2.

In Japan, the increasing influence of the military over the government had become an issue. In the name of law and order, Prime Minister Hirota was now so obviously subservient to the generals that liberal members of the Diet denounced them. One aroused deputy told the War Minister he should commit hara-kiri. This was greeted by such enthusiastic shouts and applause that the minister resigned in anger. And of course, with his resignation, in February 1937, came the end of the Hirota Cabinet.

Without hesitation Prince Saionji advised the Emperor to name another general, Kazushige Ugaki, to succeed Hirota. This choice infuriated almost everyone in the Army, since Ugaki was a moderate who had once reduced their number by four divisions. Consequently the Big Three said they simply couldn't find anyone who would serve with Ugaki. He was compelled to report to the Emperor that he was unable to form a cabinet and gave vent to his indignation in a statement to the newspapers: "What I see is that only a few men in authoritative positions in the Army have formed a group [the Control clique] and are forcing their views on the authorities, propagandizing as if their action represents the general will of the Army. The Army belongs to the Emperor. Whether their action during the last few days represents the general will of the Army of the Emperor or not is not too clear. The selection of a war minister by the Big Three of the Army is too formal and lacks sincerity. . . . I believe that Japan stands at the crossroads between fascism and parliamentary politics. I am partly responsible for the present condition in the Army, which has become a political organization. I feel sorry for the Emperor because of this state of affairs. Moreover, I greatly regret that the Army, which I have loved so long, has been brought to such a pass. . . ."

A general named Senjuro Hayashi who was sympathetic to the Control clique was selected as prime minister, but he ran into such opposition from the Diet that his government, nicknamed the "eat-and-run cabinet," lasted just four months. Hayashi was succeeded by a civilian, Prince Fumimaro Konoye, a descendant of the Fujiwara family, which had ruled the land for several centuries. A disciple of Saionji's, he had long resisted the last *genro*'s efforts to get him involved in politics. In the harrowing days following the 2/26 Incident, the old prince had concluded that Konoye alone could lead the new government and recommended him formally to the Emperor. Konoye had refused—he preferred to remain as President of the House of Peers and besides was in poor health—causing Saionji's "most embarrassing moment."

But Konoye considered the present crisis so critical that he was persuaded to accept the position hitherto reserved for old men. At forty-six years

of age he was a popular choice to lead the country, since the people had little confidence in politicians and feared a continuance of military rule. For their part, most military men trusted him because he was above political greed. The *zaibatsu* counted on him to bring stability, the intellectuals to stem the tide of fascism. Ordinary people were impressed by his comparative youth and good looks and his very reluctance to be prime minister. Any man with such an utter lack of ambition had to be sincere.

"Evolutionary reforms and progress within the Constitution must be our watchdogs," he promised upon assuming the premiership in June, "but the country demands national reform, and the government, while neither socialist nor fascist, must listen to its call. The impetus of the great [Meiji] Restoration has carried us thus far with honor and success; but now it is for the young men to take up the task and carry the country forward into a new age."

The new age came sooner than he expected and was not at all what he had envisaged. It was ushered in on the night of July 7 at the ancient stone bridge named after Marco Polo. A Japanese company stationed near this historic landmark was holding night maneuvers about a mile from a large Chinese unit. Just as a bugle signaled the end of the operation, bullets came whistling from the Chinese lines. The Japanese returned fire, but within minutes the skirmish was over. There was a single Japanese casualty—one man was missing. The company commander reported the incident to his battalion commander, who phoned regimental headquarters in nearby Peking. A second company was sent to the bridge, as well as a staff officer who began arranging a truce with the Chinese. Both sides had just agreed it was an unfortunate mistake when a second fusillade poured into the two Japanese companies.

The first shots had probably been accidental. The second volley was suspicious, particularly since relations between the Chinese and Japanese troops in the area were so good. This had come about through a close friendship between General Sung Chi-yuen, commander of all Chinese troops in North China, and General Gun Hashimoto, chief of staff of the North China Garrison. The question was who had fired the second volley, if not the Chinese troops. Cohorts of Doihara trying to aggravate the incident into an excuse to invade China in force? Or Communists hoping to start a full-scale war between Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese that would probably end in the communization of China?*

Whoever it was, the Japanese counterattacked, and it wasn't until the next morning that the negotiators agreed that both sides should peacefully

* It was not until after the war that the Japanese officers involved in the Marco Polo Bridge incident generally concluded that Mao's agents had sparked the incident. "We were then too simple to realize this was all a Communist plot," General Akio Doi, a Russian expert, said in 1967. General Ho Ying-chin, Chiang's minister of war at the time, still believes, like most Chinese, that the incident was plotted by Japanese radical militarists, although he did

withdraw. While the Japanese were pulling out, they again drew fire, retaliated and the fight was resumed.

Though it should have seemed obvious by now that a third party was trying to keep the skirmish going, each side accused the other of breaking the truce and the negotiations floundered. When the news arrived in Tokyo, the Army Chief of Staff cabled a routine order to settle the trouble locally. Later in the day representatives of the War, Navy and Foreign ministries agreed on a policy of "nonexpansion" and "local settlement." This was approved by Prince Konoye and his cabinet, but at a special meeting of the Army General Staff, the expansionists argued that more troops should be sent into China to teach Chiang a lesson, otherwise he might use this incident as an excuse to retake Manchuria; this would endanger Japanese-controlled Korea and eventually put Japan at the mercy of Russian and Chinese Communists. They promised to make the military action brief and come to a quick agreement with Chiang. Then all Japanese troops would be withdrawn into North China, which would be used purely as a buffer against Russia.

The greatest opposition came from Kanji Ishihara, now a general and head of Operations. He argued for hours but finally had to admit that the poorly disciplined Chinese troops in North China were bound to start massacring the Japanese traders and settlers in the area. This would arouse the Japanese public and bring about what he feared and abhorred the most, an endless war of retribution.

That was why the man who once said, "The first soldier marching into China will only do so over my dead body," approved the reinforcement of North China with two brigades from the Kwantung Army, one division from Korea and three from the homeland. And on July 11 Prince Konoye, who had so recently pledged international integrity, gave his consent to the flood of troops into another country. But there was little else he could have done, according to his private secretary, Tomohiko Ushiba, "in the face of the War Minister's assurance that it was merely a troop movement to stop local fighting."

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admit in a recent interview that after Chou En-lai read Chiang's diary in Sian and realized the Generalissimo was strongly anti-Japanese, he began conspiring to get the Kuomintang involved in an all-out war with Japan.

Without doubt, both the Russians and the Chinese Communists were doing their best to foster a long, enervating conflict between Chiang and the Japanese. That fall Mao Tse-tung told his troops in Yenan, "The Sino-Japanese conflict gives us, the Chinese Communists, an excellent opportunity for expansion. Our policy is to devote seventy percent of our effort to this end, twenty percent to coping with the Government, and ten percent to fighting the Japanese. This policy is to be carried out in three stages. During the first stage, we are to work with the Kuomintang in order to ensure our existence and growth. During the second stage, we are to achieve parity in strength with the Kuomintang. During the third stage, we are to penetrate deep into parts of Central China to establish bases for counterattacks against the Kuomintang."

At the Marco Polo Bridge, after hours of wrangling, the negotiators had just arranged another truce. But as both sides pulled back, a loud crackling like machine-gun fire broke out (it turned out to be firecrackers) and the battle was on again. This time the two friendly generals, Sung Chi-yuen and Gen Hashimoto, personally stepped in and before the day was over a firm local agreement had been signed. In it Sung apologized for the entire incident. He promised to punish the officers responsible, rigidly control any Red elements in his forces and withdraw troops from the bridge area. On his part Hashimoto, acting for his dying commander, agreed to bring no more reinforcements into North China.

Chiang Kai-shek ignored the truce and sent Sung orders to concentrate more forces in the troubled area. Instead Sung kept his promise and began withdrawing troops. It looked as if the crisis was over, but unfortunately communications were so bad that Tokyo had no idea the problem was being solved, and on July 17 peremptorily demanded that the Chinese stop sending troops into North China and recognize the puppet government Doihara had helped set up. This so incensed Chiang that he issued a defiant proclamation from Nanking: "If we allow one more inch of our territory to be lost or sovereign rights to be encroached upon, then we shall be guilty of committing an unpardonable crime against our Chinese race. . . . China's sovereign rights cannot be sacrificed, even at the expense of war, and once war has begun there is no looking back."

The Japanese military attaché in Nanking, General Seiichi Kita, told his old friend, Chinese War Minister General Ho Ying-chin, himself a graduate of the Japanese Military Academy, that if Chinese troops were not withdrawn at once from North China, the "situation might get out of hand." Ho was not averse to some co-operation with the Japanese but said, "If war breaks out, both Japan and the Chinese Republic will be defeated and only the Russian and Chinese Communists will benefit. If you don't believe it now, you will in ten years." He asked Kita to pass this warning on to his government with a promise that the Chinese would "fight to the last man."

Already concerned by exaggerated reports of the large number of Chinese troops flowing up into North China, the Japanese public was indignant at Chiang's proclamation; and one paper, the *Nichi Nichi,* declared editorially that the Chinese reply left Japan no choice but "to cross the Rubicon."

Only then did the long-delayed information from Hashimoto reach Tokyo that all was quiet at the Marco Polo Bridge and that it was not necessary to send any reinforcements to North China. The transfer orders were canceled and even the expansionists in the Army high command were relieved that a crisis had been averted. It was assumed that Chiang would agree to the terms signed by Sung, and peace return to China.

Sung continued to do his part by removing all sandbag barricades from

the streets of Peking and relaxing martial law. Passenger trains from the south at last began entering the ancient capital. But there was still no word of reconciliation from Chiang Kai-shek, and what the negotiators on both sides feared came about: Japanese and Chinese troops, at trigger's edge for almost three weeks, began firing at one another in earnest. It happened on the night of July 25 at the railroad station of Langfang, some fifty miles below Peking. Within an hour a skirmish turned into a major conflict. Heavy Japanese reinforcements were dispatched to Langfang and at dawn seventeen planes bombed a Chinese barracks. A few hours later the city was occupied.

The friendship between Sung and Hashimoto was now of little avail. The latter's commander had died and a new one, Lieutenant General Kiyoshi Katsuki, had arrived. He was strictly a military man who felt he had been sent "to chastise the outrageous Chinese." He cabled Tokyo that he had done everything to bring about a peaceful settlement and asked for permission to "use force" wherever necessary to protect Japanese lives and property. The Army leaders approved and one division was ordered to Shanghai and another to Tsingtao.

Again Prime Minister Konoye, assured by the military that the Chinese problem could be "solved in three months," felt constrained to go along lest his cabinet fall. The following day, July 27, he announced in the Diet that the government must now achieve a "new order" in East Asia. To patriotic Japanese it seemed proper and equitable. Japanese lives and property had to be protected and Communism contained; it was time for firmness, not weakness. Nobody realized that it was a declaration of total war with China. The Army leaders were truly convinced they could force Chiang to negotiate before fall.*

It bore no resemblance to the Manchurian coup. In 1931 the Kwantung Army had deliberately provoked the incident at Mukden, but in 1937 the North China Army neither sought nor organized the confrontation at the Marco Polo Bridge. In 1931 the Army General Staff sanctioned the seizure of Manchuria; in 1937 they did their utmost to forestall operations in North China. In 1931 Prime Minister Reijiro Wakatsuki's failure to execute a diplomatic settlement satisfactory to the Control clique brought about the fall of his government; in 1937 there would be no change of cabinet.

With approval from Tokyo in hand, General Katsuki issued a proclamation that he was going to "launch a punitive expedition against the Chinese troops, who have been taking acts derogatory to the prestige of

* James B. Crowley, assistant professor of history at Amherst College, wrote in the May 1963 issue of *Journal of Asian Studies* that "it would be safe to conclude that this incident was not caused by any 'conspiracy' of Japanese army officers and that the Japanese military was not primarily responsible for the steady drift towards war." More likely, he believes, it was the Chinese—and they had plenty of provocation—who raised Marco Polo into a major crisis. "The tragedy is that the interaction of conflicting national policies and aspirations transformed an incident into a war from which neither government was to derive substantial benefit."

the Empire of Japan." Copies of this proclamation were dropped from planes at dawn on July 28. Bombers struck at three cities and shelled others as ground troops attacked Chinese forces all over the Peking area except in the city itself.

The Rubicon had, in truth, been crossed. The rhetoric of the China conflict had evolved into action without benefit of credible strategic calculations, and Japan had taken the first giant step to war with America.

3.

"Crush the Chinese in three months and they will sue for peace," War Minister Sugiyama predicted. As city after city fell, patriotic fervor swept through Japan, but almost the entire Western world condemned Japan's aggression, and even Germany (because she feared for her interests in China) was critical. China appealed to the League of Nations, and while the world awaited its report, a bold attack came from another quarter. On October 5, 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made a forceful speech in Chicago condemning all aggressors and equating the Japanese, by inference, with the Nazis and Fascists.* "When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community," he said and explained that war was a contagion, whether declared or undeclared. "We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down." There was no mistaking Roosevelt's meaning when on the following day, after the League of Nations had censured Japan, the United States, although not a member, quickly concurred.

At home, Roosevelt's action was largely applauded but Secretary of State Cordell Hull was unhappy about the "quarantine" clause, feeling that it set back "for at least six months our constant educational campaign intended to create and strengthen public opinion towards international co-operation." Ambassador Joseph Grew also felt it was a grievous mistake. No American interest in China justified risking a war with Japan and it was futile to

* Ever since his school days at Groton, Roosevelt had been convinced of Japan's long-range plans of conquest. He pored over Admiral Alfred Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* until, according to his mother, he had "practically memorized the book." Later he corresponded with Mahan and learned that the admiral shared with him a strong concern over Japan as a major threat in the Pacific.

At Harvard, in 1920, a Japanese student told Roosevelt in confidence about his nation's hundred-year plan for conquest, drafted in 1889. It allegedly covered the annexation of Manchuria, the establishment of a protectorate in North China, the acquisition of American and British possessions in the Pacific, including Hawaii, as well as bases in Mexico and Peru. In 1934 Roosevelt informed his Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, of this "plot," pointing out to him that many of its particulars had already been verified.

hurl "moral thunderbolts" at a country which respected force above all; it would create bitterness between the two countries and destroy the good will he had been building. Aware that his staff members shared his shock and resentment, he warned them two days later not to express their opinions outside the embassy. That night he wrote in his diary:

> This was the day that I felt my carefully built castle tumbling about my ears and we all wandered about the chancery, depressed, gloomy, and with not a smile in sight. That afternoon Alice, Elsie and I went to the cinema to see *Captains Courageous* . . . And then I sunk myself in *Gone with the Wind*—which is precisely the way I felt.

Japanese reaction, of course, was quick and bitter. "Japan is expanding," retorted Yosuke Matsuoka, a diplomat whose sharp tongue and ready wit was winning him many followers. "And what country in its expansion era has ever failed to be trying to its neighbors? Ask the American Indian or the Mexican how excruciatingly trying the young United States used to be once upon a time." Japan's expansion, like that of America's, was as natural as the growth of a child. "Only one thing stops a child from growing—death." He declared that Japan was fighting for two goals: to prevent Asia from falling completely under the white man's domination, as in Africa, and to save China from Communism. "No treasure trove is in her eyes—only sacrifices upon sacrifices. No one realizes this more than she does. But her very life depends on it, as do those of her neighbors as well. The all-absorbing question before Japan today . . . is: Can she bear the cross?" *

A few weeks later, on November 16, Koki Hirota, now foreign minister, officially accused America of initiating an anti-Japanese front. An economic boycott against Japan, he told Grew, would not stop the fighting in China, but encouraged the Chinese to prolong the hostilities. Hirota said that until now the Japanese had felt America was the only country with genuine impartiality and would help bring about peace, as Theodore Roosevelt had done in the Russo-Japanese War.

Three days later Japan took Soochow, and the roads to Nanking and Shanghai were open. On December 12, the eve of the fall of Nanking, relations with America and Great Britain were almost shattered when Japanese naval aviators sank the gunboat *Panay* on the Yangtze River, though its American flag was clearly visible. A week earlier an artillery regiment commanded by Colonel Kingoro Hashimoto (founder of the Cherry Society) had fired on the British gunboat *Ladybird,* then seized it.

These incidents revived President Roosevelt's hope of quarantining the

* In interviews in 1966–67 a number of former Japanese leaders, including Generals Teiichi Suzuki, Sadao Araki and Kenryo Sato, pointed to this and similar speeches regarding Japan's increasing involvement in China as parallels to America's accelerating war in Vietnam. Both countries, they agreed, were fighting a sacrificial war despite the world's censure—and both had gone about wiping out Communism the wrong way.

aggressor. He summoned the British ambassador in Washington, Sir Ronald Lindsay, and suggested their two nations join in a naval blockade which would cut Japan off from raw materials. Lindsay protested that such a quarantine would lead to war. He cabled London that his "horrified criticisms" had "made little impression upon the President." The next day, December 17, Roosevelt sketched out his quarantine plan to the Cabinet. His resolve was strengthened by a report from the Navy's official Court of Inquiry in Shanghai that the attack on *Panay* had been wanton and ruthless; more important, a message to Combined Fleet had been intercepted and decoded by the U.S. naval intelligence indicating that the raid had been deliberately planned by an officer on the carrier *Kaga.*

In Tokyo the Konoye government was as aggrieved by the destruction of *Panay* and *Ladybird* as the Americans and the British. Foreign Minister Hirota brought a note to Ambassador Grew expressing regrets and offering full restitution for the sinking of the *Panay.* Abjectly apologetic, Hirota said, "I am having a very difficult time. Things happen unexpectedly." The Japanese Navy high command also showed its disapproval by dismissing the *Kaga* commander, who was responsible for the *Panay* bombing. "We have done this to suggest that the Army do likewise and remove Hashimoto from his command," said Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Navy Vice Minister, who had no relish for doing battle with the U.S. fleet, since he had spent considerable time in America and was cognizant of her potentialities.

The Japanese apology was officially accepted in Washington on Christmas Day (Grew observed that its arrival on Christmas Eve was a "masterly" arrangement) and the incident was apparently closed.* Great Britain also

* Roosevelt was still intent on his quarantine. He sent Captain Royal Ingersoll, chief of the Navy's War Plans Division, to London with instructions to explore the implementation of a long-range naval blockade of Japan. The proposal that had "horrified" Ambassador Lindsay found approval in the British Admiralty. They told Ingersoll that they were "prepared to stop all Japanese traffic crossing a line roughly from Singapore through the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, New Hebrides and around to the east of Australia and New Zealand." They considered "that the United States could prevent all westbound trade to Japan by controlling by embargo or ships the entire Pacific coast from Alaska to Cape Horn." But eight days later, on January 13, 1938, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain abruptly rejected another proposal of Roosevelt's calling for Britain to join an international conference to discuss essential principles of international law that would, incidentally, awaken American public opinion to the true nature of the "bandit nations," as Roosevelt was privately calling them. At first the President did not grasp the full implication of Chamberlain's unanticipated rejection, but within a week it was clear that the Prime Minister's refusal to join an international conference meant that his government would take no part in a quarantine of the aggressor, either in the Orient or in Europe.

The above information (much of it based on notes of the Ingersoll talks recently uncovered in the archives of the United States Navy) indicates beyond argument that as early as 1938, President Roosevelt was prepared to do more than assail the "bandit nations" by words. If Chamberlain had joined him in the naval quarantine, further aggression in both Asia and Europe might have been stemmed. But Chamberlain's rebuff forced Roosevelt to abandon his vigorous foreign policy and allow his country to revert to isolation. Within two months it was too late. On March 12 Hitler's seizure of Austria started the world on the road to its most devastating war.

gracefully accepted an apology for the attack on the *Ladybird,* despite the refusal of the Japanese Army to follow Yamamoto's advice. Hashimoto was not even reprimanded. He had been allowed to proceed to Nanking with his troops.

By the time the Japanese entered the city in December, all resistance had ended, and their commander, General Iwane Matsui—who had left Japan with the announcement: "I am going to the front not to fight an enemy, but in the state of mind of one who sets out to pacify his brother"—ordered them "to exhibit the honor and glory of Japan and augment the trust of the Chinese people" and to "protect and patronize Chinese officials and people, as far as possible."

Instead they roamed the city, looting, burning, raping, murdering. According to one witness, men, women and children were "hunted like rabbits; everyone seen to move was shot." Even the friendly Germans in an official report condemned the Japanese Army as "bestial machinery."

It was not until General Matsui triumphantly entered the city that he learned there had been "breaches of military discipline and morality." He ordered strict compliance with his former orders to "insure that no act whatsoever, which tends to disgrace honor, be perpetrated." He declared: "Now the flag of the Rising Sun is floating over Nanking, and the Imperial Way is shining forth in the area south of the Yangtze. The dawn of the renaissance is about to take place. On this occasion, it is my earnest hope that the four hundred million people of China will reconsider." Matsui returned to Shanghai, only to hear rumors a week later that "illegal acts" were still being committed. "Anyone guilty of misconduct must be severely punished," he wrote the Nanking commander.

But the atrocities continued for another month. About one third of the city was gutted by fire; more than 20,000 Chinese male civilians of military age were marched out of the city and massacred by bayoneting or machine-gun fire. As many women and young girls were raped, murdered and then mutilated. Numerous older civilians were robbed and shot. By the end of the month at least 200,000, perhaps as many as 300,000 civilians had been slaughtered.

Why was such savagery inflicted on a nation the Japanese regarded as their main source of cultural inspiration, their Rome and Greece? It is axiomatic that soldiers of any army get out of hand in a foreign land and act with a brutality they would never dare exhibit at home, but this could hardly account for the extent and intensity of the atrocities. They could only have been incited by some of the more radical officers, in the belief that the Chinese should be taught a lesson.

Back home, Prime Minister Konoye knew less about the atrocities in Nanking than the Germans. He was aware, however, that with all the conquest of vast areas, the Japanese were no nearer to victory but were sinking more deeply into a quagmire. Konoye was a unique individual—a

prince by birth and a socialist at heart. He seemed soft, shy and effete, if not weak. To those who knew him best, he was a man of almost painfully discriminating taste, of such wide interests and objectivity that he could listen with sympathy to those of all political beliefs. In fact, he listened with such sympathy that each in turn thought the prince agreed with him. It always took him an interminable time to make up his mind, since he first wanted to know all sides of a question, but once decision was made, almost nothing could make him change it. "He was simply impregnable," his private secretary, Tomohiko Ushiba, recalled. Konoye had few idols and one was Lord Balfour, considered not quite qualified for the job of prime minister but decisive and effective once he took office. Undoubtedly Konoye hoped to be the Japanese Balfour.

Prince Konoye was the eldest son of Prince Atsumaro Konoye and the first heir in 250 years in the Konoye family to be born of a lawful wife—an occasion which prompted his great-grandfather to write numerous poems expressing his joy. Eight days after his birth, his mother died of puerperal fever, but until he was an adolescent he believed that his father's second wife, his mother's sister, was his real mother. "When I learned that she wasn't," he later said, "I began to think that life was a tissue of lies."

When he was still a young man he was stricken with tuberculosis and spent two years doing little but staring at a ceiling and thinking. From this time he had a feeling for the underdog. He disliked money, millionaires and politicians and wrote many radical essays. Some of these socialistic convictions clung to him as he matured and even now he was against the privileged classes. To outsiders he gave the appearance of being democratic and treated all alike with courtesy. "Even beggars are guests," he once told Ushiba. But his innermost self remained aristocratic—"far more so," Ushiba recently recalled, "than you can possibly imagine."

Almost everything about him seemed contradictory but made sense. He felt ill at ease with Americans, yet sent his eldest son, Fumitaka, to Lawrenceville and Princeton. He was fond of kimonos and wore them with fastidious care, yet he was equally at ease in Western clothes. His marriage was a love match but he treated his mistress, a geisha, with great affection. He had upset family tradition twice: first, by abolishing the system of having rooms in the main house for second, third and fourth "wives" ("It's pardonable to have just one mistress, don't you agree?"); and second, by discontinuing the family diary ("How could I possibly write the truth if it were unfavorable to me?").

Only once did he seriously scold any of his five children, this in a stern letter to Fumitaka at Princeton chastising him for drinking and neglecting his studies. Fumitaka replied that he was just following the American way of life and the subject was closed.

His own father, who died when Konoye was thirteen, was so overprotective that Konoye spent his childhood with a leash around his waist to

keep him from falling. Konoye showed affection to all his children, including the youngest, a daughter by his mistress. He would eat with them, singing and cavorting for their amusement more like an American father than a Japanese.

Product of an elegant society, with one foot in the past and one in the future, Prince Konoye's considerable personal charm and polish hid to all but the discerning his profound sense of obligation to his country and a cynicism so deep that he trusted no man, including himself. He seemed to be what he was not, and even his family rarely saw the man behind the façade. Ushiba, probably as close to him as anyone, did see beyond the overly fond father, the loving husband, the charming dilettante, the considerate employer, to a strange, cold man; he was self-restrained and refined, and sophisticated to such a degree "that it was sometimes quite difficult to make out his real thinking.]"

Once Ushiba asked him which Japanese historical figures he respected. "None," was the answer. "Not even General Nogi or Admiral Togo [heroes of the Russo-Japanese War]?" "Certainly not!"

He treated the Emperor, for whom he had a warm personal feeling, rather intimately. While others sat on the edge of their chairs like ramrods in His Majesty's presence, Konoye would sprawl comfortably. He didn't do this as an insult, but because he felt so close to Hirohito. When he told someone on his way to an audience, "Oh, do remember me to the Emperor," he was not being facetious, merely natural. He felt he came from just as good a family.

As hope of a solution in China had faded with every month, Prince Konoye looked desperately in another direction—a negotiated peace. He preferred England as mediator but the Army persuaded him to use the good offices of Germany, which was friendly with both parties. Hitler had sent Chiang Kai-shek arms and military advisers and was bound, if tenuously, to Japan by the year-old Anti-Comintern Pact. The terms were so reasonable that when the strongly pro-Chinese German ambassador to China, Oskar Trautmann, presented them, Chiang Kai-shek seemed about to accept them.

But those two banes of stability in Japan—*gekokujo* and opportunism—again appeared. First, news came of another great triumph in China, and War Minister Sugiyama raised the price of negotiation; then the commander of the North China Garrison unexpectedly set up a puppet regime in Peking, against the specific orders of Konoye and the General Staff. Though the latter, under the urging of Ishihara, still called for negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek, Trautmann labored in vain. After conversations in Washington between their ambassador and President Roosevelt, China insisted that the Japanese terms were too broad. The Japanese saw this as evasion, and being inflexible negotiators themselves, lost their patience. Concluding

that Chiang Kai-shek really didn't want to negotiate, Konoye decided to take a shortcut to peace and deal with those Chinese who "shared Japan's ideals." On January 16, 1938, he announced that "the Imperial Government shall cease to deal with the National Government of China, and shall rely upon the establishment and growth of a new Chinese regime for co-operation."

This brought sharp rebukes from intellectuals and a number of liberal Diet members. Ishihara also warned Konoye that it was a policy which would inevitably lead to endless trouble. Such criticism forced the Prime Minister to review his position and he began to realize that his hasty act might have committed Japan to a rigid, do-or-die policy—a settlement by full-scale war, the last thing he wanted. Assailed by self-doubts, he wondered if he should resign. But court officials persuaded him to remain in office, otherwise the Chinese would quite properly assume that failure to settle the China question had caused his resignation and it would be more difficult than ever to achieve the solution they wanted.

It was at last apparent to Konoye that the Army itself didn't have a fixed policy on China and was drifting with the tide of events, but unable to get reliable information about Supreme Command matters, he could only watch in frustration as the situation in China worsened.

In the name of national defense the Army proposed a national mobilization law, designed to take away the Diet's last vestiges of control over war measures and direct every aspect of national life toward an efficient war economy. Army spokesmen argued persuasively and not unreasonably that Japan was a small, overpopulated country with almost no natural resources; surrounded as it was by enemies—Russians, Chinese, Americans and British—total mobilization of the nation's strength was the sole solution. The law was passed in March 1938—the Diet, in effect, voting for its own capitulation to the Army. "Liberties lost to the Japanese Army," commented Sir Robert Craigie, the British ambassador in Tokyo, "were lost for good."

The people were also being prepared psychologically for the crusade in East Asia with two slogans borrowed from the past. One was "*kokutai,*" the national essence, and the other was "*kodo,*" connected, ironically, with the recently crushed clique. The original meaning of *kodo,* the Imperial Way, was twisted now into signifying world order and peace to be achieved by Japanese control of East Asia.

Both *kokutai* and *kodo* underlined the father relationship of the Emperor to the people as well as his divinity and were already rousing millions with ardor for a holy war to free Asia from both colonialism and Communism.

3

"Then the War Will Be a Desperate One"

1.

The Japanese continued to win. They took Hankow and Canton, forcing Chiang Kai-shek to move his government far inland to Chungking. But they were conquering territory, not people, and by the beginning of 1939 were still far from final victory. They had lost thousands of men, millions of yen and incurred the wrath of the Western world, and Americans in particular.

The relations between the two countries had begun precariously the day Commodore Perry's ships steamed into Tokyo Bay with a letter from President Millard Fillmore inviting Japan to open doors long closed to the outside world. The Americans were inspired by three motives: a desire to trade, spread the Gospel to the yellow pagans and export the ideals of 1776. The Japanese reluctantly, resentfully complied, but the ensuing years brought improved relations as American officials and private citizens materially helped Japan make the transition from feudalism to modern times in the fields of education, science, medicine and production. American obtrusion into the Pacific late in the nineteenth century with acquisitions of Hawaii, Guam, Wake Island and the Philippines perturbed the Japanese, but in 1900 the Boxer Rebellion brought the two nations together again in a common cause.

These fraternal bonds were strengthened four years later by Japan's war with Czarist Russia. American sympathies were overwhelmingly for the underdog. The New York *Journal of Commerce* declared that Japan stood as "the champion of commercial rights," and cartoonists pictured the Japa-

nese soldier as a heroic figure—a noble samurai confronting the Russian Bear. Jacob Schiff, president of Kuhn, Loeb & Company, distressed by reports of Russian anti-Semitism, felt that the effort of Japan was "not only her own cause, but the cause of the entire civilized world." Practicing what he preached, he made the resources of his company available to the Japanese war effort. Despite spectacular victories, Japan could not terminate the war and turned to President Theodore Roosevelt for help. He accomplished this with the Treaty of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1905, achieving for Japan the best possible terms. In one of the perverse twists of history, this act of friendship ended the good will between the two nations: the Japanese, who were unaware that their country was close to bankruptcy, were incensed at a treaty which gave them no indemnity. Anti-American riots erupted throughout the land, and martial law had to be established in Tokyo. Still not a word came from the Japanese government explaining that Roosevelt had saved the empire from embarrassment, perhaps disaster.

The next year the situation deteriorated. This time America was to blame. An unreasonable fear that a resurgent Asia under Japanese leadership would engulf Western civilization gained force in the United States, particularly on the Pacific coast. The San Francisco *Chronicle* averred that it was "a pressing world-wide issue as to whether the high-standard Caucasian races or the low-standard Oriental races would dominate the world." Caught up in the "yellow peril"* hysteria, the San Francisco school board ordered all Nisei children to attend a school in Chinatown.

The Japanese government responded hotly that this was "an act of discrimination carrying with it a stigma and odium which is impossible to overlook." There was talk of war, and Roosevelt secretly warned his commander in the Philippines to prepare for a Japanese attack.

The crisis passed, but not the resentment, and antagonism reached a climax during World War I, even though the two countries were allies. Already President Woodrow Wilson was calling for "territorial integrity and political independence throughout the world" and a return to China of land and rights lost to conquerors. This idealistic stance was a direct threat to the empire Japan had won in the past few decades and it seemed inevitable to her military leaders that they were destined to fight America for supremacy of the western Pacific and Asia. They gained popular support in 1924 when Congress passed the Exclusion Act barring Japanese from immigration to the United States. It seemed like a deliberate challenge to the proud, sensitive Japanese, and even those with pro-American sympathies were discomposed. "Japan felt as if her best friend had, of a sudden and without provocation, slapped her on the cheek," wrote a well-known

* The phrase originated with Kaiser Wilhelm in 1895. He had a revelation of Oriental hordes overwhelming Europe and made a sketch of his vision: a Buddha riding upon a dragon above ruined cities. The caption read: *"Die gelbe Gefahr!"*—"The Yellow Peril." Several copies were made and presented to royal relatives all over Europe as well as every embassy in Berlin.

Japanese scholar. "Each year that passes without amendment or abrogation only strengthens our sense of injury, which is destined to show itself, in one form or another, in personal and public intercourse."

With the seizure of Manchuria and the invasion of North China, the gulf widened as America denounced Japanese aggression with increasingly forceful words. This moral denunciation only hardened the resolve of the average Japanese. Why should there be a Monroe Doctrine in the Americas and an Open Door principle in Asia? The Japanese takeover in bandit-infested Manchuria was no different from American armed intervention in the Caribbean.* Moreover, how could a vast country like the United States even begin to understand the problems that had beset Japan since World War I? Why was it perfectly acceptable for England and Holland to occupy India, Hong Kong, Singapore and the East Indies, but a crime for Japan to follow their example? Why should America, which had grabbed its lands from Indians by trickery, liquor and massacre, be so outraged when Japan did the same in China?**

Superpatriots plotted to assassinate pro-Western leaders and blow up the American and British embassies. Mass meetings were held denouncing both countries for giving help to China, and calling for acceptance of Hitler's invitation to join Germany and Italy in a tripartite pact. Westerners were refused rooms in some hotels, insulted publicly and occasionally beaten in sight of police.

All this emotional turmoil was worsened by marked differences between East and West in morality, religion and even patterns of thinking. Western logic was precise, with axioms, definitions, and proofs leading to a logical conclusion. Born dialecticians, the Japanese held that any existence was a contradiction. In everyday life they instinctively practiced the concept of the contradiction of opposites, and the means of harmonizing them. Right and wrong, spirit and matter, God and man—all these opposing elements were harmoniously united. That was why a thing could be good and bad at the same time.

Unlike Westerners, who tended to think in terms of black and white, the Japanese had vaguer distinctions, which in international relations often

* Arnold Toynbee saw some logic in their point of view. He later wrote that Japan's "economic interests in Manchuria were not superfluities but vital necessities of her international life. . . . The international position of Japan—with Nationalist China, Soviet Russia, and the race-conscious English-speaking peoples of the Pacific closing in upon her—had suddenly become precarious again."

** In this connection, Ambassador Grew once told the State Department: "We should not lose sight of the fact, deplorable but true, that no practical and effective code of international morality upon which the world can rely has yet been discovered, and that the standards of morality of one nation in given circumstances have little or no relation to the standards of the individuals of the nations in question. To shape our foreign policy on the unsound theory that other nations are guided and bound by our present standards of international ethics would be to court sure disaster."

resulted in "policies" and not "principles," and seemed to Westerners to be conscienceless. Western logic was like a suitcase, defined and limited. Eastern logic was like the *furoshiki,* the cloth Japanese carry for wrapping objects. It could be large or small according to circumstances and could be folded and put in the pocket when not needed.

To Westerners, the Japanese were an incomprehensible contradiction: polite and barbarous, honest and treacherous, brave and cowardly, industrious and lazy—all at the same time. To the Japanese, these were not anomalies at all but one united whole, and they could not understand why Westerners didn't comprehend it. To the Japanese, a man without contradictions could not be respected; he was just a simple person. The more numerous the contradictions in a man, the deeper he was. His existence was richer the more acutely he struggled with himself.

This philosophy was derived mainly from Buddhism, a doctrine wherein all is absorbed in the spaceless, timeless abyss of nondifference.* All is vanity and nothing can be differentiated because nothing has entity or identity. "I" has no entity and is an illusion appearing transitorily and momentarily on constantly floating relations of fallacious phenomena which come and go as the Almighty Wheel of Causality moves on. Nobody knows or is responsible for the movements of change, since there is no Creator or Heavenly Father or Fate.

Among the reasons for Japan's plunge into military adventures in Manchuria and China, this Wheel of Causality loomed significantly. Out of cowardice, or in some cases out of self-interest or simple indecision, a number of military and political leaders failed to curb the fanatic group of young officers who engineered these aggressions. But many on all levels just moved along with the tide, caught up in the Wheel of Causality. They lay down obediently and quietly, as it were, on the road of Blind Change, following the Buddhist belief that the Wheel of Causality went on eternally and absolutely nonteleologically. With characteristic flexibility, some sects believed that everyone could become a Buddha, or "blessed one," after death; others that the individual was nothing and salvation lay only in the negation of self, that man was a bubble on the Ocean of Nothingness who would eventually vanish in the boundless water where there was no birth, no death, no beginning, no end. Buddha himself was nothing more than a finger pointing at the moon.

This was all expressed in the word *sayonara* (*sayo*—so, *nara*—if), that is, "So be it." The Japanese said *sayonara* every moment to everything, for he felt each moment was a dream. Life was *sayonara.* Empires could rise

* Almost every Japanese household had two shrines—one Buddhist, one Shinto. Shinto ("the way of the gods") was the national religion. It was based on awe inspired by any phenomenon of nature. More of a cult of ancestor worship and communion with the past than a religion per se, it had been revived in the nineteenth century and transformed into a nationalistic ideology.

or fall, the greatest heroes and philosophers crumble to dust, planets come and go, but Change never changed, including Change itself.

This strong recognition of death gave the Japanese not only the strength to face disaster stoically but an intense appreciation of each moment, which could be the last. This was not pessimism but a calm determination to let nothing discourage or disappoint or elate, to accept the inevitable. The most admirable fish was the carp. He swam gallantly upstream, leaping the sheerest falls, but once caught and put on the cutting board, lay quiet, accepting serenely what must be. So be it. *Sayonara.*

Understanding little or nothing of either the Wheel of Causality or the power wielded by the dedicated young rebels, informed Americans mistakenly assumed that the takeover in Manchuria and the foray into China were steps plotted by military leaders who, like Hitler, wished to seize the world for themselves.

Within the Japanese, metaphysical intuition and animalistic, instinctive urges lay side by side. Thus philosophy was brutalized and brutality was philosophized. The assassinations and other bloody acts committed by the rebels were inspired by idealism; and the soldiers who sailed to China to save the Orient for the Orient ended by slaughtering thousands of fellow Orientals in Nanking.

There was no buffer zone in their thinking between the transcendental and the empirical—between the chrysanthemum and the sword. They were religious but had no God in the Western sense—that is, a single Divine Being. They were sincere but had no concept of sin; they had sympathy but little humanity; they had clans but no society; they had a rigid family system which gave security but took away individuality. They were, in short, a great and energetic people often driven by opposing forces and often trying to go in opposite directions at the same time.

There were also numerous petty differences between East and West that needlessly aggravated matters. If a Westerner asked, "This isn't the road to Tokyo, is it?" the Japanese would reply yes, meaning, "What you say is correct; it is *not* the road to Tokyo." Confusion also resulted when the Japanese agreed with the Westerner just to be agreeable or to avoid embarrassment, or gave wrong information rather than admit his ignorance.

To most Westerners, the Japanese was utterly inscrutable. The way he handled his tools was all wrong: he squatted at an anvil; he pulled rather than pushed a saw or plane; he built his house from the roof down. To open a lock, he turned a key to the left, the wrong direction. Everything the Japanese did was backwards. He spoke backwards, read backwards, wrote backwards. He sat on the floor instead of in chairs; ate raw fish and live, wriggling shrimp. He would tell of the most tragic personal events and then laugh; fall in the mud in his best suit and come up with a grin; convey ideas by misdirection; discuss matters in a devious, tortuous manner; treat you with exaggerated politeness in his home and rudely shove you

aside in a train; even assassinate a man and apologize to the servants for messing up the house.

What Westerners did not realize was that underneath the veneer of modernity and westernization, Japan was still Oriental and that her plunge from feudalism to imperialism had come so precipitously that her leaders, who were interested solely in Western methods, not Western values, had neither the time nor inclination to develop liberalism and humanitarianism.

2.

Hostility between the Russians and the Japanese also continued, but this was less a misunderstanding of cultures than a struggle for territory. In the summer of 1938 their troops battled for possession of a barren hill on the Manchurian-Soviet border, and the Red Army and air force gave the Japanese such a drubbing that within two weeks they agreed to a settlement. Some ten months later another squabble started near Nomonhan on the Manchurian–Outer Mongolian border, relatively close to Peking. In a few weeks it turned into full-fledged warfare, with the first large-scale tank battles in history. Once again the Russians crushed the Japanese, who suffered more than fifty thousand casualties. This embarrassing rehearsal for war not only caused a revolution in Japanese weaponry and military tactics but drove Japan closer to an alliance with Germany and Italy, since she felt that the Soviet Union, England, China and America might combine against her at any moment.*

Before this border war could be settled, Stalin threw both the Chinese and the Japanese into turmoil by signing, on August 23, 1939, a pact with his bitterest enemy, Hitler. Prime Minister Kiichiro Hiranuma, who had succeeded Prince Konoye in January, and whose cabinet had held more than seventy meetings in a futile effort to reach agreement on a Tripartite Pact, was so embarrassed and dismayed that he announced, "The Cabinet herewith resigns because of complicated and inscrutable situations recently arising in Europe."

* This was not mere paranoia. Shortly before, Stalin had written to Chiang Kai-shek: "If our negotiations with the European countries should produce satisfactory results—which is not impossible—this may be an important step toward the creation of a bloc of peace-loving nations in the Far East as well. Time is working favorably toward the formation of such a bloc.

"As a result of the now two-year-old war with China, Japan has lost her balance, begun to get nervous, and is hurling herself recklessly, now against Britain, and now against Soviet Russia and the Republic of Outer Mongolia. This is a sign of Japanese weakness and her conduct may unite all others against her. From Soviet Russia, Japan has already received the counterblows she deserves. Britain and the United States are waiting for an opportune moment to harm Japan. And we have no doubt that before long she will receive another counterblow from China, one that will be a hundred times mightier."

Both Hitler and Stalin trumpeted to the world the clauses of their historic treaty—except for a secret protocol dividing up eastern Europe—and nine days later, on September 1, one and a half million German troops invaded Poland. World War II had begun. Though Poland, crushed between two massive forces, disintegrated in a few weeks, the western front remained so quiet that newsmen sardonically labeled the conflict "the phony war."

As the fighting in China dragged on into 1940, the Japanese Army General Staff decided in secret that unless total victory was achieved within the year, forces would be gradually withdrawn, leaving only troops in the northern part of China as defense against Communism. However, six weeks later, on May 10, Hitler again changed the course of Japan by launching a blitzkrieg against the western front. At dusk, four days later, the Dutch commander surrendered. The next morning at seven-thirty Britain's brand-new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was wakened by a phone call from Paris. "We have been defeated!" exclaimed Premier Paul Reynaud. "We are beaten!" Two weeks later King Leopold III surrendered, ignoring the advice of his government, and refused to seek refuge in England. "I have decided to stay," he said. "The cause of the Allies is lost." Within a month France capitulated and England herself appeared doomed.

The Japanese military leaders, intoxicated by Hitler's easy victories, changed their minds about the war in China and adopted the slogan "Don't miss the bus!" With France defeated and Britain fighting for survival, the time had come to strike into Southeast Asia for oil and other sorely needed resources. On the morning of June 22 the Army General Staff and the War Ministry held a joint meeting, and those who had recently advocated a withdrawal from China recommended an immediate surprise attack on Singapore. Conservatives squashed this scheme, but the spirit of chance lingered in the air and the virus of opportunism spread with each passing day. Reconciled to defeat in China a few months earlier, the Japanese were tempted by Hitler's sudden fortune in Europe to make a bid for the resources of Southeast Asia.

Before the end of July, Prince Konoye was persuaded to re-enter politics and form his second cabinet. Two of the key posts were filled by rising men—one a diplomat, the talkative, brilliant, quixotic Yosuke Matsuoka, who became foreign minister, and the other a soldier, Lieutenant General Hideki Tojo, who became war minister. Hard-working, hard-headed and dedicated, Tojo had already earned the nickname "the Razor." As simple as Konoye was complicated, he enjoyed great prestige within the Army, having ably executed a number of difficult assignments, including command of the *kempeitai* in the Kwantung Army. He was incorruptible, a rigid disciplinarian who demanded and got absolute discipline, and he selected subordinates for their ability and experience alone. Unlike other generals who wavered during the 2/26 Incident, he had acted with dispatch proclaiming a state of emergency in Manchuria, thus crushing any sympathetic

revolt. To his legalistic mind, *gekokujo* was "absolutely unpardonable," not to be tolerated. This brought him respect from conservative military circles as well as from civilians who dreaded another bloody revolt, and it was undoubtedly the main reason Konoye selected him.

Foreign Minister Matsuoka, president of the South Manchurian Railway and a close associate of Tojo's while the general was in the Kwantung Army, was almost his opposite. He was equally strong-minded but far more flamboyant, venturesome and intuitive. Whereas Tojo was a man of few words, Matsuoka was an orator of extraordinary eloquence who deserved his nicknames "Mr. 50,000 Words" and "the Talking Machine." He good-naturedly denied he was loquacious. "Being verbose means trying to cancel out or excuse what one has just said. I'd never do that. Therefore I'm not verbose." "I have never known anyone talk so much to say so little," observed Ambassador Craigie, who judged him also to be a stubborn and determined man with an acute mind.

Matsuoka was small and swarthy, and his clipped bullethead, mustache, big tortoise-shell glasses and flare for the dramatic had brought him world attention when he precipitously stalked out of the League of Nations Assembly during the debate on Manchuria. At the age of thirteen he had gone to sea, and was dumped ashore in America by the captain, his uncle, and told to fend for himself. An American family in Portland, Oregon, gave him refuge and he spent the next formative years working diligently as a laborer, in a law office, and even as a substitute minister while getting himself an education. After graduation from the University of Oregon he worked for three more years before returning to Japan, where he rose to fame by brilliance and energy alone.

Prince Konoye listened to practically everybody, Matsuoka to practically nobody. He was too busy expounding the ideas that kept leaping to his agile mind. His mystifying statements confused many, and some thought he was insane, but subordinates in the Foreign Ministry, like Dr. Yoshie Saito and Toshikazu Kase, felt it was merely his paradoxical nature in action. An intellectual gymnast, he would often say something contrary to what he believed and propose something he opposed in order to get his own way by default. A man of broad visions, he seldom explained these visions, or if he did, talked at such cross-purposes that it was no wonder he left a wake of confusion behind him; even those who thought him one of the most brilliant men in Japan watched anxiously as he nimbly played his dangerous diplomatic games. He assured his associates over and over again that he was pro-American, yet talked insultingly about America; he distrusted Germany, yet courted Hitler; he was against the rise of militarism, yet spouted his arguments for war.

In his home he also played the paradox. He shouted at his seven children, and let them ride on his back; he was autocratic, yet gave unstintingly of his love and attention. Kiwamu Ogiwara, who worked for Matsuoka

as *shosei* (a combination secretary and personal servant) became so terrified at his temper tantrums that he could never look directly at him. One day after taking a bath, Matsuoka shouted *"Oi!"* (Hey!) from his room, and when Ogiwara peered in, gestured impatiently at his middle. The *shosei* brought in an *obi* and this set Matsuoka off on a furious pantomime. Ogiwara had to find out from the maid that this particular gesture meant the master wanted his loincloth. On days when he was "not at home," a visitor would sometimes insist on seeing the master and the *shosei* would announce him to Matsuoka. "How can a man who isn't here see anyone!" he would yell. Almost constantly in a nervous state, Ogiwara left Matsuoka's employ detesting him. Yet a few years later, when he wrote asking for a job on the South Manchurian Railway, Matsuoka saw to it that he got a position. Under the fierce, arrogant, impatient exterior was a different person which few ever glimpsed.

The Cabinet was just four days old when it unanimously approved a new national policy to cope with "a great ordeal without precedence" in Japan's past. The basic aim of this policy was world peace, and to bring it about, a "new order in Greater East Asia" would have to be established by uniting Japan with Manchukuo and China—under the leadership, of course, of Japan. The entire nation was to be mobilized, with every citizen devoting himself to the state. Planned economy would be established, the Diet reformed and the China Incident brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

Moreover, a tripartite pact would be signed with Germany and Italy, and a nonaggression treaty arranged with the Soviet Union. Although America had placed an embargo on strategic materials to Japan, attempts would be made to placate her as long as she went along with Japan's "just claims." In addition, Japan would move into Indochina and perhaps farther, seizing an empire by force of arms if necessary while Europe was involved in its own war.

This policy was the brainchild of the military leaders, but they had convinced Prime Minister Konoye and the civilians in the Cabinet that it was Japan's last hope for survival in the chaotic modern world. What it meant was that the "Don't miss the bus" fever had become national policy, escalating the China Incident into war and pushing Japan to further aggressions. While the supremacy of civilian leaders over the military was a fundamental aspect of American democracy, the reverse was true in Japan. The Meiji Constitution had divided the power of decision between the Cabinet and the Supreme Command, but the military leaders, who had little understanding of political and diplomatic affairs, could almost always override the civilians in the Cabinet; their resignation would bring down the government. Their influence, however, went beyond the threat of resignation. Military monopoly had become a tradition and was rarely questioned. Consequently, it was the policies of well-meaning but ill-equipped

generals and admirals, based on narrow military thinking, which dominated Japan.

The militarists who had formed this "Don't miss the bus" policy did not want or foresee the possibility of war. With France defeated, and England battling for its own existence, Indochina with its rubber, tin, tungsten, coal and rice was to them "a treasure lying in the street just waiting to be picked up." Within two months Japan forced the impotent Vichy government to sign a convention in Hanoi allowing Japan to set up air bases in northern Indochina* and use that area as a jumping-off place for attacks on China.

All this was not done without protests from Matsuoka and more thoughtful men in the Supreme Command who foresaw a collision course with the Anglo-Saxons in the making. The Army Chief of Staff, Prince Kanin, resigned in tears.

The United States reacted violently to the Japanese move; it meant a potential threat to the Burma Road, through which America was sending supplies into China. Prime Minister Churchill, however, felt quite sanguine about the Japanese garrisons in northern Indochina and suggested that two Indian brigades be removed from Singapore. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden disagreed. "It seems to me difficult to maintain now that the Japanese threat to Malaya is not serious," he wrote in a minute to the Prime Minister. "There is every indication that Germany has made some deal with Japan within these last few days, and it seems, therefore, wise to make some provision for the land defense of Singapore."

Eden had guessed right. The long-discussed Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy was near conclusion even though the Navy still objected, fearing that such an agreement would require Japan's automatic entry into war under certain circumstances. Matsuoka countered this with persuasive and interminable rebuttals. The pact, he declared, "would force the United States to act more prudently in carrying out her plans against Japan" and would prevent war between the two countries. Furthermore, if Germany did get into a fight with America, Japan would not be automatically obliged to come to her aid.

Unable to withstand the onslaught of Matsuoka's arguments—and, incidentally, vociferous popular support for the alliance—the dissidents were won over. Konoye gave his grudging approval because he well knew he would again be forced to resign if he opposed the Army. "My idea is to ride on the military *away* from war," he told his son-in-law. Like the Navy, the Emperor opposed the pact, and before affixing the official seal, he warned Konoye that he feared it would eventually lead to war with America and Britain. "You must, therefore, " he added ominously, "share with me the joys and sorrows that will follow." On September 27, 1940,

*Now North Vietnam.

the pact was signed in Berlin.* To British and Americans this was further evidence that Japan was no better than Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and that the three "gangster" nations had joined forces to conquer the world. The United States retaliated immediately by adding scrap metal of every kind to the list of embargoes, such as strategic materials and aviation fuel, which had been announced in July.

Not only the Anglo-Saxons were dismayed by the treaty. *Pravda* called it a "further aggravation of the war and an expansion of its realm." German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop assured Vyacheslav Molotov, his Russian counterpart, that it was directed exclusively against the American warmongers. "The treaty, of course, does not pursue any aggressive aims against America. Its exclusive purpose is rather to bring the elements pressing for America's entry into the war to their senses, by conclusively demonstrating to them that if they enter the present struggle, they will automatically have to deal with the three great powers as adversaries." Why not join the pact, he suggested, and wrote a long letter to Stalin saying that it was

> the historical mission of the four powers—the Soviet Union, Italy, Japan, and Germany—to adopt a long-range policy and to direct the future developments of their people into the right channel by delimitation of their interests on a world-wide scale. . . .

Matsuoka was positive he had engineered a plan for world peace. To confused intimates who considered him friendly toward America, he said it was the best way to prevent war with the United States. "If you stand firm and start hitting back," he told his eldest son, "the American will know he's talking to a man, and you two can then talk man to man." He thought he, and he alone, knew the real America. "It is my America and my American people that really exist," he once said. "There is no other America; there are no other American people."

"I admit people will call all this a tricky business," he told Dr. Saito; but he had allied with Hitler "to check the Army's aggressive policy . . . and to keep American warmongers from joining the war in Europe. And after that we can shake hands with the United States. This would keep peace in the Pacific while forming a great combine of capitalistic nations around the world against Communism."

The Tripartite Pact was also a means of settling the China Incident,

*At this time Hitler did not want war with Japan *and* the Anglo-Saxons and felt, like Matsuoka, that the pact obviated such a conflict. He wrote Mussolini that "a close co-operation with Japan is the best way either to keep America entirely out of the picture or to render her entry into the war ineffective." Almost as soon as the pact was signed the Führer changed his mind about keeping peace in the Far East. He decided that Japan had to become involved in the war as soon as possible, and the German ambassador in Tokyo was ordered to inveigle Japan into attacking Singapore at the risk of provoking the United States.

he said. "The solution of the incident should rest on mutual assistance and prosperity, not on the hope of getting outside help to threaten China. To do this we should use the good offices of a third nation. I think the United States would do admirably for this purpose. But here the question is, What concessions will Japan (or rather, the Army) make? Japan should agree to a complete withdrawal of her troops from China."

The devious Matsuoka concluded that his aims could best be accomplished by supporting Ribbentrop's plan for a grand quadruple alliance uniting Germany, Italy and Japan with their common enemy, Russia, and requested permission to go to Europe so he could personally bring this to pass. After lengthy debate the military chiefs approved the trip but rejected his request to bring along a gift for Hitler—promise of a Japanese attack on Singapore.

On March 12, 1941, a large crowd gathered at Tokyo Station to bid Matsuoka farewell. As the bell rang announcing the train's departure, he rushed up to General Sugiyama and pestered him once more about Singapore. When was he going to take the city?

"I cannot tell you now," the general replied stiffly, thinking to himself, What a troublesome fellow this Matsuoka is!

That he was became evident when, on the long trip across Siberia, he said privately to Colonel Yatsuji Nagai, sent along by the Army to see that he would make no rash promises about Singapore, "Nagai-*san,* you try to stir up some trouble along the border; I'm going to try to close a Japanese-Soviet neutrality pact."

In Berlin he first saw Hitler and even in these discussions it was Matsuoka who, as usual, dominated the conversation. In fact, Hitler rarely talked, and when he did he usually railed against England, exclaiming, "She must be beaten!"

Both Ribbentrop and Hitler, as well as high officials of the Reich, did their best to convince Matsuoka that seizure of Singapore would be advantageous to Japan. Ribbentrop argued that it would "perhaps be most likely to keep America out of war," because then Roosevelt couldn't risk sending his fleet into Japanese waters, while Hitler assured him that if Japan *did* get into war, Germany would come to her aid and "would be more than a match for America, entirely apart from the fact that the German soldiers were, obviously, far superior to the Americans."

But Matsuoka became evasive at every mention of Singapore. For example, when Hermann Göring, after accepting a scroll of Mount Fuji, jokingly promised to come and see the real thing only "if Japan takes Singapore," Matsuoka nodded toward the edgy Nagai and said, "You'll have to ask him."

Matsuoka was not at all reticent about the treaty he hoped to make with Stalin and was surprised to hear Ribbentrop, who had given him the idea of a grand quadruple pact, say, "How can you conclude such

a pact at this time? Just remember, the U.S.S.R. never gives anything for nothing." Nagai took this to be a warning, but Matsuoka's enthusiasm could not be damped even when the ambassador to Germany, General Hiroshi Oshima, told him in confidence that there was a good likelihood Germany and Russia would soon go to war.

On April 6 the party left Berlin. At the Soviet border they learned that Germany had invaded Yugoslavia. Nagai and the other advisers were disturbed—just the previous day Russia had signed a neutrality pact with Yugoslavia—but Matsuoka himself was effervescent. "Now I have the agreement with Stalin in my pocket!" he told his private secretary, Toshikazu Kase.

He was right. A week after arriving in Moscow, he signed a neutrality pact in the Kremlin. At the extravagant celebration party, Stalin was so obviously delighted at the turn of events that he personally brought plates of food to the Japanese, embraced them, kissed them, and danced around like a performing bear. The treaty was a coup for his diplomacy, convincing proof that he could disregard rumors about a German attack on Russia. After all, if Hitler had any such plans, would he have allowed Japan to conclude this agreement? "*Banzai* for His Majesty the Emperor!" was his opening toast. He averred that diplomatic pledges should never be broken, even if ideologies differed.

Matsuoka toasted him in turn and then added something no other Japanese diplomat would have said. "The treaty has been made," he blurted out. "I do not lie. If I lie, my head shall be yours. If you lie, be sure I will come for your head."

"My head is important to my country," Stalin retorted coldly. "So is yours to your country. Let's take care to keep both our heads on our shoulders." It was an embarrassing moment made worse when Matsuoka, in an attempt to be funny, remarked that Nagai and his naval counterpart "were always talking of how to beat the devil out of you."

Stalin wasn't joking when he replied that while Japan was very strong, the Soviet Union was not the Czarist Russia of 1904. But an instant later he had regained his good humor. "You are an Asiatic," he said. "And so am I."

"We're all Asiatics. Let us drink to the Asiatics!"

The innumerable toasts made it necessary to delay the eastbound train for an hour. At the station platform the Japanese were taken aback to see Stalin and Molotov tipsily converging on them from a side door for a final good-bye. Stalin kissed Nagai. "The reason England's in trouble today," he bellowed, "is because she has a low opinion of soldiers." Beaming, Stalin then encompassed the diminutive Matsuoka in a bear hug and gave him several affectionate smacks. "There is nothing to fear in Europe," he said, "now that there is a Japan-Soviet neutrality pact!"

Matsuoka should have heeded Corneille's character who said, "I embrace my rival, but only to choke him." Instead, he blithely exclaimed, "There is nothing to fear in the whole world!" and like a conqueror, climbed aboard the train. (Stalin was already embracing another ambassador—Hitler's envoy, Count Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg—and telling him, "We must remain friends, and you must do everything to that end.") As the train carrying Matsuoka traversed Siberia, he told Kase that just before leaving Moscow he had talked freely with his old friend Laurence Steinhardt, the American ambassador, and they had agreed to try to restore good relations between their two countries. "Now the stage is set," he said. "Next I will go to Washington."

3.

On the other side of the world Matsuoka's ambassador in Washington, the good-natured, one-eyed Kichisaburo Nomura, a retired admiral, was already endeavoring to patch up the differences between Japan and America with Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Their talks had been inspired by two energetic Catholic priests, Bishop James E. Walsh, Superior General of the Maryknoll Society, and his assistant, Father James M. Drought. Some six months earlier, armed with an introductory letter from Lewis L. Strauss of Kuhn, Loeb & Company, the two priests had gone to Tokyo, where they visited Tadao Ikawa, a director of the Central Agricultural and Forestry Bank. They persuaded him that men of good will in both Japan and America could help bring about a peaceful settlement, and showed Ikawa a memorandum calling for a Japanese "Far Eastern Monroe Doctrine" and a stand against Communism, "which is not a political form of government but a corroding social disease that becomes epidemic." Ikawa was impressed by the memorandum and felt sure any reasonable Japanese would agree to its terms. During several years' service in the United States as an official of the Finance Ministry, he had made numerous friends in New York banking circles and acquired an American wife. He assumed that the proposal had the backing of President Roosevelt, since Father Drought had mentioned he was acting with the approval of "top personnel" in the U. S. government and, fired with enthusiasm, introduced the clergymen to Prime Minister Konoye and Matsuoka. The former suggested that Ikawa sound out the Army in the person of an influential colonel in the War Ministry named Hideo Iwakuro. He was a unique combination of idealism and intrigue and was just the man to put the priests' project into action: he ardently believed that peace with America was Japan's salvation, and plotting was a way of life with him. Behind his impish smile was one of the most agile brains in the Army. An espionage and intelligence

expert, he had founded the prestigious Nakano School for spies, which was at the time sending out groups of well-trained agents throughout Asia imbued with his own idealistic views of a free amalgamation of Asian nations. It was he, too, who had dreamed up the idea for wrecking the Chinese economy by flooding that country with a billion and a half dollars' worth of counterfeit yen. He had also succeeded in getting refuge in Manchuria for some five thousand wandering Jews who had fled Hitler, by persuading the Kwantung Army leaders on grounds that no true Japanese could deny: a debt was owed the Jews; the Jewish firm of Kuhn, Loeb & Company had helped finance the Russo-Japanese War.

Colonel Iwakuro arranged an interview for the two Americans with General Akira Muto, chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, and the latter was equally impressed by their proposal; he gave it his blessing. Around New Year's the two priests returned to America, where they made an ally out of Postmaster General Frank C. Walker, a prominent Catholic. He set up an interview with President Roosevelt. The President met Bishop Walsh, read his long, enthusiastic memorandum and passed it on to Hull with the notation: ". . . What do you think we should do? FDR."

"In general, I am skeptical whether the plan offered is a practical one at this time," Hull replied in a note drafted largely by Dr. Stanley Hornbeck, his senior adviser on Far Eastern affairs, well known for his sympathy toward China and hostility toward Japan.* "It seems to me that there is little or no likelihood that the Japanese Government and the Japanese people would in good faith accept any such arrangement at this stage."

But the President was so intrigued by the idea that he asked Postmaster General Walker to turn over his duties to an assistant and give Bishop Walsh whatever assistance he could. As a "presidential agent," Walker was empowered to set up secret headquarters on the eighteenth floor of

*Hornbeck's views on China were shared by an America which had made Pearl Buck's novel *The Good Earth* a best seller. For three decades Americans had held a highly idealized picture of the Chinese, looking upon them as childlike innocents who needed protection against the imperialism of Britain and Japan. China was a helpless, deserving nation whose virtues America alone understood.

"In this highly subjective picture of the Chinese," wrote George F. Kennan, "there was no room for a whole series of historical and psychological realities. There was no room for the physical ruthlessness that had characterized Chinese political life generally in recent decades; for the formidable psychological and political powers of the Chinese people themselves; for the strong streak of xenophobia in their nature; for the lessons of the Boxer Rebellion; for the extraordinary exploitative talent shown by Chinese factions, of all times, in turning outside aid to domestic political advantage."

The so-called China Lobby did much to further China's cause in America. It was created by T. V. Soong, a clever and charming member of China's most omnipotent family. One sister had married Sun Yat-sen; another, a descendant of Confucius, H. H. Kung; and a third, Chiang Kai-shek. Educated at Harvard and Columbia, Soong became close friends with influential Americans such as Henry Morgenthau, Harry Hopkins, Roy Howard, Henry Luce, Joseph Alsop and Thomas Corcoran. With their help, and that of a Pole, Ludwig Rajchman, Soong set up the lobby in 1940 and found he now had direct access to President Roosevelt without having to go through Hull.

the Berkshire Hotel in New York City, and was given a code name, "John Doe."

Late in January, Bishop Walsh cabled Ikawa: AS A RESULT OF MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, HOPEFUL OF PROGRESS, AWAITING DEVELOPMENTS. Ikawa wondered if he should go to Washington as well, to help the priests and Ambassador Nomura, who was about to sail for the United States, find a formula for coexistence. The admiral was a straightforward, honest man of good will and good nature, with many American friends, including President Roosevelt, but unfortunately had no foreign office experience and little aptitude for diplomacy.

Ikawa went to Colonel Iwakuro for advice. The colonel encouraged him to go and, moreover, wangled a commercial passport for him, as well as money for the trip from two industrialists who were willing to make a contribution toward peace. Ikawa would assist Nomura on the pretext of negotiating with American businessmen. When word of the trip leaked out, Matsuoka (just before his trip to Europe) accused the Army of "taking upon itself negotiations with America" and of "putting up the money." War Minister Hideki Tojo knew nothing of the arrangement and summoned Iwakuro to his office. Iwakuro was so persuasive that Tojo categorically, and in good faith, informed the Foreign Ministry that the Army had no knowledge whatsoever of the Ikawa mission.

It was a dangerous game but Iwakuro felt that friendly relations with America were well worth it, and playing dangerous games was his hobby. He thought this ended his part in the matter but it had just begun, for Tojo had become so impressed with Iwakuro's grasp of the situation that he was ordered to proceed to America to help Nomura in his mission.

To prepare himself for the assignment, Iwakuro consulted with those who called for war as well as those who wanted peace. One night at a party in the Ginza, Nissho Inoue, leader of the Blood Brotherhood, urged him to become a spy: "We are going to fight against Britain and the United States, since they are blockading us, and your duty in America is to find out when we should start the war." But these saber rattlers were far outnumbered by those who urged Iwakuro to arrange any kind of honorable settlement.

Exuding an air of conspiracy, he arrived in New York City on March 30 to find an America widely split on the issue of war or peace. The interventionists, convinced their country's future and ultimate safety depended on helping the democracies crush the aggressor nations, had just pushed through Congress the Lend-Lease Act committing America to unlimited aid, "short of war," to the enemies of the Axis. She was to be the Arsenal of Democracy. Supporting this measure, and war itself, were such groups as "Bundles for Britain," as well as national minorities whose European relatives had suffered at the hands of Hitler and Mussolini. Their antiwar opponents included strange bedfellows: the right-wing "America

Firsters" of Charles Lindbergh, Senator Borah and the German-American Bund; the "American Peace Mobilization" of the American Communist and Labor parties; and the traditionally isolationist Midwest which, though sympathetic to Britain and China, wanted no part of a shooting war.

Iwakuro was taken from the airport to St. Patrick's Cathedral to confer with Bishop Walsh and Father Drought. "Because of the Tripartite Pact, Japan cannot do anything to betray its co-signers," he said. "The thirteenth disciple, Judas, betrayed Christ, and every Christian despises him. It is the same with us Japanese. So if you insist that we withdraw from the pact, it will be hopeless to go on." The priests said they understood, and Iwakuro proceeded to Washington. He got a room at the Wardman Park Hotel, where Cordell Hull had recently taken an apartment. The next morning he reported to Admiral Nomura and found him affable and eager to utilize the unofficial channel opened up by the two priests and Ikawa. Most of the professional diplomats at the embassy, however, were hostile to this approach and were already treating Ikawa with open contempt. To them the new arrival was even more of an enigma. Iwakuro appeared to be "engagingly frank" but they felt he had come to camouflage the aggressive intents of the Army, and were wary.

On April 2 Father Drought began helping the two unofficial Japanese diplomats draw up a Draft Understanding between Japan and the United States. In three days it was completed. It was a broad agreement, conciliatory in tone, touching on problems ranging from the Tripartite Pact to economic activity in the southwest Pacific. Its most significant points concerned China, with Japan promising to withdraw troops and renounce all claims to any Chinese territory, provided China recognized Manchukuo and provided the government of Chiang Kai-shek was merged with that of a rival regime in Nanking under a former premier of the Republic of China, Wang Ching-wei.*

Drought took one copy to Postmaster General Walker, who called it

*Several months earlier, on November 30, 1940, Japan had signed a treaty with the Wang government. The son of a scholar, Wang had studied political science in Tokyo and became Sun Yat-sen's chief disciple. It was he who wrote down Sun's last wishes at his deathbed. He served twice as premier of the Republic of China before becoming vice president of the Nationalist party. From the beginning he had been a rival of Chiang Kai-shek's, and their relations became so strained that at a private luncheon late in 1938 he suggested they both resign their offices and "redeem the sins they had committed against China." This infuriated Chiang and a few days later Wang thought it best to escape by plane to Hanoi. On March 30, 1940, he established his own splinter government in Nanking, although he had little popular support and not much money.

What he wanted primarily was peace with Japan for the good of the Chinese people, and if he had succeeded he would have become a national hero. But the treaty, which, by recognizing Wang's government, purportedly gave Japan a legal basis for fighting in China, was turning out badly for both Wang and the Japanese. It ruined any chance there was for Japan to make peace with Chiang Kai-shek and made the Nanking government a puppet of Japan. As a result, Wang had already become the symbol of treachery in China.

"a revolution in Japanese 'ideology' and policy, as well as a proof of the complete success of American statesmanship," and passed it along to Roosevelt, with the recommendation that he sign it immediately before "the Japanese leaders [were] assassinated." At the Japanese embassy Nomura, Minister Kaname Wakasugi, the military and naval attachés and a man from the Treaties Section, after some changes in wording, unanimously approved it.

The Draft Understanding was carefully examined at the State Department by the Far Eastern experts. They concluded that "most of its provisions were all that the ardent Japanese imperialists could want." Hull concurred but felt that "however objectionable some of the points might be, there were others that could be accepted as they stood and still others that could be agreed to if modified." On April 14 Ikawa told Nomura that he had arranged a private meeting with Hull at the Wardman Park Hotel that evening. Nomura was to go to Hull's apartment by a rear corridor and knock on the door at eight o'clock. Nomura did this, but he was afraid it was a practical joke. To his surprise, Hull opened the door. His was a sad, thoughtful face and he spoke slowly and gently except—as Nomura was to learn—when aroused. He came from Tennessee, land of mountain feuds, and was himself a man of implacable hatreds.

Nomura announced cryptically that he knew all about a certain "Draft Understanding," and though he hadn't yet forwarded it to Tokyo, thought his government "would be favorably disposed toward it." Hull raised objections to some of the points in the agreement but said that once these had been worked out, Nomura could send the revised document to Tokyo to ascertain whether the imperial government would take it as a "basis for negotiations." The inexperienced Nomura inferred from this that a revised Draft Understanding would be acceptable to the United States.

But the admiral was seriously mistaken. Hull had unwittingly misled Nomura, since he did *not* regard the proposals as a solid basis for negotiations. Perhaps the misunderstanding was a result of Nomura's faulty English. Or perhaps Nomura's great desire for a settlement had influenced his interpretation of Hull's vague phraseology. Nevertheless, it was largely Hull's fault. He should have known he was giving some encouragement to Nomura, when he had no such intentions. He had committed a tactical error.

The two diplomats met again two days later at Hull's apartment. "The one paramount preliminary question about which my Government is concerned," Hull began in his slow, circuitous manner, "is a definite assurance in advance that the Japanese Government has the willingness and ability to go forward with a plan . . . in relation to the problems of a settlement; to abandon its present doctrine of military conquest by force and . . . adopt the principles which this Government has been proclaiming and practicing as embodying the foundation on which all relations

between nations should properly rest." He handed over a piece of paper listing these four principles:

1. Respect for the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of each and all nations.
2. Support of the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries.
3. Support of the principle of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity.
4. Nondisturbance of the status quo in the Pacific except as the status quo may be altered by peaceful means.

Wondering if his earlier optimism had been well founded, Nomura asked if Hull "would to a fairly full extent approve the proposals contained" in the Draft Understanding. Some would be readily approved, Hull replied, while others would have to be changed or eliminated. ". . . But if [your] Government is in real earnest about changing its course," he continued, "I [can] see no good reason why ways could not be found to reach a fairly mutually satisfactory settlement of all the essential questions and problems presented." This reassured Nomura and he remained optimistic even when Hull pointed out that they had "in no sense reached the stage of negotiations" and were "only exploring in a purely preliminary and unofficial way what action might pave the way for negotiations later."

Nomura transmitted Hull's suggestions and objections to the unofficial diplomats and most of his comments were incorporated in a revised Draft Understanding. The document was enciphered and dispatched to Tokyo, accompanied by a strong recommendation from Nomura for a favorable response. He added that Hull had "on the whole no objections" to the Draft Understanding (which Hull had said, in so many words) and was willing to use it as a basis for negotiations (which he had no intention of doing).

It was now Nomura's turn to commit a diplomatic blunder—as serious as Hull's. He failed to relay the Secretary of State's four basic principles to Tokyo. Certainly this information would have cooled some of Prime Minister Konoye's enthusiasm for the Draft Understanding. As it was, the Prime Minister was so encouraged by the way things seemed to be working out that he convened an emergency meeting of government and military leaders. They were just as enthused, including the military, and agreed that the American proposal—for that is what they thought the Draft Understanding was—should be promptly accepted in principle.*

*The Army General Staff had already received an optimistic report from the military attaché in Washington: IMPROVEMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES CAN BE ESTABLISHED. PLEASE EXERT ALL EFFORTS TO SEND INSTRUCTIONS IMMEDIATELY.

One of War Minister Tojo's most trusted advisers, Colonel Kenryo Sato, was astounded that America would make such concessions. It was all "too good to be true," he felt, and passed along his suspicions to Tojo. But the War Minister was willing to do almost anything to settle the war in China honorably and went along with the rest of the Cabinet.

Matsuoka's deputy protested. They should wait for a few days, until the Foreign Minister returned from Moscow. Konoye wanted no collision with the troublesome Matsuoka and acquiesced. On April 21 he learned that Matsuoka had at last arrived at Dairen, not far from the battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War, and told him over the phone to come home at once to consider an important proposal from Washington. Matsuoka assumed this was a result of his talk in Moscow with U. S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt and triumphantly told his secretary that he would soon be heading for America to complete his plan for world peace.

The next afternoon Matsuoka's plane landed at Tachikawa Air Base and he stepped out warmed by the cheers of the waiting crowd. Prime Minister Konoye was on hand, even though he was suffering so intensely from piles that he had to sit on an inflated circular tube. He offered to take Matsuoka to the Prime Minister's official residence, where other Cabinet ministers were waiting; he would brief the Foreign Minister on the negotiations with America en route. Matsuoka mentioned that he wanted to stop briefly at the plaza outside the Palace moat to pay his respects to the Emperor. To Konoye it was pretentious and in bad taste to bow deeply while newsmen took pictures, and he could not stand to the side while Matsuoka went through the ceremony or he'd be accused of insolence to the Emperor.

Since Matsuoka insisted on having his own way and Konoye was too proud to join him, the two left the airport in separate cars.* On the drive to the Palace, Matsuoka learned from his Vice Minister that the proposal for a peaceful settlement was not his own doing but the work of a couple of amateur diplomats. He was mortified, and that night was late for a conference at the Prime Minister's official residence, convened to discuss the Draft Understanding. He avoided not only Konoye but the subject of the meeting as well, talking incessantly of Hitler-*san* and Stalin-*san* as if they were his closest friends. Piqued at first, he became spirited and expansive as he boasted of how he had told Steinhardt that Roosevelt was "quite a gambler" and that the United States was keeping both the China Incident and the war going with her aid. "I told him the peace-loving President of the United States should co-operate with Japan, which is also peace-loving, and that he should inveigle Chiang to make peace with us." He also related that Ribbentrop had told him that Germany had signed the pact with Russia only because of "unavoidable circumstances" and that if it

*Later Konoye repeatedly said, "If only I had ridden that day with Matsuoka!" His secretary, Ushiba, believes pain from piles was probably a contributing factor. If so, it was not the first time this relatively minor ailment changed history. Napoleon suffered intensely from hemorrhoids at Waterloo.

"Konoye may not have succeeded in placating Matsuoka," Ushiba commented further, "but his failure to ride with Matsuoka as he had planned may have been a turning point of history. It was really a great pity inasmuch as Konoye had been very keen on personally explaining to Matsuoka, and even restrained other Cabinet ministers from going to meet him. This incident throws much light on Konoye's character: he lacked persistence; he easily cooled off."

came to war, Germany would probably be able to defeat Stalin in three or four months.

But the business of the conference could not be avoided indefinitely. When the Draft Understanding was finally brought up, Matsuoka burst out stridently, "I cannot agree to this, whatever you Army and Navy people say! First of all, what about our treaty with Germany and Italy? In the last war the United States made use of Japan through the Ishii-Lansing agreement,* and when the war was over, the United States broke it. This is an old trick of theirs." Suddenly he announced that he felt very tired and needed "a month's rest" to think things over, and went home.

His arrogant manner had not been of a kind to bring reassurance, and as the meeting continued far into the night, both Tojo and General Muto recommended that the Draft Understanding be approved without further delay. The following day Konoye summoned his Foreign Minister. Matsuoka had calmed down, but about all he would say was, "I wish you would give me time to forget all about my European trip; then I'll consider the present case."

A week passed without any action from Matsuoka, and pressure began to build in the Army and Navy for his removal. Whether he was so offended that negotiations had been initiated without him that he was deliberately sabotaging them or was merely being properly cautious for fear that an amateur attempt at peace might lead to disaster, it was difficult to tell.

The reason Matsuoka himself gave was that the Draft Understanding was merely a plot of the Army, and Colonel Iwakuro was making a cat's-paw out of him. So he did nothing, while the Army and Navy fumed and the negotiators in Washington wondered what had gone wrong. It was hardest on the impetuous Iwakuro. Finally, on April 29, the Emperor's birthday, he could restrain himself no longer and suggested telephoning Matsuoka. It was indiscreet, but indiscretion was Iwakuro's creed and his associates were persuaded by his enthusiasm. It was decided that he and Ikawa should make the call from Postmaster General Walker's secret headquarters in New York City. By the evening they were in Room 1812 at the Berkshire Hotel, and began toasting the Emperor in port. The colonel had a small tolerance for wine and after two glasses he was feeling light-headed. At eight o'clock (it was ten o'clock the next morning in Japan) he put in the call to Matsuoka's home in Sendagaya.

"Congratulations on your trip to Europe," Iwakuro began. "About the fish I sent you the other day, how did you find it? Please have it cooked as soon as possible. Otherwise it will go bad. Nomura and all the others are expecting to have your reply soon."

"I know, I know," said Matsuoka curtly. "Tell him not to be so active."

Iwakuro wished he could have slapped Matsuoka for answering so rudely.

*In 1917 the United States consented to Japan's request that her "special interests" in China be recognized, but terminated the ambiguous agreement after the Armistice.

"Please find out how others think about it. If you keep the fish around too long, it will surely go bad. Please be careful. Otherwise people will hold you responsible for everything."

"I know," was the blunt answer. Iwakuro hung up, muttered something incomprehensible, and to Ikawa's consternation, abruptly passed out.

The following day the two men called on former President Herbert Hoover, who welcomed them warmly but observed that since the Republicans were not in power, they could be of little help in the negotiations. "If war comes, civilization will be set back five hundred years," he said and added somberly, "The negotiations should be completed before summer or they will fail."

In Tokyo, Matsuoka was still delaying the reply to Hull. He had informed Hitler of the Draft Understanding and was waiting for his comments.* To those who pressed for action, he repeated that before approving the Draft Understanding, Japan should ask America to sign a neutrality treaty which would be in effect even if Japan and Britain went to war. Nomura was told to sound out Hull on such a treaty. Naturally, Hull rejected the proposal peremptorily. This irritated Matsuoka no end; he told the Emperor on May 8 that if the United States entered the war in Europe, Japan should back their Axis allies and attack Singapore. He predicted that the talks in Washington would come to nothing, and that if they did succeed it would only mean that America had been placated at the expense of Germany and Italy. "If that happens, I am afraid I cannot remain in the Cabinet."

When Prince Konoye heard this—from the Emperor himself, who expressed his "astonishment and grave concern"—he secretly met with his War and Navy ministers, General Tojo and Admiral Koshiro Oikawa, and they agreed to force the fractious Foreign Minister to act. A reply accepting the main conditions of the Draft Understanding was drawn up, and Matsuoka was instructed to send it without delay.

On May 12 Nomura brought this document to Hull's apartment. Hull read it with disappointment. It "offered little basis for an agreement, unless we were willing to sacrifice some of our most basic principles, which we were not." Still, it was a formal proposition and he decided "to go forward on the basis of the Japanese proposals and seek to argue Japan into modifying here, eliminating there, and inserting elsewhere, until we might reach an accord we both could sign with mutual good will."

The problem—already beset by language difficulties, stubbornness, rigidity and confusion—was further aggravated by American intercepts of Japa-

*Matsuoka also promised the German ambassador, General Eugen Ott, who expressed fears that the negotiations in Washington would negate the Tripartite Pact, that if the United States entered the war, Japan would definitely get in it. Notwithstanding, Hitler was suspicious of Matsuoka, and told Mussolini that Matsuoka was a Catholic who also sacrificed to pagan gods and "one must conclude that he was combining the hypocrisy of an American Bible missionary with the craftiness of a Japanese Asiatic."

nese messages. Diplomatic codes, supposedly unbreakable, had been cracked by American experts, and messages from the Japanese government to its diplomats overseas were being intercepted and deciphered under the cover name of Operation MAGIC. Consequently, Hull usually knew what was on Nomura's mind before he walked into a conference.* But since many of the decoded messages were not considered worthy of Hull's attention—a naval officer made this decision on his own—and since messages were translated by men not fluent in the stylized and difficult language of Japanese diplomacy, Hull was occasionally misled.

The judge from Tennessee, moreover, was constantly annoyed at the perpetual, "frozen" smiles of the Japanese, and either ridiculed or made fun of their bowing and "hissing."** As a result, it was easy for his chief adviser, Dr. Hornbeck, to persuade him that the Japanese were not to be trusted and that any compromise with Japan would be a betrayal of American democratic principles.

Hornbeck, a highly ethical man like his superior, who had been brought up in China, was by nature antagonistic to the Japanese and looked on their expansion from a purely moralistic standpoint. Hornbeck's associate in the State Department, J. Pierrepont Moffat, described him as regarding "Japan as the sun around which her satellites, Germany and Italy, were revolving." A proponent for economic warfare since the fall of 1938, he stood for "a diplomatic 'war plan.'" Stubborn and sensitive, he was convinced that Japan was a "predatory" power run by arrogant militarists who were encouraged by world timidity to go from aggression to aggression. He had always felt they could only be blocked by a series of retaliations, ending, if need be, in economic sanctions. This program should be put into effect even if it ended in war; bowing to the militarists' demands would eventually end in war, anyway. Like so many intellectuals—and he was one of the most brilliant men in the foreign service—he was opinionated.† He was also dictatorial and could easily override more objective sub-

*About two weeks earlier Ambassador Hiroshi Oshima had cabled from Berlin that he had just been told by Dr. Heinrich Stahmer, a Foreign Ministry official in charge of Japanese-German affairs, that German intelligence was fairly certain the American government was reading Nomura's coded messages. "There are at least two circumstances to substantiate the suspicion," said Oshima. "One is that Germany is also reading our coded messages. And the other is that the Americans once before succeeded in compromising our codes, in 1922, during the Washington Conference." But Kazuji Kameyama, chief of the Cable Section, assured Matsuoka that it was humanly impossible to break the diplomatic code, and it was assumed that any secret information America obtained had come through security leaks.

**Snakes and cats hiss by expelling breath. Japanese do just the opposite, *sucking* in at times of cogitation, uncertainty or embarrassment.

†"I am still convinced," Ushiba wrote in 1970, "that *on the U. S. side*, Hull's formalism and orthodox diplomacy and Hornbeck's stubbornness proved the undoing of Konoye's efforts (granted there was much more stubbornness on the Japanese side!)"

ordinates, such as the modest Joseph W. Ballantine, the department's leading Japan expert.

During these trying days Hull and Nomura often met at the Wardman Park Hotel in an effort to work out their differences, but made little progress. Part of their trouble came from Tokyo, where Matsuoka was making provocative announcements both privately and publicly. On May 14 he told Ambassador Grew that Hitler had shown great "patience and generosity" in not declaring war on the United States, and that American attacks on German submarines would doubtless lead to war between Japan and America. The "manly, decent and reasonable" thing for the United States to do, he said, was "to declare war openly on Germany instead of engaging in acts of war under cover of neutrality." Grew with all his sympathies could not bear such an insult, and he rebutted Matsuoka's assertions point for point. Matsuoka realized he had gone too far and after the meeting wrote a conciliatory note:

> . . . I was wondering, to be frank, why you appeared so disturbed when I referred to the American attitude and actions. After Your Excellency's departure, it all suddenly dawned on me that I misused a word. . . . Of course, I didn't mean to say "indecent." No! I wanted to say "indiscretion."
>
> I write you the above in order to remove any misapprehension; I'd feel very sorry if I caused any.

Three days later Matsuoka wrote Grew again. In a long, disjointed letter marked "Entirely Private" he said he knew how to be "correct" as a foreign minister but often forgot that he was foreign minister. Furthermore, he hated the so-called correct attitudes of many diplomats which "hardly get us anywhere" and then admitted that he thought in terms of one, two and even three thousand years, and if that sounded like insanity he couldn't help it because he was made that way.

Indeed, more than one thought this last was the case. At a recent liaison conference Navy Minister Oikawa had remarked, "The Foreign Minister is insane, isn't he?" And President Roosevelt, after reading a MAGIC translation of instructions sent by Matsuoka to Nomura, thought they were "the product of a mind which is deeply disturbed and unable to think quietly or logically."

Prince Konoye, however, believed Matsuoka's provocative, inflammatory and sometimes erratic statements were purposely made to frighten opponents; perhaps that was why he kept aiming so many barbs at America. But if this had started as a tactic and he sincerely wanted peace, it ended in disaster. Because of his insults and delays, the talks in Washington had about reached an impasse. Matsuoka knew this was happening, yet he continued insulting and delaying and looking to Hitler for advice. He was deliberately wrecking the negotiations probably out of his egomaniacal

conviction that he and he alone knew the real America and could resolve the controversy.

He remained belligerent while Nomura and Iwakuro talked peace, and Hull, understandably, concluded that he was being misled. On June 21 the Secretary of State at last answered the Japanese proposal: Japan would have to abandon the Tripartite Pact, and he rejected the Japanese plan to retain troops in certain areas of North China to help the Chinese combat the Communists.

Konoye and his cabinet were dismayed. It wasn't even as acceptable an offer as the Draft Understanding. Why had the Americans changed from their "original" proposal? wondered Konoye, still unaware that Hull had never regarded the Draft Understanding as a basis for negotiations.

What infuriated Matsuoka was an Oral Statement that accompanied Hull's answer to the effect that recent public statements by certain Japanese officials—and it was obvious he meant Matsuoka—seemed to be an unsurmountable roadblock to the negotiations. The Foreign Minister took this as a personal insult, and cause for breaking off the talks in Washington altogether.

This concern and confusion was eclipsed the next day, Sunday, June 22, when Hitler invaded Russia. The Japanese were taken by surprise, although Ambassador Oshima, after talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop, had cabled sixteen days earlier that war between Germany and Russia was imminent.

It also came as a blow to Stalin, despite 180 German violations of Soviet air space (including penetrations as deep as four hundred miles) in the previous two months. There were also unheeded warnings of an impending attack from official Washington and London—and Stalin's own secret agent in Tokyo, Richard Sorge, who had correctly predicted in the spring of 1939 that Germany would march into Poland on September 1. Sorge not only dispatched photocopies of telegrams from Ribbentrop informing his ambassador in Tokyo, General Eugen Ott, that the Wehrmacht would invade the Soviet Union in the second half of June, he also sent a last-minute message on June 14: "War begins June 22." In the first few hours the Luftwaffe wiped out 66 Soviet airfields and destroyed 1,200 planes while ground forces swept forward capturing almost 2,000 big guns, 3,000 tanks and 2,000 truckloads of ammunition.*

*According to *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.*: "The country's poor preparedness was due to grave errors of judgement made by Stalin in evaluating the general strategic situation and in his estimates of the probable time the war would break out. . . . Hitler hoped that his surprise attack would knock out the Red Army, and to be sure, Stalin's errors of judgement and his outright mistakes, went a long way to further his designs."

Early in 1969, however, the Soviet Communist party's most authoritative journal, *Kommunist*, declared that Stalin was an "outstanding military leader," and that Nikita Khrushchev's dramatic attack on Stalin at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 was completely unfounded. "Not a stone remains of the irresponsible statements about his military incompetence, of

The news of the attack reached Tokyo a little before four o'clock on Sunday afternoon. Within minutes Matsuoka phoned the Lord Privy Seal, Marquis Koichi Kido, and asked for an audience with the Emperor. Kido was a small, neatly compact man of fifty-two, with a trimmed mustache, and had, like Konoye, been a protégé of Prince Saionji's. The liberal political philosophy and logical reasoning which characterized the last *genro* (he had died the previous year at the age of ninety-one) had always made a deep impression on him, particularly Saionji's repeated warnings that Japan's policy must be based on co-operation with Britain and America. Accordingly, Kido had actively opposed the seizure of Manchuria, the push into China and the Tripartite Pact. His grandfather by marriage, as it were, was Koin Kido, one of the four most illustrious leaders of the Meiji Restoration,* but the young man had earned every advancement by his own industry and ability. As Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Kido was the permanent confidential adviser to the Emperor on all matters ("I was to the Emperor what Harry Hopkins was to President Roosevelt") and Hirohito had grown to lean on his counsel. Konoye and Kido were probably the two most influential civilians in Japan, and though close friends, were almost exact opposites in character as well as appearance. Already highly respected as a hard-headed, practical man, the Privy Seal was direct and decisive, a pragmatist. He was an able administrator and every detail of his life was carefully planned, precisely executed. In golf, which he played with zealous regularity, he was such a model of precision with his modulated swing that his partners called him "Kido the Clock."

After arranging a five-thirty audience for Matsuoka, Kido informed the Emperor that the Foreign Minister's views probably differed from Konoye's. "I would like His Majesty to ask him if he has consulted with the Prime Minister regarding the question, and tell him that this question is extremely important," said Kido. "Therefore he should confer closely with the Prime Minister and tell him that the Emperor is basically in agreement with the Prime Minister. Please excuse my impertinence for daring to give His Majesty this advice."

When Matsuoka spoke to the Emperor, within the hour, it was evident he had not yet talked with Konoye. He was sure Germany would quickly

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his direction of the war 'on a globe,' of his supposedly absolute intolerance of other views, and of other similar inventions grasped and spread by foreign falsifiers of history." This reappraisal was echoed a few days later by the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* in a lengthy attack on "revisionists" in such countries as Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and France.

*In going over this portion of the manuscript for corrections, Marquis Kido wrote: "My grandfather is generally called Koin, but the proper pronunciation of the Japanese characters is Takayoshi." Takayoshi had no son to carry on the family name, and his nephew Takamasa (his younger sister's son) was legally made a Kido after he married Takayoshi's only daughter. She died and Takamasa married again; Koichi Kido was the eldest son of that union.

defeat Russia,* and recommended an immediate attack on Siberia and a postponement of the push to the south. Astonished, since this policy meant expansion in two directions, the Emperor asked Matsuoka to consult with Konoye and indicated that the audience was over.

Matsuoka did see Konoye but listened to no advice, and continued to call for an attack on Russia in private as well as at liaison conferences. These were ordinarily held at the Prime Minister's official residence. They were informal gatherings of the Big Four of the Cabinet—the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, War Minister and Navy Minister—with the Army and Navy Chiefs and Vice Chiefs of Staff. Other Cabinet ministers and experts occasionally attended to give counsel and information. The Prime Minister sat in an armchair near the center of a medium-sized conference room surrounded by the others. Three secretaries—the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet, the chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the War Ministry and the chief of the Naval Affairs Bureau of the Navy Ministry—sat near the entrance.

The conferences were lively. There was no presiding officer, no strict protocol, and arguments were common. The meetings had been started in late 1937, to co-ordinate activities of the government and the military, discontinued for some time, then resumed in late 1940 when the situation became more critical.

Three days after Matsuoka's audience with the Emperor, he met direct opposition from the military, who were not eager for a simultaneous fight with the Soviet Union and America. Naval operations against both these countries, said Navy Minister Oikawa, would be too difficult. "To avoid this kind of situation, don't tell us to attack the U.S.S.R. and at the same time push south. The Navy doesn't want the Soviet Union provoked."

"When Germany wipes out the Soviet Union, we can't simply share in the spoils of victory unless we've done something," said Matsuoka and then uttered words which were strange coming from a foreign minister. "We must either shed our blood or embark on diplomacy. And it's better to shed blood." The following day he pressed his argument. What was more important, the north or the south? he asked.

Of equal import, replied Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama. "We're waiting to see how the situation develops." He did not reveal that if Moscow fell before the end of August, the Army would attack Siberia.

"It all depends on the situation," said Army Vice Chief of Staff Ko

* The U. S. military agreed. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox prognosticated that "it would take anywhere from six weeks to two months for Hitler to clean up in Russia." Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary: "I cannot help feeling that it offers to us and Great Britain a great chance, provided we use it promptly," and then told Roosevelt that in his opinion it would take Germany from one to three months to whip the Soviet Union. Ambassador Grew thought only good could come of the attack and wrote in his diary: "Let the Nazis and the Communists so weaken each other that the democracies will soon gain the upper hand or at least be released from their dire peril."

Tsukada, a bright, short-tempered man. "We can't go both ways simultaneously."

After the conference Colonel Kenryo Sato continued the debate with Tojo, who felt Matsuoka had made several good points. "We gain nothing in the north," said Sato. "At least we get oil and other resources in the south." He was as brilliant and impulsive as General Ishihara and Colonel Iwakuro, and often served as the official spokesman for Army policy. He was already notorious throughout the country for having yelled "Shut up!" at a Diet member who kept interrupting his speech.

Wary as he was of Sato's quixotic behavior, Tojo had come to depend on advice from the "Shut up" colonel. Sato's logic made him wonder, "If we declare war on the Russians, would the United States back them up and declare war on us?"

"It's not impossible. America and the Soviet Union have different systems, but you never can tell in war."

The following day Tojo gave Matsuoka no support at all. But the Foreign Minister was undaunted. He argued that reports from Ambassador Oshima indicated that the war in Russia would soon be over and that England would capitulate before the end of the year. "If we start discussing the Soviet problem *after* the Germans beat the Soviets, we'll get nowhere diplomatically. If we hit the Soviets without delay, the United States won't enter the war." He was confident, he said, that he could hold off the United States for three or four months with his diplomacy. "But if we just wait around to see how things will turn out, as the Supreme Command suggests, we'll be encircled by Britain, the United States and Russia. We must first strike north, then south." He went on and on almost compulsively until he saw that his words were having no effect. Then, in an attempt to force the issue, he said, "I would like a decision to attack the Soviet Union."

"No," said Sugiyama, who spoke for all the military.

Matsuoka's strongest ally was in Berlin, but Hitler himself had yet to come out with a flat request to attack Russia. He did this three days later, in the form of a telegram from Ribbentrop to his ambassador in Tokyo. On the morning of June 30 General Ott transmitted this request to Matsuoka, who used it as a principal argument at the liaison conference that afternoon. Germany, he announced, was now formally asking Japan to come into the war. He became so fervent in his appeal for an attack on Russia that one listener likened it to "a vomit of fire." "My predictions have always come true," Matsuoka boasted. "Now I predict that if war starts in the south, America and Britain will join it!" He suggested postponing the drive south and was so persuasive that Oikawa turned to Sugiyama and said, "Well, how about postponing it for six months?"

It looked as if Matsuoka had abruptly turned things around by his oratory. A Navy man leaned over and whispered to Army Vice Chief of Staff

Tsukada that perhaps they should consider the postponement, but Tsukada could not be swayed; with a few impassioned words of his own, he brought Oikawa and Sugiyama back to their original position. At this point Prince Konoye, who had been almost silent until then, said that he would have to go along with the Supreme Command. There was no more to say. The long debate was over and the decision was made to go south.

The final step was to get formal approval from the Emperor. This would come automatically at a ceremony held at the Imperial Palace, an imperial conference. At these meetings the Emperor traditionally did nothing but sit silent and listen to explanations of the policy in question. Afterward he would indicate his approval with a stamp of his seal. The members were comprised of those who attended liaison conferences, an expert or two, and the President of the Privy Council, a civilian who represented the Throne in a sense by occasionally asking questions the Emperor himself could not.

The conference to approve the move south was convened on July 2. The members sat stiffly on both sides of two long tables covered with brocade, but the minute the Emperor entered the room they shot to their feet. His skin, like that of his three brothers, was smooth as porcelain and of unique coloring. His army uniform did not make him look a bit martial. He stepped up to the dais and sat down before a gold screen, facing south, the direction to be honored according to court etiquette. He seemed detached, as if above worldly affairs.

Below, the members sat down at right angles to His Majesty and stared woodenly at each other, hands on knees. Then the ceremony began. All but the President of the Privy Council, Yoshimichi Hara, had rehearsed what they would say. First Prince Konoye rose, bowed to the Emperor and read a document entitled "Outline of National Policies in View of Present Developments." It was the plan to go south; the first step would be occupation of French Indochina. This, hopefully, would come without bloodshed by exerting diplomatic pressure on the Vichy government; but if persuasion failed, military force was to be used, even at the risk of provoking war with America and Britain.

Sugiyama bowed and said he agreed that Japan should push south. "However, if the German-Soviet war develops favorably for our empire, I believe we should also use force to settle this problem and so secure our northern borders."

Admiral Osami Nagano, Chief of the Navy General Staff, also felt it was necessary to go south despite the risks. When he finished, the President of the Privy Council began asking questions, some of them more embarrassing than expected at such a formalized meeting. What were the realistic chances of taking Indochina by diplomatic means? he wondered.

"The odds are that diplomatic measures won't succeed," replied Matsuoka. Still against going south, he had to argue the majority decision.

Hara was a small, mild-looking man but he was not at all intimidated by the stern faces of the generals and admirals. He emphasized that military action was "a serious thing." And wasn't sending troops into Indochina while attempting to ratify a treaty between Japan and France inconsistent with the Imperial Way of conducting diplomacy? "I do not think it wise for Japan to resort to direct, unilateral military action and thus be branded an aggressor."

"I will see to it that we won't seem to be involved in an act of betrayal in the eyes of the world," Matsuoka assured him.

Hara remained dubious. Why not go north? he suggested and began using some of Matsuoka's own arguments. Hitler's attack on Russia presented the chance of a lifetime. "The Soviet Union is spreading Communism all over the world and we will have to fight her sooner or later. . . . The people are really eager to fight *her.*" What was supposed to be a formality threatened to turn into a debate. "I want to avoid war with the United States. I don't think they would retaliate if we attacked the Soviet Union." On the other hand, Hara feared a move into Indochina would bring war with the Anglo-Saxons.

Matsuoka had used the same words the day before. "There is that possibility," he agreed.

Sugiyama privately thought that Hara's questions were "sharp as a knife," but curtly pointed out that the occupation of Indochina was "absolutely necessary to crush the intrigues of Britain and America. Moreover, with Germany's military situation so favorable, I don't believe Japan's advance into French Indochina will provoke America to war." He warned, however, of counting out the Soviet Union prematurely. They should wait "from fifty to sixty days," to make certain that Germany would win. The finality of his statement shut off further discussion, and any hopes that Matsuoka might have had about resuming the debate vanished. A vote was taken and the policy document unanimously approved. Japan would go south.

Throughout the proceedings the Emperor had been sitting silent and impassive, as custom decreed, his mere presence making any decision legal and binding. The document was taken to the Cabinet secretariat, where a copy was made on official stationery. It was signed by Konoye and the Army and Navy Chiefs of Staff, brought to the Emperor and finally to the Privy Seal's office, where the imperial seal was affixed. It was national policy, and another step had been taken toward total war.

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Now Hull's counterproposal had to be dealt with. Matsuoka, predictably, was still in a rage over the Oral Statement, which criticized unnamed

Japanese officials for inflammatory public remarks. This rather innocuous rebuke was, to Matsuoka, a personal insult as well as an unforgivable affront to Japan, and at a liaison conference on July 12 he said, with anger bordering on paranoia, "I've thought about it for the last ten days, and I believe America looks on Japan as a protectorate or a dependency! While I'm foreign minister, I can't accept it. I'll consider anything else, but I reject the Oral Statement. It is typically American to ride roughshod over the weak. The statement treats Japan as a weak and dependent country. Some Japanese are against me, and some even say the Prime Minister is against me." His words tumbled out, revealing as much resentment for his personal enemies as for Hull. "Little wonder then that the United States thinks Japan is exhausted and therefore sends us such a statement. I propose right now that we reject the statement out of hand and break off negotiations with the United States!" He called Roosevelt "a real demagogue" and accused him of trying to lead America into war. As for himself, it had been his cherished hope since his youth to preserve peace between Japan and America. "I think there is no hope, but," he concluded irrationally, "let us try until the very end."

At last he had said something the military liked. Even if there seemed to be no hope, Tojo repeated, they should keep negotiating with America. "Can't we at least keep the United States from formally going to war by means of the Tripartite Pact? Naturally, the Oral Statement is an insult to our *kokutai* and we must reject it, as the Foreign Minister advises. But what if we sincerely tell the Americans what we Japanese hold to be right? Won't this move them?"

Navy Minister Oikawa was also for coming to some agreement with the Americans. According to reports, they weren't in any position to instigate a war in the Pacific. "Since we don't want a Pacific war either, isn't there room for negotiation?"

"Room?" Matsuoka retorted with some sarcasm. "They'll probably listen only if we tell them we won't use force in the south. What else would they accept?" He was in no mood for compromise. "They sent a message like this because they're convinced we submit easily."

It was obvious to Prince Konoye that Matsuoka was making this a personal issue and that it would be necessary to by-pass him. But the Foreign Minister's influence was still so great that the Prime Minister had to meet surreptitiously with key Cabinet members to draft their own conciliatory reply to Hull. This was presented to Matsuoka, but it took him several days just to read it—he claimed he was sick—and even after he had, he tried to delay matters. First, the Oral Statement should be rejected, then there should be a wait of several days before dispatching the answer.

Prime Minister Konoye agreed to reject the statement but insisted that both the rejection and the reply be sent simultaneously to Hull, to save time. Konoye gave these instructions to Matsuoka's associate Dr. Yoshie Saito, who promised to follow orders. He disobeyed—another act of *gekoku-*

jo—and without consulting anyone, cabled a single message to Washington: the rejection of the Oral Statement. He held back the proposal for a few days, as Matsuoka had wanted, and Hull first saw it in an intercepted cable to Germany.

To the legal-minded Tojo such action was insupportable, and he told Konoye that Matsuoka should be dismissed at once. But the prince did not want open conflict with Matsuoka, who was still a public hero after his meetings with Hitler and Stalin. Konoye decided to get rid of him by subterfuge: he would ask the entire Cabinet to resign and then form a new one with a different foreign minister. He called an extraordinary session of the Cabinet at six-thirty on July 16, and when he made his proposal, no one objected; Matsuoka was home ill in bed.

This terminated the stormy career of the most controversial figure in Japanese diplomacy. The end had come through an act of insubordination committed for Matsuoka's sake by a faithful subordinate, but without his knowledge.

The following day the Emperor asked Konoye to form a new cabinet. He did so within twenty-four hours, which was possible only because there were so few changes. Matsuoka was replaced by an admiral who got along well with Americans, Teijiro Toyoda. One of his first acts was to cable his ambassador in Vichy that the Japanese Army would push into Indochina on July 24 no matter what the Vichy government decided to do. But on the day before the deadline, Vichy agreed to the peaceful entry of Japanese troops in southern Indochina. The ambassador in Vichy triumphantly wired Tokyo:

> THE REASON WHY THE FRENCH SO READILY ACCEPTED THE JAPANESE DEMANDS WAS THAT THEY SAW HOW RESOLUTE WAS OUR DETERMINATION AND HOW SWIFT OUR WILL. IN SHORT, THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO YIELD.

When Hull read this, courtesy of MAGIC, he was as indignant, and perhaps rightly so, as if Indochina had been taken by force. He pressed Roosevelt to retaliate by imposing a new embargo on Japan, despite a recent warning from the War Plans Division of the Navy that such action "would probably result in a fairly early attack by Japan on Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and possibly involve the United States in early war in the Pacific."

This time Roosevelt listened to those who, like Ickes, had long been urging him to act forcefully against all aggressors.* On the night of July

* On the day after Hitler's invasion of Russia, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote Roosevelt: "To embargo oil to Japan would be as popular a move in all parts of the country as you could make. There might develop from the embargoing of oil to Japan such a situation as would make it, not only possible but easy, to get into this war in an effective way. And if we should thus indirectly be brought in, we would avoid the criticism that we had gone in as an ally of communistic Russia."

26 he ordered all Japanese assets in America frozen, and Britain and the Netherlands soon followed suit. In consequence, not only did all trade with the United States cease, but the fact that America had been Japan's major source of oil imports now left Japan in an untenable situation. To the *New York Times* it was "the most drastic blow short of war." To Japan's leaders it was much more. They had secured the bases in Indochina by negotiation with Vichy France, a country recognized if not approved by America, and international law was on their side; the freezing was the last step in the encirclement of the empire by the ABCD (American, British, Chinese, Dutch) powers, a denial to Japan of her rightful place as leader of Asia and a challenge to her very existence.

The frustration, near-hysteria and anger could be expected but not the confusion among the Supreme Command. Five days later Naval Chief of Staff Nagano, a cautious and sensible man, still had not recovered from an event that should have been foreseen. In an audience with the Emperor, he first said he wanted to avoid war and that this could be done by revoking the Tripartite Pact, which the Navy had always maintained was a stumbling block to peace with America. Then he warned that Japan's oil stock would only last for two years, and once war came, eighteen months, and concluded, "Under such circumstances, we had better take the initiative. We will win."

It was a curious performance. In one paragraph Nagano had put in a word for peace, cleared the Navy of responsibility for any diplomatic disaster, prophesied an oil famine, suggested a desperate attack and predicted victory.

The Emperor cut through the tangle with one question: "Will you win a great victory? Like the Battle of Tsushima?"

"I am sorry, but that will not be possible."

"Then," said the Emperor grimly, "the war will be a desperate one."

PART TWO

The Lowering Clouds