected to remain nine days in Japan and it was too

late to cancel any of the major events scheduled, which included radio broadcasts and dinners to be given in the captain's honor by the embassy, the Japanese Foreign Office, and the Navy Ministry. After a prolonged silence, Hull relented. Turner might accept framed silk embroidered pictures of marine subjects for his wardroom and warrant officers' messes because these items had already been accepted on his behalf by Grew. But the embassy was to insist absolutely on return of the twenty pearl necklaces, along with other gifts. Grew tried to save the situation by indicating that Turner should be allowed to decide whether to accept or reject individual gifts, but this time Hull remained obdurate. All gifts must be returned at once. Accordingly, a notice appeared in the *Japanese Advertiser* saying that the United States would return all the commemorative dolls and swords that had been arriving at the embassy since 1 April. In addition, a monster public meeting to have been held at Meiji Stadium was diverted by request of the ambassador to more sober surroundings at a university theater.⁹

What is remarkable is that, despite all restrictions handed down from on high, nothing could dampen the festive spirit. A play about Saito's ambassadorship opened in Tokyo, with portions of the script rendered in English, and Grew fought gamely to stave off further interference. When reminded by Hull that the *Astoria* should not stay in port longer than three days, he remonstrated that the earliest date he could tactfully suggest for its departure was 23 April, a full week after arrival and the day of the Yasukuni Shrine festival. Informed by the Gaimusho that even this minor curtailment of schedule would likely give offense, he promptly agreed to a full ten days of activities as originally planned, and Hull said nothing.¹⁰

At this juncture, like the proverbial writing on the wall, came Roosevelt's second sign of contradiction. A day or two before the arrival of Saito's remains, and under considerable Anglo-French pressure to protest Tokyo's latest claim, he announced that the American fleet would return to the Pacific and engage in maneuvers at Hawaii! Hull likewise instructed Ambassador Grew to do all he could to discourage the Japanese from sending a warship to San Francisco and New York as an expression of thanks.¹¹ Captain Turner remained until 26 April, during which time his officers were lavishly feted and showered with attention, including an audience with the emperor. But one day after the *Astoria* weighed anchor, Senator Pittman, whose utterances were gen-

erally taken to reflect the view of the White House, made the comedy complete by introducing a resolution allowing the president to cut all trade with Japan. Saito must have turned in his urn.

The British were not particularly gratified, either. That Roosevelt should go ahead with the *Astoria* visit despite Japan's earlier seizure of Hainan and her recent declaration of intent to occupy other key islands was an object lesson not easily forgotten. Much as Prime Minister Chamberlain desired American support on the European Continent and wished to facilitate repeal of the Neutrality Act, he could not consider drastic sanctions without American naval commitment, and so his only hope of breaking the impasse with Tokyo, as it seemed, was to extend recognition both to Manchukuo and to the newly organized pro-Japanese, anti-Chiang government of Chinese President Wang Ching-wei.¹² On 8 July, Roosevelt appeared open to such an arrangement when he asked Premier Kiichirō Hiranuma to exert himself on behalf of peace in Europe. Sir Robert Craigie, the British ambassador to Japan, issued a "formula" two weeks later in concert with Foreign Minister Arita by which Britain agreed to recognize Japanese hegemony in the areas of China controlled by her military. But it was not to be. Any chance of compromise in the Far East was dashed on 26 July, when Roosevelt denounced the Japanese-American Treaty of Commerce, assuring its termination in six months. Even after European guns began to flash, he insisted with great adamance that British troops remain on station in China. Small numbers stayed on in Peking and Tientsin, with a larger body at Shanghai, as the British continued to feel the need, in Halifax's words, of "keeping in step" with the United States. At the same time, FDR ignored all requests from Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay for guarantees of contingency aid in the Far East. Hitler posed an obvious threat, but the most Roosevelt would do was to send more ships and planes to the Pacific and hold naval maneuvers near Honolulu.¹³

Grew, meanwhile, began the year with considerable hope for rapprochement. On his desk lay Whitney Griswold's *Far Eastern Policy* and MacMurray's memorandum of over one hundred pages. Both works made a powerful case for Japan, with the latter carrying special weight because its author had served as secretary of legation in Peking (1913–17), counselor of embassy in Tokyo (1917–19), chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (1919–24), and minister to China (1925–29). MacMurray's record included additional experience as chief of the Division

of Near Eastern Affairs, assistant secretary of state, director of the Johns Hopkins School of International Relations, and, since 1933, minister to the Baltic states. Although he sympathized with China's dream of self-determination, he reasoned that the only immediate alternative to a Japanese presence on the mainland was the presence of Russia. What impressed him most was, first of all, Moscow's capacity to absorb Korea; second, Japan's vital ties with China and Manchukuo; and third, China's willful violation of treaties. Americans, he felt, had not been prudent in brushing aside Japan's complaints of treaty violation in 1928, and the Japanese felt "quite naturally and strongly" that "justice was on their side." Unlike most observers, MacMurray realized that Western assumptions were not readily transferable. If East and West could differ on the proper relationship between man and woman, a phrase like "equality of commercial opportunity" might also be susceptible to more than one interpretation.¹⁴

Armed with the views of Griswold and MacMurray, Grew paid a visit to Washington during the summer of 1939. In two fruitless sessions with Roosevelt he tried to show that economic sanctions would not work and might lead to war. The president would not listen; if anything, his attitude seemed to harden as he spoke of sending more forces to the Pacific and intercepting the Japanese when they moved south. Talk then turned to the holding of military maneuvers in Hawaiian waters, and before Grew could return to Tokyo, Roosevelt denounced the Japanese-American Treaty of Commerce. That Grew's presence in Washington should coincide with such a dread blow did not escape the *Japan Times*: "The unkindest cut of all came from the hand of an American whom we always believed to be our best friend."¹⁵

Instead of resigning out of an understandable sense of betrayal, Grew traveled to Chicago and other cities and delivered a set speech bearing the unmistakable mark of the White House. He did not ignore the Japanese side of the question altogether, but his positive statements, including a complimentary reference to MacMurray, were tucked away in the middle of his text while he rang all the conventional changes on Tokyo's alleged lust for expansion. Like the good soldier that he was, he began with reference to the "rape of Nanking" and the "massacre of undefending populations." The Japanese military caste, he suggested, had "outdone the Huns in barbarity" and put a blot on the imperial escutcheon that could never be erased. The *Panay* incident had been intentional, and American indignation at Nipponese leaders was "fully

justified." In closing, he admitted that not all Japanese, not even all of the army, supported a policy of aggression. Japanese gentlemen were as fine as any in the world. Yet the implication was clear. While residing in Tokyo, he recalled, he had to be accompanied everywhere by detectives. Clearly, Japanese gentlemen were not in the saddle.¹⁶

On returning to his post, he commenced talks with the new liberal government of Premier Nobuyuki Abe and Foreign Minister Kichisaburo Nomura. Personally, he still preferred a *modus vivendi* featuring renewal of the commercial treaty in return for the redress of specific grievances. He also continued to warn the White House that economic sanctions would not succeed. Publicly, however, he hewed to the condemnatory line laid down by FDR. With Japanese closure of the Yangtze River a special cause of irritation and hundreds of unsettled cases involving American life and property still pending, he delivered a hard-hitting formal address. He was determined, as he put it, to let Tokyo hear it "straight from the horse's mouth," and the American press was quick to award him plaudits for "bare-knuckle" diplomacy. On 4 November, engaging Foreign Minister Nomura in the first of a series of four talks, he again sought publicity and, once more, the press granted him generous coverage, making it look to all the world as if he had threatened Tokyo with refusal to renew the commercial treaty. One can only marvel that Premier Abe managed to survive such treatment as long as he did. In Tokyo's inner council, commanding voices were urging a political berth with Hitler. Army chief Seishirō Itagaki, who had recommended such a course the previous spring only to meet with determined resistance from navy chief Mitsumasa Yonai, was again voted down and Abe managed to ward off political challengers for many weeks by insisting that he would succeed in restoring the commercial treaty.¹⁷

In his initial conference with Nomura, Grew asked for an end to the bombing of American enclaves, settlement of a list of outstanding claims, and the opening of the Yangtze River to Western commerce. Subsequently, he noted a cessation of bombings and indignities, with investigations begun, solatiums paid, properties evacuated, and many, if not most, of the American claims settled. However, when it became obvious at the second meeting (not held until 4 December) that Grew lacked authorization to negotiate a new trade treaty, the harassment of Americans resumed. Grew chafed at instructions which confined him to vacuous statements to the effect that Japanese concessions had not

gone far enough. He felt totally helpless as there was nothing further to do. When he made an urgent request for greater flexibility, it was denied, and Nomura was never able to ascertain what Roosevelt would require in return for renewal of the treaty. On 18 December, the foreign minister indicated that his government was prepared to reopen the Yangtze and forego all the military advantages attached to closure. This, certainly, was a major concession, and while it might not be wholly satisfactory, Matsukata vouched for the support of the army and indicated that if it were accepted in a constructive spirit, Japan would "double its efforts to effect a lasting rapprochement." No matter. On 22 December, Grew informed Nomura that there would be no renewal of the treaty, only trade on an ad hoc basis. Bitterly disappointed, Abe and Nomura could no longer bear the strain and resigned.¹⁸

By this time, Tokyo had recognized Wang Ching-wei's mainland regime. Grew agreed with the British and French that Wang stood a good chance of survival, especially with continued Japanese backing, for he was neither a quisling nor a puppet. This was also the view of a number of senators, including Vandenberg. Nonetheless, Roosevelt denounced Wang as a stooge, even as he encouraged the new Yonai-Arita ministry to send unofficial envoys to Washington, a Mr. X and Mr. Y. As if to draw the curtain further over the face of reality, he sent Francis B. Sayre to Tokyo for confidential talks. Having completed six years as assistant secretary of state, Sayre was holding down the post of high commissioner to the Philippines in a sort of diplomatic exile that may have reflected his tendency to see Japanese policy through Japanese eyes. After maintaining contact with MacMurray House, and a brilliant Wall Street lawyer by the name of John Foster Dulles, he suddenly appears on center stage as spokesman for the president.¹⁹

The dialogue between Sayre and Foreign Minister Arita was no chance encounter, whatever it may have seemed in its barren aftermath. Sayre had corresponded with the president and obtained specific instructions. He was also in close touch with Roosevelt's ambassador to China, Nelson T. Johnson, having forwarded one of the latter's recent letters to the White House. "I hope," Roosevelt wrote, "you will be able to take a little holiday in Japan and talk things over with Grew . . . and if he [Ambassador Johnson] is able to get say to Saigon, you might run over there and see him." He was to allow "several months" between prospective trips to Japan and China and arrange to be in Washington during July.²⁰

Once in Tokyo, Sayre met the emperor and conferred with Arita on 1, 2, 3, and 6 May. Grew attended the first of these sessions, the one confined to ceremonial and Philippine matters. Subsequently, Sayre initiated discussion of a Pacific nonaggression pact and proposed that Japan join China in requesting American mediation. When Arita suggested that Roosevelt might propose direct talks between the two sides, Sayre countered with the idea that Chinese and Japanese representatives could meet at Manila or perhaps Hong Kong, implying American or British good offices. Arita, however, had no sooner agreed to send a military officer to Hong Kong for face-to-face talks with the Chinese, assuming that Sayre would pledge his "good offices," than Undersecretary Welles cabled that the talks were compromising America's position vis-à-vis China. Sayre then reverted to the standard American defense of Chinese policy. Arita declared testily that under these circumstances it would perhaps be better for him to "withdraw the more or less formal reply which he had made and to forget the whole matter." Sayre did not disagree, and the talks ended.²¹

Amid a flurry of press speculation, Roosevelt tried to cover his trail by labeling the Sayre initiative "unauthorized." Sayre echoed the administration line, saying that his proposals had been "personal" rather than official. It is nevertheless abundantly clear that, as in similar situations involving William Bullitt (1933) and Breckinridge Long (1935), the men in the field had Roosevelt's support in all but name. Furthermore, whether intended or not, FDR had aroused another set of false hopes, something which Hull deplored. Sayre's own disappointment is implicit in the advice he tendered Roosevelt on 16 May: Japan, he wrote, was weary of fighting and if given "compensations in North China"—in other words, if permitted to "retire gracefully"—she would not be averse to doing so. "The way lies open now . . . to extend American good offices or mediation." Roosevelt, as one might expect, had no intention of offering compensation, and Sayre did not return home as planned. Grew, meanwhile, could think of nothing better than to adopt Hornbeck's original assumption of time being on the side of the United States "if we allow Nature to take its course." In this, he proved woefully mistaken. Hitler's string of victories in the spring and summer engendered in even the most conservative Japanese what Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō has described as a fear of "missing the bus."²²

During the summer of 1940, Ambassador Grew struck up another series of talks, this time with Arita, in the hope of reviving Sayre's

proposal for a Pacific nonaggression pact. Although the American position was dictated, as heretofore, by an administration which refused to put anything in definite terms, Grew's initiative, which began on 10 June, gained unexpected impetus on 6 July when Roosevelt endorsed the concept of three Monroe Doctrines, one for the Western Hemisphere, one for Europe, and another for Asia. Speaking at Hyde Park through press secretary Steve Early, he outlined his vision of a system whereby the nations of each area would decide collectively on the form of leadership desired. As quoted by the *New York Times*, the idea was to "let all of them settle their disputes in Asia and Europe. . . . There is an absence of intention on the part of this government . . . to interfere in any territorial problems in Europe or Asia. . . . In the case of French Indo-China we think the disposition should be decided among the Asiatic countries." There could be only one inference: Germany should organize the European bloc, Japan the Asian.

This pronouncement drew instant fire from the liberal press, as well as from China proper, and again, as expected, Roosevelt spun quickly around. By 11 July, Grew and Arita were no longer talking, and in another two weeks Roosevelt would clamp a partial trade embargo on Tokyo, one which affected such items as aviation motor fuel, lubricants, and high-grade melting scrap. In Japan, the newly installed government of Prince Konoye and his foreign minister, Yosuke Matsuoka, would soon be extending serious feelers to Rome and Berlin.²³

By this time, France and the Netherlands were no longer operating as independent nations, and a colonial vacuum had developed in Southeast Asia which the Gaimusho perceived as a standing invitation to Britain and the United States. Tokyo believed further in a natural right to leadership in the area by virtue of ability, geographical proximity, and racial affinity. Negotiations were therefore begun with Vichy for a Japanese military presence in northern Indochina. French field officers were not unwilling to resist, as it developed, but they could do so only with the moral, diplomatic, and, if need be, military backing of the United States, and FDR's stance remained noncommittal. After his prior refusal to join in a protest against the seizure of Hainan Island or to offer France support for the holding of the Spratly Islands, he was still in the act of making overtures to Tokyo. The notion of a Monroe Doctrine for Asia had touched off a paroxysm of disbelief in Paris, and Japan now set out to occupy northern Indochina. This Japanese "pre-empting" of Indochina in time of war was, of course, no more than

Russia had done in Finland during time of peace. Roosevelt might condemn it as an act of aggression, but Japanese leaders could point to Allied occupation of Iceland, Curaçao, and Aruba. They had to assume that they might need military bases in Indochina for an invasion of Singapore should London force them to fight on a second front. Furthermore, only by control of Indochina could they interdict the heavy supply of war matériel going to China, where a million of their best troops had been mired since 1937. Next to Hong Kong, there was no lifeline more valuable to Chiang Kai-shek than French Indochina.²⁴

China's future seemed especially doubtful on 27 September 1940, the day the Tripartite Pact was signed, for Prime Minister Winston Churchill had turned aside Roosevelt's call for a reopening of the Burma Road. Washington derived two-thirds of its tungsten as well as other vital raw materials from China via the Burma Road so that for industrial reasons, not to mention a desire to keep Chiang alive, the White House desired British cooperation. One thing, and only one thing, however, could move Churchill to change his mind. Twice in June he had offered to keep the road open on condition that FDR pledge military support in the event of a Japanese attack.²⁵ America, he suggested, should send a permanent squadron to Singapore. When the president demurred, the prime minister made a second suggestion. Washington should notify Tokyo that "any attempt to change the status quo in the Far East or Pacific" would not be tolerated.²⁶ Again, Roosevelt refused. It cannot be too much emphasized that Churchill would not agree to stringent economic sanctions, with their attendant risk of war, or to an equally risky reopening of the Burma Road, unless an American fleet stood behind him, its decks cleared for action. Otherwise, he insisted, he would have to make his peace with Tokyo. On 14 July, for the last time, he made it clear that without definite assurance of American military muscle in reserve, the Burma Road would close. And close it did.²⁷ So stung was the administration by this pinching off of Chiang's lifeline that Hornbeck suggested outright retaliation—against London—if necessary.²⁸ This, however, is not the route the president chose.

What Roosevelt did, if the following hypothesis is borne out, was to make the kind of offer Churchill demanded—the equivalent of a formal military guarantee to come to Britain's aid in order to prevent capitulation to Japan's New Order.²⁹ One would never guess from Halifax's correspondence, or even from the minutes of the British War Cabi-

net, that such a commitment came this early. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the entire British cabinet was privy to all that transpired between Roosevelt and Churchill. Even if this were so, we shall have occasion to see that censors did their work on the War Cabinet minutes. In addition, it is important to recall that we are dealing here with five British desiderata: (1) a *secret* American military commitment to stand behind Britain in defense of her Far East possessions; (2) a *public* declaration of such purpose; (3) a *warning to Japan* of such purpose; (4) a secret pledge to stand behind other territories such as Thailand and the Dutch East Indies; and (5) a *public* pledge of such support.³⁰

As we shall observe, the third of these demands was satisfied by February 1941, the second not until the very eve of Pearl Harbor, while the first was granted in a variety of ways by 8 October 1940, before the announcement that the Burma Road would reopen.

Downing Street was merely reiterating a position that Britain and France had staked out since the early 1930s.³¹ When, in late 1937, it was feared that resumption of war in China would tempt Tokyo to expand southward into the Dutch Indies, as well as the Philippines and a number of possessions flying the Union Jack, a British consul general told the Foreign Office, "We must do our very best to get the U.S. government interested in a policy which would guarantee the present territorial status quo in the Malayan archipelago and Philippine Islands; also British Malaya and Hong Kong."³² FDR could not very well have forgotten, either, that when the French asked for an American military guarantee at Brussels and he had declined to go beyond words, an irate Premier Chautemps had shut down Chiang's supply route through Indochina.

When Hitler absorbed what remained of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939, European statesmen shaped their policy toward Germany on the basis of the kind of help they expected to receive from the United States in the Far East. That they were unwilling to face the prospect of a two-front war without active American participation was something that French leaders made patently clear. On 12 May, American naval units set a hopeful precedent when they landed alongside French and British forces at Kulangsu, China. Two hundred Japanese troops, having landed earlier, were claiming authority over the local international settlement; but when thus confronted with a three-power show of unity, they backed down. In June of 1939, the French naval attaché in Tokyo noted confidently that in case of a German-

Japanese combination, France was counting on the weight of the American fleet. Paris still believed that Japan could and should be weaned away from the Axis, but every eventuality had to be weighed. As usual, neither Britain nor France was interested in economic sanctions against Tokyo until the United States had given a firm indication of military commitment in case of war. That they followed the American lead in this most sensitive of areas is a fair indication that by June of 1939 all doubt of Roosevelt's ultimate intent had been removed. As early as 30 January 1939, Lord Lothian had written Canadian Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King that Washington was ready to say that it would participate in any war pitting democracies against dictatorships and would fight, if necessary, for the defense of Australia and New Zealand.³³

By late April 1940, Secretary Hull and Norman Davis were confirming that their government was prepared to defend British interests in the Pacific. Roosevelt reinforced this promise the following month when he told Mackenzie King that should France fall and Britain come under heavy aerial attack, the United States would not sit idly by. It would open its ports to the Royal Navy for refitting and provisioning and do its best to build up Singapore and Halifax. Furthermore, according to Mackenzie King, "Its fleet would hold the Pacific and especially defend Australia and New Zealand against Japanese and other attacks. As soon thereafter as grounds could be found to justify direct and active American participation (and neither Mr. Roosevelt nor Mr. Hull believes that this would be more than a very few weeks), the United States would participate in a stringent blockade of the Continent." Since Canada's chief executive acted as an important channel of communication between the White House and Downing Street, his diary is eminently worth quoting. An entry for 27 September reads, "The United States will not allow Japan to get control of Asia and the Pacific."³⁴

Many other signs point in the same direction. Father Drought remembered that Roosevelt had thwarted an Anglo-Japanese understanding based on the reopening of the Yangtze Valley to British trade in September 1940.³⁵ On 14 September, the day after Congress agreed to a military draft, Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long recorded in his diary that, according to what he had heard, Roosevelt had decided to go all out to protect British possessions in the Far East. In his opinion, this would mean war: "I now understand that it has been discussed as a matter of high policy that the administration has made up its mind

to deal very firmly with Japan and that no steps will be spared and that those steps may lead to war."³⁶ The signing of the Tripartite Pact on 27 September did not create an Allied bond. Rather, a bond already in place was noticeably strengthened. Washington announced that China would receive a \$25 million loan, followed within a month by the announcement of an additional \$25 million, and it is clear that by 2 October, Churchill had obtained sufficient assurance of an American guarantee to decide in favor of reopening the Burma Road. Asked by dubious colleagues if it would be such a good idea to have America at war in the Pacific when her aid was so sorely needed in the Atlantic, his answer was a resounding yes. If anything, he wanted to go a step further and extract a *public* pledge from Roosevelt stating that the United States, in conjunction with the British, Dutch, and Dominions, would guarantee the status quo in the South Pacific.³⁷ On 4 October, Roosevelt conversed with House Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas and Representative John W. McCormack of Massachusetts. He spoke in sharp terms about the relationship between Washington and Tokyo: although Japan might regard any aid to its enemies as a *casus belli*, the United States was prepared to act. Four days later, Roosevelt told his associates, "This country is ready to pull the trigger if the Japs do anything. I mean we won't stand any nonsense."³⁸

The question naturally arises as to what, if any, additional *quid pro quo* Roosevelt received for throwing American military support to Britain in the Far East. Here again, the diary of Mackenzie King is instructive, for it indicates that the United States obtained something far beyond a mere opening of the Burma Road. There is reference to a Canadian cabinet poll taken during the first week of October on whether Ottawa should join London in standing by Washington in case of a Japanese attack against U.S. possessions.³⁹ How the members of the cabinet voted is unclear, but London's position stands out in bold relief.

One can go further. During the first week of October, British ambassadors reported what seemed to be an important new commitment on the part of the United States, although they were not clear about its precise terms. It is unlikely that they were referring to the Destroyers for Bases program, which was now more than a month old. FDR had just called up the entire naval reserve and was rushing supplies, ammunition, and an anti-aircraft regiment to the Philippines. Moreover, in a move nearly always associated with war, he had ordered all Americans out of the Far East. On 7 October, the British War Cabinet was

informed that the American navy wanted to know how fully Singapore could be made available to U.S. vessels in case Japan retaliated for the reopening of the Burma Road (effective 17 October) or threatened the Dutch East Indies. Churchill is reported to have been immensely pleased as he considered this a capital development coming in the train of the Tripartite Pact. We do not know all the details of what Roosevelt offered, or how Churchill and his cabinet reacted, owing to the fact that a critical section of cabinet minutes is missing. But it is evident that the word was "go." On 8 October, Britain announced what Churchill had decided a week earlier—namely that the Burma Road would reopen on 17 October.⁴⁰

The extent of the American commitment is further confirmed by another set of facts. FDR wanted immediate Anglo-American staff talks, and he wanted them in Singapore, as well as in Washington and London. Furthermore, Admiral James O. Richardson, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, was apprised by Navy Secretary Frank Knox on 10 October that in the event of an attack on the Burma Road, Roosevelt wished to deploy American naval units to blockade Japan by means of two lines of ships, one running from the Philippines to Hawaii, the other from Samoa to the Dutch East Indies. Richardson, who had lunched with the president several months earlier and found him "fully determined to put the United States into the war," balked at this latest plan and informed Knox that the navy was ill prepared. He told FDR to his face that senior naval leaders did not have confidence in the civilian leadership of the United States. Within a short space of time, he would be fired.⁴¹

A variety of subtle indications mark the fall of 1940 as a decisive turning point in American policy toward Japan. In mid-October, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax wrote his friend Victor Hope, Marquis of Linlithgow: "For the first time in the last two years the Americans have shown their teeth to some purpose." *Time* magazine observed that an attack on the Dutch Indies might draw the United States into combat and claimed that the navy would rather confront Japan sooner than later (quite untrue). Hull refused to reassure the American people, as he had done in the past, that their sons would not be sent to fight in a foreign war. Although Roosevelt gave such assurance several times in the heat of his campaign for a third term, Hull later noted that "knowing the situation and the dangers as I did, I refused."⁴²

Nor is it insignificant that by December 1940, Ambassador Grew

had executed a complete about-face. In the past, he had regarded commercial warfare as an incitement to war. Now, he wrote FDR from his post in Tokyo: "Japan has become openly and unashamedly one of the predatory nations . . . which aims to wreck about everything that the United States stands for. . . . We are bound to have a showdown some day . . . I am profoundly thankful that . . . you are piloting the old ship of state."⁴³

With this assessment Francis B. Sayre took pointed exception. As U.S. high commissioner to the Philippines and recently special envoy to Tokyo, where, as we have seen, he held confidential talks with Foreign Minister Arita, he agreed with Long that decisions were being taken that would "suck" the country into war. Just before the arrival of a British military mission in Washington, he warned the White House that aid to Britain must be given "without ourselves entering the war." Sayre's opinion notwithstanding, on 29 December the president delivered his hard-hitting Arsenal of Democracy Address in which he labeled Japan a direct threat to the United States. Sayre received this revealing explanation from the Oval Office two days later:

On one side are aligned Japan, Germany and Italy, and on the other side, China, Great Britain and the United States. . . . If Japan, moving further southward, should gain possession of the region of the Netherlands East Indies and the Malay Peninsula, would not the chances of Germany's defeating Great Britain be increased and the chances of England's winning be decreased thereby? . . . Would we be rendering every assistance possible to Great Britain were we to give our attention wholly and exclusively to the problems of the immediate defense of the British Isles and of Britain's control of the Atlantic? . . . They live by importing goods from all parts of the world.

Obviously, there were two schools of thought on the question of how best to prevent Japan from hobbling the war effort against Hitler. Some believed in compromise, others did not; and FDR, who belonged to the latter school, began to withhold more and more exports on the pretext of stockpiling for national security. Sayre later wrote that for all practical purposes Roosevelt had decided on war by 31 December 1940. From then on, it was only a matter of time. His phraseology is worth recalling: "Whether ourselves to take the initiative by declaration of war and attack or whether to await further the turn of events and a possible attack upon ourselves, as finally came at Pearl Harbor, was a profoundly difficult and momentous decision." Just how accurate

Sayre's memory was after seventeen years and how much he knew of Roosevelt's inner mind is not easy to tell. But his recollection dovetails neatly with Long's sense of the situation.⁴⁴

A conference on Pacific relations held on 7 December at Princeton, exactly one year to the day before Pearl Harbor, furnishes another gloss on the drift of informed opinion. Aviator Charles Lindbergh, who attended along with others, could not but comment on how many seemed to take it for granted that "the most desirable course of action for this country was that which would be of greatest aid to England, whether or not it involved us in war!" Discussion centered on whether war with Japan would help or hinder Great Britain and what steps short of war would involve the United States most quickly. It was agreed that while the American people would not endorse a flat declaration of war, they would support incremental steps *leading* to war: "I kept wanting to remind them that we were in *America* and *not* in England," exclaimed Lindbergh, "that our primary concern was the future of *America* and not that of the British Empire."⁴⁵

Additional evidence of a shift in American policy is implicit in the administration's behavior during February 1941. With Lend-Lease legislation safely secured, FDR delivered an ultimatum to Tokyo through the person of Eugene Dooman, second in command of the American embassy. On 14 February, Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Chuichi Ohashi remarked to Dooman: "Do you mean to say that if Japan were to attack Singapore there would be war with the United States?" Dooman replied with precisely the argument that FDR had impressed upon Sayre only six weeks before: "It would be absurd to suppose that the American people, while pouring munitions into Britain, would look with complacency upon the cutting of communications between Britain and British dominions and colonies overseas. If, therefore, Japan or any other nation were to prejudice the safety of those communications, either by direct action or by placing herself in a position to menace those communications, she would have to expect to come into conflict with the United States." Later in the conversation, Dooman reminded his listener that a "major preoccupation" of the United States was "to assist England to stand against German assault" and that Japan "cannot substantially alter the *status quo* in Southeast Asia" without "incurring the risk of a very serious situation." These were strong words in the parlance of diplomacy, and they seem to have made their mark. Grew recalled that Australian Minister

Sir John Latham, having seen Ohashi a few minutes after the session with Dooman, had found him "greatly agitated and distrait [sic]."⁴⁶

There is little room for guesswork as to the authenticity of Dooman's ultimatum. It was immediately relayed to Washington and never thereafter repudiated. Twelve days later, Grew gave it emphatic confirmation at the foreign minister level. On 26 February, the American ambassador cabled Hull for permission to tell Foreign Minister Matsuoka that "the statements made by Mr. Dooman to Mr. Ohashi were made with my prior knowledge and have my full approval." We do not have Hull's reply, but we may assume that it was positive, for the next day, 27 February, Grew cabled Hull a second time: "Yesterday, I told Matsuoka that I entirely concurred in and approved of all that Dooman had said to Ohashi on 14 February."⁴⁷

When Langer and Gleason published *The Undeclared War* (1953), they were in possession of all pertinent data relating to Dooman. But without benefit of additional facts adding up to a more convincing general context, they appear to have been psychologically incapable of grasping the truth. They were correct in attaching little weight to Grew's testimony before a congressional committee in late 1945. It was not to be expected that a former ambassador, especially one in Grew's position, would willingly accuse himself—and the administration—of having forced Japan's hand. Thus, the dualism of his response. He could not recall having received any instruction from the State Department in this connection ("not to my recollection"); he denied that Dooman's ultimatum was "necessarily from official sources," and he tried to play down the choice of language. Langer and Gleason also pointed out that at no time did FDR or any of his advisers ever disavow either Dooman's ultimatum or Grew's confirmation. At the same time, they could not square what transpired in Tokyo with "the spineless program being discussed in Washington."⁴⁸ FDR did, of course, see Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura on the same day that Dooman saw Ohashi, and while one interview bristled with tension, the other turned out to be relatively cordial. One must remember, however, that these were standard tactics for a man who, in one-to-one contact, tended to avoid anything verging on the disagreeable. To borrow an expression from another student of the subject, Roosevelt had a way of "leading with someone else's chin."⁴⁹

As 1941 dawned, the Gaimusho found itself in control of most of China's coastal area, most of her populace, and the bulk of her slender

industrial apparatus. At the same time, even though Chiang had retreated to the remote reaches of Chungking, his Nationalist armies gave no sign of surrender, and because Washington was their principal underwriter, Tokyo still hoped to engage the United States in serious talks leading to a mutually acceptable compromise. Roosevelt, appearing interested as always, received Admiral Nomura in March as a special ambassador from Premier Konoye.⁵⁰ Another round of talks would enable the White House to satisfy all shades of opinion. Isolationists and pacifists could be encouraged to look for genuine accommodation while hard-liners could be assured that the talks were merely intended to give Tokyo a graceful means of retreat. They would be accompanied by ever-increasing economic pressure.

For some time, Japan had invited the aid of the Catholic Church as an intermediary, and it now enlisted the service of two Maryknoll priests: Bishop James E. Walsh, superior general of Maryknoll, the Catholic Missionary Society of America, and his vicar general or treasurer, the Reverend James M. Drought. After visiting Tokyo in late 1940 and conveying to Japanese leaders a sense of what terms they felt Washington might be willing to accept, they went to Roosevelt with an outline of what they thought Japan might be persuaded to offer. Two additional representatives came to the United States to serve as liaison between Washington and the Japanese cabinet. The first of these, Tadao Wikawa, headed Japan's largest banking group and, with the rank of minister plenipotentiary, remained in touch with Premier Konoye by private code. Related by blood or marriage to former premier Reijirō Wakatsuki, as well as to the head of the Domei News Agency, he had risen from the rank of finance commissioner in New York to become minister of finance and then to draft Japan's foreign exchange law. Colonel Hideo Iwakuro, who arrived a few weeks after Wikawa, bore the unassuming title of military attaché and did not speak English, but he could negotiate in French or German and was assistant to General Akira Mutō, chief of the powerful Military Affairs Bureau of the War Department. According to Grew, Iwakuro was exceedingly influential in military circles and had the complete confidence of the Japanese secretary of war.⁵¹

Initially, Drought served as a bridge between Wikawa, whom he saw directly, and Roosevelt, whom he reached through Postmaster General Frank Walker. When Iwakuro entered the picture, Nomura was not far behind, and it was out of this group that there emerged Drought's celebrated Draft Understanding of 16 April. Among its prominent features

were the following: the United States was to recognize Manchukuo, allow greater scope for Japanese immigration, and support demands for British withdrawal from Hong Kong and Singapore; Japan would withdraw from China in recognition of that country's independence and territorial integrity; she would also refrain from exacting any war indemnity and would endorse the doctrine of the Open Door, to be more precisely defined at a later date. Chiang Kai-shek and his rival, Wang Ch'ing-wei, were to merge their governments, and both Japan and the United States were to oppose the transfer of any territory in the Far East, including the Philippines. Secretary of State Hull agreed to accept the Draft Understanding as "a basis for the institution of negotiations" with the exception of its clauses on immigration, Hong Kong, and Singapore and with the further proviso that Japan would assent to four general principles for which the United States had long contended: namely, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all nations, noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations, equality of commercial opportunity, and nondisturbance of the Pacific status quo except by peaceful measures.⁵²

Once the Hull-Nomura talks began in earnest, Drought made seventeen visits to Washington, ranging in duration from several days to several weeks, and before he was finished he had spent most of May, September, and November on the Potomac.⁵³ Bishop Walsh, who personally delivered two of Konoye's messages to the president, kept a close watch on the Japanese side. He passed two months with Wikawa during summer and fall at various locations in the vicinity of Tokyo. At the request of Dooman, he also transmitted many messages from the Gaimusho to the State Department with an eye to narrowing differences which seemed to bar the way to a final settlement.⁵⁴

The major issues in dispute may be reduced to four: American economic opportunity in China and Manchukuo; allowance for Japanese troops to remain in China as a barrier against communist inroads and for the shielding of Manchukuo; Japan's neutrality in the event of American entry into the European war; and American recognition of Manchukuo. The last of the four was accepted by both parties as an automatic part of any peace agreement, and Japan proved willing to concede everything regarding the first and third points.⁵⁵ She had never ceased to promise that once the war ended in China, America would be given ample economic opportunity, and before the talks ended she proved willing to set this down on paper. As for the Axis, Tokyo was

technically bound to fight if and when the United States should enter the war, but the language of the Tripartite Pact was such that she could interpret it loosely. This she promised to do in return for tolerance of her stake in North China and Manchukuo. On 21 November, she offered to put such an interpretation of the pact in writing, which, considering the premium she placed upon "face," was a momentous concession. No one can be certain that she would have honored this promise or any other, but the likelihood is great. This, at any rate, was the opinion of Downing Street, and the prospect seemed real enough to cause considerable concern on the part of high German officials.⁵⁶ There is no compelling evidence to the contrary.

Troops proved to be the sticking point. Yet even here the Japanese took the position by late May that they would be willing to withdraw up to 90 percent of their occupation force within two years and restrict the remainder to specified zones in North China. Hull dashed any hope of compromise by insisting upon a *one*-year withdrawal of *all* forces with the suggestion that Chiang or an international commission be given the task of halting communist penetration. On 13 September, Japan went a step farther by offering to withdraw the remaining 10 percent after "a certain period." Hull, however, stood firm on immediate withdrawal of all troops. This might have been the last word, but it was bruited that Konoye would accept a Chinese police corps in North China under Japanese officers and might agree to a specific withdrawal date if Roosevelt would attend a Pacific summit conference as originally anticipated. Many, including Walsh and Grew, believed that if Konoye went to Hawaii as the first premier ever to leave his country on an official visit, he would deliver what he promised.⁵⁷

What is extraordinary is that the Japanese were willing to go as far as they did when the history of the American side from the start had been one of backing and filling. Professor Paul Schroeder has demonstrated that as Nomura offered more and more in the way of concessions, Hull offered less and less, until Japan finally moved into southern Indochina, providing Roosevelt with an excuse for further stalling and justifying American imposition of a lethal *de facto* oil embargo beginning 24 July. Hull had been the first to back away from the Draft Understanding on stipulations involving immigration and British withdrawal from Hong Kong and Singapore. This, in turn, invited similar retreat on the part of Nomura, who immediately became vague on the question

of the Axis and stationing of troops. Thereafter, Hull initiated each mutual departure from the expected basis for agreement.⁵⁸

Typically, Hull insisted on 16 May that Nomura return to the Draft Understanding while he himself drew even farther away from it. In the early rounds of negotiation, he focused on the issue of troops; but when Japan promised to withdraw most of its forces in two years, he shifted to the question of unity in Japanese politics and argued about whether the government of Prince Konoye was actually in a position to honor its promises. When this point was answered acceptably, he moved on to economics until Japan offered to do in China exactly what the United States was doing in South America. Seemingly satisfied on this point, he then agreed to the Draft Understanding substantially intact, only to return to the troop issue even as he admitted in private the need for Japan to station forces in the north. Each time the Japanese offered a concession, he raised the ante. On 7 July, he introduced a demand for public rejection of the Axis Pact, which the United States had promised as early as January it would not do. Finally, on 8 October, after Tokyo indicated that even the question of troops in North China might be negotiable, Hull took the extreme position that he would not sign any agreement until Tokyo proved its seriousness by withdrawing some of its troops in advance. Drought, maddened by White House tactics, called them "contemptible."⁵⁹

It is generally assumed that the president was sincere in his approach to Japan.⁶⁰ Yet why, if he was bargaining in good faith, was Drought brought to complain on 7 July: "We have now gone three and a half months without offering any official counter-statement"? If Roosevelt had been serious, why did he encourage the idea of a summit meeting on 17 August and again on the twenty-eighth only to retreat from it? On the seventeenth, having just returned from his meeting with Churchill at Argentia, he suggested that Nomura consider a specific date, 15 October. On 28 August, he backed away from Hawaii as a site, naming Juneau, Alaska, as more convenient. He was still "keenly interested," he told Nomura, "in having three or four days with Prince Konoye." In the meantime, press leaks had begun to cause Foreign Minister Teijirō Toyoda acute embarrassment. His country had extended an unprecedented invitation without receiving the courtesy of an answer, and he urgently requested announcement of a definite meeting date such as 20 September. Inexplicably, Roosevelt now came to a dead halt.

There would be no meeting, he told Nomura, until major principles had been settled. On the following day, 4 September, he announced the closing of the Panama Canal to Japanese shipping.⁶¹ Toyoda and Konoye were thus left dangling.

Nor is this the full story. Why, one must ask, did FDR allow his subordinates to offer the idea of a *modus vivendi* on 18–19 November only to fall back on generalities two days after the Japanese indicated their acceptance and advanced a specific proposal? It is true that Japan's offer of 20 November included an unsatisfactory proviso that the United States halt all aid to China (must cease all measures "prejudicial" to "peace between Japan and China"). But instead of objecting, Hull chose to add two requirements of his own: that Japan vacate *all* of Indochina instead of just the southern portion and that she receive only enough oil to meet her *civilian* requirements.⁶²

Why, one may also wonder, did Roosevelt interpret the Japanese advance into southern Indochina beginning 2 July solely as an act of aggression? It placed Tokyo in a better position to threaten Singapore and Manila, but it also helped to secure her food supply at a time when Britain had sealed off an alternate source of rice in Burma. Maxwell Hamilton, chief of the Far Eastern Division at State, viewed the advance as basically defensive in light of anticipated intensification of American and British economic pressure. Two weeks earlier, Washington had instituted a new phase of trade restriction affecting East Coast and Gulf ports. Japan, in short, had her back to the wall. She envisaged bloodshed.⁶³

Why, finally, did Hull confine himself to such vague terminology? Why did he use the term "Indochina" several times when he plainly meant only the southern half of Indochina, and why did it take him ten months to indicate that complete and immediate troop withdrawal from all of China was a *sine qua non*? The proposal he submitted on 31 May was nebulous with respect to both the Axis Pact and troops remaining in North China. Three and a half months later, when Nomura finally agreed to consider a time limit on troops remaining in North China, Roosevelt ordered Hull to return to general principles and "reemphasize my hope for a meeting [with Konoye]." Nomura was stunned when presented on 2 October with another spate of generalities. Accused of stalling, it was at this point that Roosevelt countered with his radical insistence on *prior* withdrawal of troops as a token of good faith.⁶⁴

The reader will recall that beginning on 24 July, FDR acquiesced in the

imposition of a total oil embargo against Tokyo. Again, if one were so disposed, one could raise the question of *why*, as American action left the Japanese with no logical middle ground between abject surrender on the diplomatic front (with resulting economic, military, and strategic difficulties linked with national dishonor) and a direct attack on the United States.⁶⁵

It is ironic that Japan should be the nation whose good faith was called into question when neither Hull nor presidential adviser Stanley Hornbeck nor Roosevelt himself ever regarded the Drought-Walsh initiative as anything but a ploy. From the outset, Hornbeck and Hull advised against serious negotiation, and when Roosevelt told Churchill in August that he felt he could "baby" the Japanese along for another thirty days, this is just what he meant. It is what he had been doing since the fall of 1939; indeed, his strategy became so obvious at times as to be almost comic.⁶⁶ Although Japan presented important new proposals on 9 April, Hull used subsequent sessions with Nomura to concentrate less on specifics and more on general questions such as democracy versus the inherent evil of Hitlerian Germany.⁶⁷ Again and again, he cited America's exemplary conduct in Latin America without acknowledging the glaring differences that separated one hemisphere from another. Repeatedly, he arraigned Nazism and propounded the advantages of free trade.⁶⁸ By June, therefore, the dialogue was reduced to trivia, and Hull folded his tent for a six-week summer vacation. Nomura sought him out at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia, only to be told that he was unavailable on a doctor's excuse.⁶⁹

Long-suffering Bishop Walsh confessed to being "a little mortified" by the administration's foot-dragging. "If the thing is finally done," he wrote, "it will not be due to their good management." On 7 November, we may observe Hull holding forth on the virtues of the Pan-American system. A week later, he is to be heard maintaining the preposterous fiction that talks with Nomura had not yet got beyond the "exploratory" stage. Contributing to the carnival atmosphere was a simultaneous series of parallel talks. Grew had been conversing with Toyoda; Welles had fallen to squabbling over minor points with Minister-Counselor Kaname Wakasugi; Roosevelt had been seeing Nomura at frequent intervals; while both Eugene Dooman and Joseph W. Ballantine (a Japanese-speaking Foreign Service officer on special assignment in Washington) had entered into an exchange with their opposite numbers. Nor does this include conferences between Hamilton and Wikawa.⁷⁰

The coup de grace came on 26 November, when Hull presented Tokyo with a set of demands totally divorced from the context of the past six months and calling for Japanese withdrawal from Manchukuo.

Any student who has attempted to thread his way through the record of these talks will not be surprised that a task force of Japanese carriers was soon on its way to Hawaii. Even if Hull never admitted, as he did, along with Under Secretary of State Welles, to a deliberate policy of stalling, the record reveals numerous devices employed since the fall of 1939 to cover the face of American intransigence.⁷¹

As spring blossomed into summer and summer gave way to fall in 1941, Tokyo had less reason than ever to surrender. Hitler, in full control of nearly all western Europe, had expelled Britain from Greece and Libya, Tobruk excepted, and gone on to throttle Russia. Never had Japanese proponents of the Axis been stronger. In August, an attempt was made on the life of former premier Kiichirō Hiranuma, principal diplomatic adviser to the emperor, and he barely escaped. In September, a bullet passed within inches of the premier himself. Grew took to carrying a revolver.⁷²

Some historians have pinned the blame on Nomura, stressing his relative inexperience and echoing Hull's charge that the admiral did not possess an adequate command of English: "I frequently doubted whether he understood the points I was making."⁷³ But why, then, did Hull continue to negotiate with a person who demonstrated such difficulty with communication? Many have accepted Hull's thesis that Nomura erred in presenting the Draft Understanding to Tokyo as an American proposal when it was merely a paper drawn by Drought, which Hull had agreed to accept "as a basis for starting conversations" and subject to four principles for which the United States had long contended.⁷⁴

In point of fact, Drought's Draft Understanding of 16 April was nothing if not an American proposal. It had been drawn on the initiative of American clergymen in collaboration with the president of the United States and his advisers. The Japanese had made it perfectly clear to Drought, and through Drought to Roosevelt, that they were sending a plenipotentiary and that FDR was expected to designate his own representative to work with Wikawa and hammer out an agreement. The Japanese government would approve said agreement in due time, and the president would call a conference to seal the compact before the eyes of the world.⁷⁵ Wikawa's presence in Washington, in fact the whole idea

of a Draft Understanding, with emphasis on the word "understanding," was intended by Tokyo to assure agreement with the United States before the tendering of a formal proposal. As Drought put it to Joseph Ballantine, Hamilton's assistant, "The Japanese would want some intimation that the Japanese proposals would be substantially acceptable to this [the U.S.] government." If America accepted unofficially, the Japanese cabinet would give formal endorsement, hopefully before Foreign Minister Matsuoka returned from a trip to Berlin and Moscow. The pro-Axis Matsuoka would then be faced with a *fait accompli*.⁷⁶ Walker warned Hull on 17 March that "Prince Konoye, Count Arima and Marquis Kido [Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal] are endangering their lives by these negotiations. Obviously, they will not confide in the Japanese embassy at Washington until they are certain of substantial agreement with the two persons" (Wikawa and Iwakuro).⁷⁷ The next day, Walker again warned Hull that the Japanese wanted either "substantial change introduced or substantial approval given" to the Draft Understanding "so that Tokyo can immediately instruct its Embassy to submit the Draft officially upon which both governments can announce an 'Agreement in Principle.'" The idea was so crucial to Walker that he mentioned it a third time to Hull. It was therefore a warrantable expectation on Japan's part that when Hull authorized Nomura to submit the Draft Understanding to Tokyo as "a basis for the institution of negotiations," it constituted a morally binding agreement, and not at all what Hull later claimed.⁷⁸

Originally, when asked by Nomura if the United States could approve the Draft, Hull replied encouragingly that some points would need modification or elimination, but he could see "no good reason why ways could not be found to reach a fairly satisfactory settlement of all the essential questions presented." Drought referred to this wording when on 12 May he recalled "our assurance that there will be no substantial modifications in the proposed 'understanding,'" and it is why Nomura told his superiors that Hull had agreed "in general." Here was anything but a misunderstanding based on language barriers. According to Walker, Hull actually assured Nomura that there would be no substantial modifications, and according to Konoye, Hull accepted Japan's second tentative plan (the Draft Understanding) as a basis for discussion, which amounts to the same thing.⁷⁹

One reason why Hull's initial response to the Draft Understanding was so misleading is that there was a difference between what he ini-

tially said and what he had been told to say. On 7 March, Hornbeck, who believed there was no use negotiating with men whose word could not be trusted, informed him that although Roosevelt wanted him to engage in talks with Nomura, he must be reserved and keep the ambassador guessing; the United States was in no hurry. In April, he was instructed to remain as vague as possible and confine his talk to generalities such as the desirability of trade liberalization or the merits of the Declaration of Lima. If asked whether he could accept the Draft Understanding, he was to say it could be "a starting point for discussion." In other words, Roosevelt and Hornbeck wished to remain noncommittal while giving the impression of interest. Hull was advised to state that if Tokyo approved the Draft, he would study it "sympathetically" and "feel optimistic that on the basis of mutual good will our differences can be adjusted."

Needless to say, in the language of diplomacy, where "no" may be interpreted to mean "maybe" and "maybe" is generally taken to mean "yes," differences resolvable in an atmosphere of goodwill cannot be very substantial. Inadvertently, Hull ended by promising a good deal more than his instructions permitted. For the phrase "starting point" he substituted the word "basis," which carries an entirely different meaning. On 10 June, Hornbeck reined him in with a reminder that he had succeeded in bringing himself "to a negotiation . . . no matter how it may otherwise be technically described." Almost as if an invisible wire had tightened about his neck, Hull now ceased to direct his attention to substantive matters. By 20 June, the Japanese leadership was protesting that he seemed more interested in silk purchases or a bus line franchise than in the major points at issue. Drought agreed, telling Walker that "it makes us look perfectly ridiculous."⁸⁰

Another stock criticism of Nomura is that he did not let Tokyo know immediately of Hull's insistence on four general principles as a condition for considering the Draft Understanding. Such an omission pales, however, against the backdrop of the summer's talks. Japan could have paid lip service to Hull's principles. But from the beginning, it was specifics that counted. Even if Nomura had been less than proficient in English—and this may be doubted in view of his former residence in Britain and the United States, not to mention his 1939 talks with Grew—and even if there had been a genuine misunderstanding as to the nature of the Draft Understanding, these issues alone could never have been decisive. One or two mistakes on Nomura's part do not ex-

plain Hull's stalling. Nor do they account for his flight from specificity. Any failure in communication was due to ignorance of another kind. Roosevelt misunderstood Japan's relationship with China even as he misunderstood the aims of the Soviet Union. Conversely, Japanese leaders never seem to have entirely grasped the true nature of Roosevelt.

Some have shifted the blame to Walsh and Drought, claiming that they were meddlesome amateurs who exaggerated on both sides the concessions each was willing to make. Admittedly, the "Preliminary Draft of an 'Agreement in Principle,'" which Drought first circulated to Hull via Walker on 17 March, implied the withdrawal of all Japanese troops when it provided for China's absolute independence. It also stipulated that Japan would sever all trade ties with Germany and withhold shipments to countries trading with Germany. Neither of these provisions appeared in the Draft Understanding of 16 April. But neither did there appear the earlier provisions for a Japanese Monroe Doctrine and a dividing of the Pacific into two zones of naval influence. In any case, it was the latter document which Hull accepted as a "basis" for discussion, not the former.⁸¹

While the priests were not professional diplomats, neither were they "self-appointed" in the sense often implied. They were chosen by Japan and accepted by Roosevelt. Their mission was self-starting only insofar as a telegram from publisher-philanthropist Robert Cuddihy to former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Setsuzō Sawada got the ball rolling. Letters of introduction from Lewis Straus helped keep it in motion. Before leaving Tokyo in December of 1940, the priests had conferred with Foreign Minister Matsuoka on two occasions and helped him draft a speech to the America-Japan Society. Although their meeting with the premier was canceled at the last minute, they called on General Mutō. They met the Japanese vice-minister for foreign affairs and were introduced to Prince Saionji's grandson, head of the Domei News Agency. They also saw Wikawa and called on Tarō Terasaki, chief of the American desk at the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Several times they visited their old friend Sawada, who had recently held a position comparable to that of Welles in the United States. Nothing was left to chance. It is especially significant that once they had the confidence of the Japanese, the Roosevelt administration welcomed them as an important channel of negotiation. Hull asked Drought to remain on tap in Washington, and Walsh was requested by the American embassy in

Tokyo to serve as a go-between. The bishop made frequent visits to the embassy in the fall and stayed in touch with Grew through Dooman. Roosevelt himself encouraged the priests and thanked them for their help.⁸²

Drought, who is said to have been an "innocent abroad" and "as wrong about Japan as any person could be," had worked as a young missionary in China and written a Hakka grammar that later became a standard text.⁸³ As treasurer of a great religious society with large interests in Japan, he also had ample opportunity for diplomatic contact. Typical was a letter he addressed to Ambassador Kensuke Horinouchi objecting to the 1939 bombing of a Maryknoll center in China. He knew how careful the Japanese had been to protect noncombatants, he said, and was keenly aware of why their people were at war; sensitive to the larger issues, he had consistently tried to represent the Japanese viewpoint to the American people. Nevertheless, this latest incident, in which a Maryknoll father had been wounded, might be misconstrued: "Our relations must be conducted with frankness and on a basis of honorable self-respect, and I am sure that I should be wanting in both, and unworthy of your esteem were I to fail to invoke your particular consideration to the injuries suffered by our Father and the property losses sustained by our Society."⁸⁴

Walsh, one of six men to found the first American Catholic mission in China, had lived in that country for eighteen years. After acquiring a fair command of Chinese calligraphy, he had found time to write several books on subjects related to China, including *Observations in the Orient* and *The Young Ones* (stories about Chinese children). Among his published works, which included several plays and innumerable articles, was a biography of Father McShane containing a section on Oriental psychology.⁸⁵

Together, Walsh and Drought articulated the Japanese outlook more accurately than anyone at the highest echelons of State. With a healthy respect for the Eastern mind, they could appreciate Japan's insistence upon secrecy as well as the grave risk of assassination her leaders were running.⁸⁶ As Walsh remarked in 1940, "We deal in the Orient with superior civilizations, with essentially good people; with fine sensibilities." Drought explained the futility of Hull's preaching in a single sentence: "Orientals put a different value on speech than we do." Far better than any of Roosevelt's other advisers, he understood Japan's fear of communism and her usefulness as a potential makeweight against

Russia. He was also aware that American cooperation might be parlayed into Japanese support in the struggle against Hitler.⁸⁷

Unique in the annals of American diplomacy, Drought composed lengthy memoranda detailing problems and outlining solutions from Japan's point of view. Using the term "our" to mean "Japanese," he laid out Tokyo's best approach to the United States in line with American psychology. Japan would be well advised, he argued, to compare her desire for a friendly government in China to Woodrow Wilson's preference for Carranza over Huerta in Mexico; she should borrow from the corpus of Pan-American thought to describe her Pan-Asian League; she should continue to claim her own version of a Monroe Doctrine for the Far East. If the Maryknoller had his way, Matsuoka would also have tried to dispel lingering fear of a Japanese deal with the Axis by broadcasting to the American people on Christmas Eve 1940.⁸⁸ He foresaw the appeal that a Pacific summit conference would have for Roosevelt and assured Japanese leaders that even if such a meeting proved only moderately successful it could do nothing but good as it would "break down the present tension and permit Japan to consolidate her position, *with or without American approbation.*"⁸⁹ This, perhaps as much as anything else, explains why Roosevelt withheld his consent. Realizing the need for different nations to have different systems of government, Drought considered a cosmopolitan outlook so vital for peace that he included in his "Preliminary Draft of an 'Agreement in Principle' between the United States and Japan" the following: "The governments of the United States and of Japan recognize that the diversity of cultural and consequent [sic] political and social forms prevailing among advanced nations [is] . . . inescapable. . . . Only a perverted will can distort as an incitement to conflict . . . this natural diversity which, when properly appreciated and encouraged, is one of nature's gifts for creative human and international progress. . . . Among nations the political form of constitution . . . [is a] private domestic concern." He has been accused of being pro-Japanese and "going over" to Tokyo. In fact, he was one of a handful of diplomats capable of seeing things as they really were.⁹⁰

Had more people seen what the Maryknoll missionaries saw, the diplomatic climate might have been somewhat different. As it was, the Hull-Nomura talks entered their final phase with Drought and Walsh receding into the background, their place taken by men sworn to fight. Unknown to Roosevelt, a mammoth task force was girding for action at

an island base far to the north of Honshu. Six carriers with 423 planes, 2 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, 11 destroyers, 28 submarines, and 8 tankers were practicing for the most successful surprise attack in modern naval history. The president's attention was effectively diverted from this engine of destruction when Tokyo dispatched a highly visible armada south toward the Philippines on 25 November. The northern-based fleet steamed eastward undetected along a northerly route far removed from conventional traffic. Traveling by night without light and burning a specially refined fuel to minimize smoke, it left behind no telltale evidence, not even refuse. Unwieldy tankers, losing their way in the darkness like so many sheep, were rounded up in the morning by destroyers; dangerous feats of refueling were accomplished on a tempestuous sea.

U.S. cryptographers had of course cracked the Japanese diplomatic code by now, and FDR was fully aware of the imminence of war. One intercept made it clear that 25 November was to be the last day for signing an agreement. Another indicated a decision by Tokyo to extend the life of the talks to the twenty-ninth; after that, things were "automatically going to happen." Still another product of the so-called "Magic" system revealed that Japanese diplomats had been instructed to return home after destroying their files. Knowing, as American officials did, that five Japanese divisions were already seaborne south of Formosa and en route to an unknown destination, they naturally concentrated on the mounting threat to Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies, and Manila.

On 27 November, a warning went out from Washington to all American bases in the Pacific: "Attack imminent." Nothing further was known. Virtually no one dreamed Japan capable of striking an outpost as remotely situated as Pearl Harbor. So it was that Commander Giles E. Short prepared for sabotage. On 6 December, Roosevelt received a final intercept which removed all doubt as to the immediacy of the impending threat; yet he was in no hurry to publicize it lest some overzealous serviceman fire the first shot and jeopardize his chance to unite a bitterly divided nation. It was a precaution not taken in vain. According to Commander Itaya, leader of the Japanese attack group, "Pearl Harbor was asleep in the morning mist. . . . Calm and serene inside the harbor . . . important ships of the Pacific fleet were strung out and anchored two by two." They were perfect targets. By 7:55 A.M. the entire base was engulfed in panic as sailors raced to man their anti-

aircraft guns and loudspeakers carried the voice of Rear Admiral Bellinger: "AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR, THIS IS NO DRILL."

Inasmuch as Tokyo struck without warning—Nomura did not deliver his declaration of war until twenty minutes after the fact—FDR declared 7 December a day that would "live in infamy." Ever since, it has been associated in the popular mind with an element of murderous deceit. Nevertheless, if there was treachery, one must conclude that it was not the Japanese who led their adversary on, not they who broke their word, nor they who slapped their interlocutors in the face. Hull not only arranged to snub Nomura when he came calling in West Virginia. Similar presumption led him to make an unprecedented demand for a change in the Tokyo cabinet. Yoshie Saito, adviser to the foreign minister, protested strenuously at the Thirty-eighth Imperial Liaison Conference held on 10 July: "Hull's 'Oral Statement' contains especially outrageous language. For instance, it says . . . 'there are differences of opinion within the Japanese government. . . . We cannot make an agreement with a Japanese government of that kind.' . . . His attitude is one of contempt for Japan. I have been in the foreign service for a long time. This language is not the kind one would use toward a country of equal standing; it expresses an attitude one would take toward a protectorate or a possession. These words are inexcusable." The foreign minister concurred: "Hull's statement is outrageous. Never has such a thing occurred since Japan opened diplomatic relations with other countries . . . I was truly amazed that he [Nomura] would listen without protest to a demand that Japan, a great world power, change her cabinet." It seems to have been Hull's insulting manner that stung the most: "The United States did nothing about our proposal for forty days." At the Imperial Conference of 1 December, it was said that Roosevelt had not only refused to make a single concession; he had added new demands. He wanted a complete and unconditional withdrawal from China, the withdrawal of recognition of Nanking, and reduction of the Tripartite Pact to a dead letter. This, according to Premier Hideki Tōjō, "belittled the dignity of our Empire." Even the distinguished Hara Yoshimichi, president of the Privy Council, a man who continued to argue against war with the United States, was brought to admit before his colleagues on that same day: "The United States is being utterly conceited, obstinate, and disrespectful."⁹¹

None of the above need be taken to mean that Roosevelt lacked a valid reason for refusing compromise. It can be argued that if Konoye's

troops had been permitted to march out of China under the flag of victory, they might have gone into action elsewhere, and to the serious detriment of America. Roosevelt himself seems to have been of this persuasion, even though many at the time, including British leaders, disagreed. War with Japan was the last thing Whitehall wanted. When Prime Minister Churchill told his people in February 1942 that he had toiled unremittingly for American belligerency, he was referring primarily to the Atlantic theater. British leaders may have preferred war in the Far East to American neutrality, but they generally disapproved of Roosevelt's take-it-or-leave-it attitude.⁹² As late as 18 October 1941, the Foreign Office took the position in cables to Lord Lothian, its newly appointed ambassador to Washington, that Britain had been willing to follow the American policy of maximum economic pressure, but "we should still prefer if possible to keep Japan out of the world conflict and to detach her from the Axis."⁹³ Churchill did object to the Japanese version of a *modus vivendi* under consideration in late November, but this was because it called for a break in the supply line to China, not because it held out hope for a compromise. All agreed that the Chinese coolie must not be deserted as long as he continued to hold down large numbers of Japanese, but though no one wanted a subservient China, the fear was that Washington was not giving Tokyo sufficient opportunity to distance itself from the Axis.

On this point, good men may disagree. The crux of the issue is that FDR's methods at their best frustrated the normal process of communication. At their worst, they violated common canons of courtesy, not to mention fair play. So devious was he on occasion, and so adroit in concealing the true nature of the Hull-Nomura talks, that individuals on each side of the bargaining table have ever since been saddled with a burden of blame which is in no way theirs. Here again, British opinion is worthy of note. Informed observers at the Court of St. James's never accepted the notion of Japan's attack as a stab in the back. Oliver Lyttelton, minister of production and a leading member of Churchill's War Cabinet, told the American Chamber of Commerce that the United States had not been driven to war by Tokyo but rather had challenged her to the point where she felt compelled to stand and fight. Lord Halifax, who replaced Lothian as ambassador at Washington, concurred with Lyttelton, noting that this was an idea Americans seemed unable to grasp.⁹⁴ Indeed, Halifax and Lyttelton were face to face with

an attitude which even the passage of forty years has done little to alter.

Before proceeding to a discussion of American diplomacy as it affected the national rivalries of Europe, there are several additional observations to be made about events surrounding Pearl Harbor. First, it seems clear that Roosevelt's own attitude toward the war, and toward war in general, was tinged with fatalism. At the age of sixteen, he had written his parents that war with Spain "seems to be nearer and more probable now, and we can only hope that Spain will do the wise thing and *back down completely*." Eighteen years later, as assistant secretary of the navy, he predicted that "the Mexican situation is going through one of its periodically peaceful revivals, but the pendulum will swing back to intervention in a week or a month or a year. I don't care much which as *it is sure to come* and at least Army and Navy are gaining by every hour's delay" (italics added in both quotations). Such casualness on the part of an assistant secretary proved doubly significant coming from a president. FDR began his first term in office by telling advisers Moley and Tugwell that war with Japan might just as well come sooner as later. This was an extraordinarily bellicose thing to say in 1933, and the idea seems to have been contagious. By 1937, Admiral Leahy was recording in his diary that "a major war between the Occident and the Orient must be faced at some time either now or in the future." A year later, the feeling was such that Assistant Secretary of State Hamilton felt it necessary to draw a distinction between himself and other White House advisers: "I am not one of those who believes that war between the United States and Japan is inevitable." Roosevelt and his intimates reverted again and again to the idea of inexorability. Arthur Krock gained the impression that the president was looking ahead to "the war he thought he could not avoid." FDR's son James, as well as Congressman Sol Bloom, confirmed this assessment some years later when they recalled that after the surrender of France, the White House considered American belligerency a foregone conclusion. Certainly this was an assumption shared by Secretary of War Stimson, Secretary of the Navy Knox, and Chief of Staff Marshall in January of 1941, when Anglo-American staff talks got under way.⁹⁵

Not that any of the above should be taken to suggest that Roosevelt was a warmonger. He was far too complicated for any such easy system of classification. Yet, while he may not have desired war for its own sake,

it flowed from many of his thoughts and actions. Never much of a believer in preparedness after the death of Theodore Roosevelt, he repeatedly blocked the road to American rearmament. While Japan added rapidly to her naval establishment and neared the limits set by the Treaty of Washington, he told reporters, "There isn't any cloud on the horizon at the present time."⁹⁶ Not until 1936 did he speak out on foreign policy and then only to warn against the horrors of war, saying that it was his goal to reach treaty strength by 1942. Although naval building increased during 1937 so that the nation was soon spending twice what it had spent five years earlier, the defense structure, measured in relative terms, was allowed to atrophy. Only in late 1938 and early 1939 did the president really begin to move. But the pace was still so slow that the strength of the nation vis-à-vis other world powers continued to decline. The year Roosevelt first sought a hemispheric defense program, 1938, was also the year that Germany's chargé in Washington reported incredulously, "Still no military preparations whatever in the United States." In 1939, the U.S. Army ranked nineteenth in the world—behind Portugal and ahead of Bulgaria. In percentage of population under arms it ranked forty-fifth. It stood at less than 70 percent of the peacetime strength authorized by Congress and less than 25 percent in terms of combat readiness. General John J. Pershing considered America in a "lamentable" state.⁹⁷

For another two years, public opinion continued to outstrip presidential leadership in this area. Although Roosevelt paid lip service to an air program, he suppressed Stettinius's defense recommendations. Thus, when France collapsed in the summer of 1940 and Britain and Germany put thousands of planes into the air, the United States stood nearly defenseless with a bare minimum of 53 modern bombers and 187 modern pursuit planes. The White House has been commended for "pushing through" a draft bill during an election year, but it should also be pointed out that polls showed 59 percent of the people in favor of a draft law in June, 69 percent in July. Roosevelt waited until 2 August to support a bill jointly sponsored by a Republican and an anti-New Deal Democrat. Americans, in other words, wanted to spend more on guns than FDR was willing to request, while Congress appropriated more for defense than he was ready to spend. When he branded the two-ocean navy an "outmoded conception" and requested a billion dollars for army and navy combined, Congress kept itself in emergency

session and insisted on a two-ocean navy with \$5 billion in defense spending.⁹⁸

Roosevelt could have taken a Navy Department request for three battleships and petitioned Congress for six, knowing full well that he could count on no more than half this number, but he pared down the original order from three to two. As a result, he obtained only one. A typical case concerns the reinforcement of naval bases. Pressure to fortify United States possessions in the Pacific during the spring of 1938 came, not from the Oval Office, but from the Hill. Congress instructed Charles Edison, FDR's unenthusiastic secretary of the navy, to commission a strategic survey, and Edison, after gathering the pertinent data (Report of the Hepburn Board), recommended the revamping of twenty-five bases at a cost of \$326 million. Roosevelt's Bureau of the Budget cut the figure to twelve bases at \$94 million, and the president reduced it further to \$65 million. Although Guam was designated by navy men as urgently in need of an air and submarine base, Roosevelt requested a paltry \$5 million. In January, when Tokyo voiced objection to U.S. plans for Guam, he told the press that he did not intend to submit any specific plan for immediate approval. Under pressure from reporters, he then denied ever having supported a \$5 million appropriation in the first place. Finally, after being brought to admit that he had indeed endorsed such a sum, he went on to explain that the money would not be used for fortification. The upshot was that Congress found no difficulty in rejecting the item altogether and Guam was never dredged to provide for larger ships. Hopkins's biographer Robert Sherwood has termed this an act of "puerile self-delusion." Even so, it was not nearly as detrimental to rearmament as were a series of other presidential actions. On 13 May 1938, FDR wrote Daniel Bell, acting director of the budget: "The increase of 9900 men for the navy can be cut by nearly 4,000—in other words, I think the total increase for the Navy of 6,000 men is enough. In regard to increase of Marine Corps by 4,000 men, I suggest that this figure be cut—1,000 men."⁹⁹

Closely allied to the question of bases and recruitment was the situation in the Philippines, which had never been satisfactory from a strategic point of view. After Manila rejected the Hawes-Cutting Independence Act of January 1933, Roosevelt recommended substitute legislation duly approved in the form of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. He then announced that the United States would probably give up all its Phil-

ippine bases when it yielded civil jurisdiction. Some feared that this would send the wrong signal to Tokyo. There was also the problem of power. Both the commanding general of the Philippine Department and the commander in chief of the Asiatic Fleet addressed a letter to Washington saying in effect that the United States must either increase the size of its military base or pull out.¹⁰⁰ Observers in both Britain and Australia agreed, but Roosevelt hewed to a middle course. As zero hour approached, the defenses of Corregidor were little different from what they had been in 1922 before the advent of airpower. In addition, FDR clamped an oil embargo on Japan over the objection of army and navy men, who knew this would deny them their most valuable commodity, time. Incredibly, as bombs fell on Manila in December 1941, American ships were actually carrying troops away from the scene of action rather than to it. In extending the draft, Congress had required the discharge of all selective service men over the age of twenty-four and FDR was accordingly in the process of deactivating eighteen National Guard divisions.¹⁰¹

It can be shown that Roosevelt failed to make effective use of even the limited forces at his disposal. In 1934, when difficult talks were under way with Tokyo, he withdrew his fleet from the Pacific. When talks broke down, Grew commented on how uncooperative the Japanese had been in contrast with their attitude toward Russia, which had bolstered its Far Eastern defenses and was demonstrating a willingness to use them. Japan no longer thought of seizing Vladivostok and was willing to pay a substantial price to acquire the Chinese Eastern Railway. Anti-Soviet propaganda had decreased markedly, while anti-Americanism was on the rise:

When our naval supply ship *Gold Star* came to Kobe lately, there were sneering references to the fighting qualities of a navy which permitted the presence of women on one of its vessels. . . . a recent editorial (*Fukuoka Nichi Nichi*) stated: "Intimidatory diplomacy can only be applied to negotiations with a weaker power. America may apply such a policy to the Central or South American countries but she cannot do so to Japan." Would such statements appear if American naval preparedness was a recognized fact in Japan?¹⁰²

This was not the only instance in which power and diplomacy gave the appearance of being out of harness. In June of 1938, only six months after the *Panay* outrage, and in spite of the probability of additional insult, Roosevelt ordered his naval units out of the Pacific and

into the Atlantic. Japan subsequently occupied Hainan Island and went on to announce annexation of the Spratly Island group. When he did decide to send the fleet back to the Pacific, he stationed it at Pearl Harbor, once again against the advice of ranking military officers. Just as Admiral Harold R. Stark had objected to his policy of separating small units from the battle fleet and having them pop up at spots like Australia—Stark felt it undermined American credibility—Admiral Richardson now insisted that the fleet would be a more powerful and convincing weapon if stationed on the West Coast instead of at Pearl Harbor. Hawaii lacked facilities to maintain it in a state of battle readiness, and one could not expect to bluff the Japanese. As we have already seen, Richardson was relieved of his command thirteen months into a tour of duty normally lasting twenty-four.¹⁰³

America's later decision to separate about 40 percent of the Pacific Fleet from the main body and transfer it to the Atlantic in May 1941, just as negotiations between Nomura and Hull were thought to be reaching a critical stage, dumbfounded the British and shocked many closer to home. Years ago, Theodore Roosevelt had warned against any division of the battle fleet, and this was still the consensus of presidential advisers. Hull agreed that all major units should remain in the Pacific; Stimson, Stark, and Knox preferred to have the entire fleet in the Atlantic.¹⁰⁴ Either way, the fleet should not be divided. FDR's response was typical of his tendency in situations involving divided counsel. He compromised, and in so doing committed an irreparable blunder. Japan, perceiving the United States as overextended on two fronts, felt it could deliver a sudden blow that would send Washington reeling. As Admiral Nagano told an imperial conference on 5 November 1941, "The combined force of Great Britain and the United States has weak points. We are, therefore, confident of victory. We can destroy their fleet if they want a decisive battle."¹⁰⁵

None of this would necessarily have been decisive had Roosevelt's mode of thought and action not aroused feelings of contempt. He had difficulty viewing any move on the part of Japan as anything but a step along the road to world conquest, and nearly all his statements referring to Japan were provocative, especially after 1937. When Assistant Secretary of State Pierrepont Moffat heard what the president had said in Chicago, he warned that such words would "drive us much further than we wish to go."¹⁰⁶ The effect was to kindle animosity on both sides of the Pacific and narrow the parameters of peace.

Given time and the democratic process, fighting words stimulated a demand for action. Congress and leaders of American opinion joined the chorus, and Roosevelt was forced to move from token measures to the brink. In February and April of 1941, he extended unneutral aid to China in the amount of \$100 million. Subsequently, on 6 May, China qualified for equally unneutral outlays of Lend-Lease. Early in the year, American volunteers, soon to be known as the Fourteenth American Airforce or the Flying Tigers, began to fly for China under the direction of Claire Chennault. While more and more planes and fliers embarked for China, General Douglas MacArthur built a powerful striking force on Japan's southern flank in the Philippines. After the arrival of a small squadron of B-17 bombers in the spring, larger squadrons followed, with plans to send Super Flying Fortresses with a fifteen-hundred-mile operating radius and a capacity to reach either Osaka at full bombing strength or Tokyo partially loaded. In November, the *Washington Post* enumerated just how many planes Roosevelt had stationed in the Philippines, how many more would be there by December, and how many after six weeks. Air bases in Siberia, as well as possible operations in Indochina and Malaysia, were mentioned, and Roosevelt's assemblage of bombers was touted as the greatest in the history of the world.¹⁰⁷ Thus did the press convert a form of military insurance into an incendiary threat without a flickering of disapproval from the White House.

Weeks passed, the Hull-Nomura talks ground on, and American provocation accelerated. Not content to cut Tokyo's vital oil line, Roosevelt sent heavy tankers to within a few miles of Japanese territorial waters en route to the Soviet port of Vladivostok. Although Tokyo warned him that this would be considered an unfriendly act, it was allowed to proceed, and for good measure Secretary of the Interior Ickes fired a verbal fusillade at the Japanese, again with Roosevelt's blessing. As the emperor's navy began to move southward in early December, the president ordered three small armed vessels into the path of the oncoming fleet.¹⁰⁸ His intention may or may not have been to ensure American involvement before Japan could strike a knockout blow against the British. In any case, Churchill happened to be dining with American envoys Winant and Harriman when news of the Pearl Harbor attack arrived in London, and as he remembered it, "One might almost have thought they had been delivered from a long pain."¹⁰⁹

In retrospect, it is interesting to imagine what might have happened

had Western leaders approached the Orient with less smugness and complacency. In 1909, Wallace Irwin published *Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy* in which he depicted a thirty-five-year-old Japanese male who spoke pidgin English and was buck-toothed, smiling, courteous, and crafty. Thirty years later, Americans still perceived the Japanese as quaint little people devoted to cherry blossoms and Mount Fuji. Breckinridge Long recorded in his diary: "Hull believes in fighting [Japan]" and has told columnist Anne McCormick that it "would only be a naval war anyway." In the same vein, it was a truism to Hornbeck that "no oriental nation has today the perspective and the outlook of the more advanced Occidental nations, and Japan is no exception. . . . The Japanese state is still essentially feudal." Were the Nipponese not, after all, a race of copiers? *Time*, referring to them as "little yellow men," dismissed their 1940 austerity campaign as a matter of geisha girls being deprived of permanent waves; Premier Konoye was described as a "finicking hypochondriac" who spent each Sunday seated in lotus form; and the editors went out of their way to assure American readers that a naval blockade of Japan would quickly bring her to her senses—she was running scared. Half of Tokyo's homes were "built of wood and paper," and the populace was already feeling the pinch of "economic strangulation."¹¹⁰

This was the feeling which U.S. Commodore Glynn had carried with him to Tokyo almost a hundred years earlier: America "could convert their selfish government into a liberal republic in a short time." For a half dozen decades or more, such a conversion seemed well on the way to fulfillment. Grew told American audiences in 1939 that when the United States spoke, Japan listened. According to Stimson, it had been "historically shown that when the United States indicates by clear language and bold actions that she intends to carry out a clear and affirmative policy in the Far East, Japan will yield."¹¹¹

Roosevelt, who felt the Japanese suffered from underdeveloped skulls, interested himself in a new method of genetic crossbreeding. Doubtless, too, he accepted his friend Arthur Murray's image of a people given to "truculence, impudence, trickery, swollen headedness, and brutality." Above all, he did not regard the Japanese people as formidable. A year after entering the White House, he was already describing his policy as one of babying them along. Hull and Stimson advised him that there could be no future in settling with Japan since China was the

ultimate power in the Far East. He therefore rejected compromise, assuming all along that he could tighten the bit in Tokyo's mouth by means of economic coercion. The same summit conference that he so earnestly sought with Hitler and Mussolini was a conference which he spurned in connection with Konoye. In 1933, he told Stimson with honest conviction that trade sanctions would force Japan out of Manchuria. Likewise, in 1938, he cited figures on Tokyo's sinking gold reserve to assure the British that a moral embargo would bring Nippon to account.¹¹²

Given the failure of one economic measure after another, it is remarkable how few persons perceived war as a logical outcome of escalation. On this point, Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana was as confirmed in his thinking as was John Leighton Stuart, president of Yenching University. Maxwell Hamilton filed his lengthy report on sanctions in 1937 without including a single allusion to war, and Hornbeck never saw any binding tie between the oil embargo and all-out hostility (he later admitted his error). Roosevelt was surprised to find that the Nazi-Soviet Pact had no immediate impact on Japanese policy, but he never allowed this to influence his basic style of thinking. He continued to feel in October 1940, as he had felt the year before, that he could intimidate the Japanese by moving his fleet to Hawaii. And no amount of explanation on the part of Admiral Richardson could sway him. The fleet would simply blockade Japan or intercept a thrust against the Indies. As for Pearl Harbor, Marshall and Knox regarded it as well-nigh impregnable. Few believed Tokyo capable of dropping torpedoes in shallow harbor water. Nor was it expected that a way might be found to make bombers so fuel-efficient that they could fly fully loaded from Formosa to Clark Air Force Base in Manila. It was truly unimaginable that within a matter of days a torpedo would sink two of Britain's greatest prizes, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, or that Singapore would be overrun from the one direction in which her guns could not be fired.¹¹³ And so the war came.

Whether Roosevelt could have reached a viable settlement with Japan during an eight-year interval will probably never be known because he never made a determined effort to do so. It is curious, though, to reflect on what such a story may reveal about a president's intellectual power, his character, and his sensitivity. Precisely why did he resist every diplomatic initiative on the part of Tokyo? Can he be regarded as a fatalist or simply as unalterable in his opposition to Japan by 1935? And to what

degree did he feel compelled to weigh impulses of conciliation and firmness against fluctuations in American public opinion? These are questions almost impossible to resolve with finality on the basis of the data presented thus far. The hope, however, is that additional light may be brought to bear upon them by examining the American approach to Europe during a similar period and under a similar set of circumstances.