

When Nomura finally got to see the President three days later he pointed out the "considerable concessions" made by Japan and reiterated the need for haste. Roosevelt must also have been mindful of Marshall and Stark's plea for time in his reply that "nations must think one hundred years ahead, especially during the age through which the world is passing." A mere six months had been spent in the negotiations. It was necessary to be patient; he didn't want a temporary agreement. Nomura cabled Togo that the United States "was not entirely unreceptive" to Proposal A. The wishful-thinking admiral was ready to grab at any straw of hope.

So was Bishop James Walsh. Just back from another trip to the Far East, he made one more attempt to bring Japan and America together in the form of a long memorandum delivered to Hull on November 15. In reading it, Hornbeck added a number of sarcastic notes for Hull which revealed his own strong bias.

Where the bishop explained that the Emperor's sanction of any policy was regarded by all Japanese as "the final seal that makes it the irrevocable policy of the nation," Hornbeck noted in pencil: "If a policy sanctioned by the Emperor is 'irrevocable,' then the alliance with the Axis is *irrevocable*." And to a long plea for understanding between the two countries, he put down: "Naive."

"It is perhaps worthwhile to recall," Walsh observed, "that the Chinese were well on the way to actual collaboration with Japan when the Manchurian Incident rudely arrested the movement and turned the Chinese radically in the other direction." Opposite this, Hornbeck penciled: "He speaks as though the *Chinese* had started the 'Manchurian Incident.'" And when Walsh noted that "There is no real peace anywhere in the Far East today," Hornbeck wrote down: "And for that *fact* who are responsible?—the Japanese (& the Germans)."

That very day Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu arrived in Washington after a tiring trip across the country, and two days later Ambassador Nomura brought him to Hull's office. One glance at the diminutive, bespectacled man with the neat mustache who had signed the Tripartite Pact was enough for the Secretary of State to conclude that he was not to be trusted. "Neither his appearance nor his attitude commanded confidence or respect," Hull wrote in his memoirs. "I felt from the start that he was deceitful. . . . His only recommendation in my eyes was that he spoke excellent English, having married his American secretary."

Convinced that Kurusu was privy to his government's trickery and would try "to lull us with talk until the moment Japan got ready to strike," Hull escorted the two Japanese the few hundred yards to the White House. Roosevelt put himself out to be affable: "As Bryan said, there is no last word between friends."

Kurusu replied that a way must be found to avoid war. The Pacific was "like a powder keg." Roosevelt agreed that a broad understanding should be reached.

As for the Tripartite Pact, Kurusu said he didn't see why America, "which has been a strong advocate of observance of international commitments, would request Japan to violate one." Japanese leaders had already assured the Americans that the pact would not automatically lead to war; that would require an independent decision. Moreover, an understanding between Japan and America "would naturally 'outshine' the Tripartite Pact, and American apprehension over the problem of application of the pact would consequently be dissipated." It was a step toward actual abrogation of the treaty, but Hull didn't believe a word Kurusu said; it was merely "some specious attempt to explain away" the pact.

Roosevelt remained friendly, and reaffirmed that there was "no difference of interest between our two countries and no occasion, therefore, for serious differences," and even offered to act as "introducer" between China and Japan.

3.

That same day Prime Minister Tojo made a speech in the Diet which was also broadcast to the nation. It dealt with the negotiations in Washington and he pointed out that their success would depend on three things: America must not interfere with Japan's solution of the China Incident; she must "refrain from presenting a direct military menace to our empire" and call off the economic blockade; and exert efforts to "prevent the extension of the European war" to East Asia.

There was thunderous applause, whereas excellent speeches ordinarily failed to get much of a response. In the diplomatic box of the U. S. embassy, the naval attaché leaned over and whispered to his companions. An *Asahi Shimbun* reporter noticed this and wrote:

... The four staff members of the American embassy suddenly went into a huddle and conversed with each other, and then all vigorously shook their heads, although no one knows what they meant by this. All others in the visitors' gallery looked at them with fixed attention.

What the naval attaché whispered was: "Well, he didn't declare war, anyway."

Among the leaders of Japan hope dwindled as each day passed with no definite word from Washington on Proposal A. America's attitude seemed to be stiffening on the major issues. All that remained was the last resort, and Togo cabled Nomura to present "B." On November 20 the admiral read it to Hull, who took it as an ultimatum and in his memoirs described the conditions as "of so preposterous a character that no American official could ever have dreamed of accepting them." But he hid his feelings

to "avoid giving the Japanese any pretext to walk out of the conversations" and said he would give the proposal "sympathetic study."

His reaction was unfortunate and uncalled-for. Only one of Proposal B's five conditions—the one to stop giving aid to China—was unreasonable. This paragraph aroused him so much that he made it the most vital issue. In a fit of temper he burst out, "In the minds of the American people there is a partnership between Hitler and Japan aimed at enabling Hitler to take charge of one-half the world and Japan the other half." The Tripartite Pact strengthened the public in this belief, he added, and began to assail it vigorously.

Nomura turned to Kurusu helplessly. Little more than a week before, Hull had admitted that the pact was not a major problem. Yet three times in the past few days he had declared that as long as Japan clung to it, a peace settlement could not be taken seriously. Why was the pact being elevated again to importance? It was almost as if nothing had changed in Japanese-American relations since the days of Matsuoka.*

Hull's subordinates also had a similarly curious reaction to Proposal B. The man most sympathetic to Japan, Joseph Ballantine, feared its acceptance would mean "condonement by the United States of Japan's aggressions, assent by the United States to unlimited courses of conquest by Japan in the future . . . betrayal by the United States of China . . ." and "a most serious threat to American national security."

Such talk of aggression made little sense. The proposal adequately covered Southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific and offered peace in China. Japan could not have committed further aggression without breaking her own proposal, and if the Americans had wanted a definite pledge to stop military expansion they probably could have gotten it.

It was not really a question of Proposal B itself, but of State Department refusal to accept it at face value. What the Japanese Army considered a major concession and had accepted only after bitter arguments—withdrawal of troops from southern Indochina to the north—was scorned by Ballantine. It was a "meaningless" offer, since the Japanese could easily return the same troops to southern Indochina "within a day or two."

Roosevelt, on the other hand, must have been impressed by "B" because he responded with his own *modus vivendi*. He wrote it out in pencil and sent it on to Hull.

6 months

1. U. S. to resume economic relations—some oil and rice now—more later.

* There were several possible reasons why Hull revived this dead issue: out of moral indignation; out of fear of denunciation from the American public, which generally equated Japan with Nazi Germany, if any agreement was reached with Japan; to prepare the public for a war with Japan by raising the specter of a Hitler-Tojo joint attack.

2. Japan to send no more troops to Indochina or Manchurian border or any place South—(Dutch, Brit. or Siam).
3. Japan to agree not to invoke tripartite pact even if U. S. gets into European war.
4. U. S. to introduce Japs to Chinese to talk things over but U. S. to take no part in their conversations.

Later on Pacific agreements.

This *modus vivendi* was further evidence that Roosevelt, unlike Hull, was a practitioner of *Realpolitik*, and brought about the first genuine relaxation of American rigidity, the first realistic hope for a peaceful settlement. Though it must have offended Hull's purist nature, he dutifully began putting it into diplomatic form. Despite personal reservations about Kurusu and suspicions of his superiors back in Tokyo, he was still willing to negotiate.

Since the talk with Hull had revealed the great importance he still attached to the Tripartite Pact, Kurusu called the following day at the State Department with a draft letter declaring that Japan was not obligated by that agreement to collaborate or co-operate in any aggression by any third power.

... My Government would never project the people of Japan into war at the behest of any foreign power: it will accept warfare only as the ultimate, inescapable necessity for the maintenance of its security and the preservation of national life against inactive justice.

I hope that the above statement will assist you in removing entirely the popular suspicion which Your Excellency has repeatedly referred to. I have to add that, when a complete understanding is reached between us, Your Excellency may feel perfectly free to publish the present communication.

Neither the indirect negation of the Tripartite Pact nor the offer to publish it allayed Hull's suspicions, which were "confirmed" a day later in an intercept from Tokyo to Nomura extending the deadline of negotiations to November 29 (Washington time).

... THIS TIME WE MEAN IT, THAT THE DEADLINE ABSOLUTELY CANNOT BE CHANGED. AFTER THAT THINGS ARE AUTOMATICALLY GOING TO HAPPEN.

That evening—it was Saturday, November 22—Kurusu and Nomura called at Hull's apartment to urge a prompt reply to Proposal B. They were smiling and courteous. It was a "strain" for Hull to respond amiably, knowing what he did "of Japan's nefarious plans" from MAGIC. "There they sat, bowing agreeably, Nomura sometimes giggling, Kurusu often showing his

teeth in a grin, while through their minds must have raced again and again the thought that, if we did not say Yes to Japan's demands, their government in a few days would launch new aggressions that sooner or later would inevitably bring war with the United States and death to thousands or millions of men."

Hull said, "It's a pity that Japan cannot do just a few peaceful things to help tide over the situation."

Nomura was just as ill at ease. He reiterated the need for haste and pressed for an item-by-item answer.

"There is no reason why any demand should be made on us" was the testy reply. "I am quite disappointed that despite all my efforts you are still trying to railroad through your demand for our reply." Hull could see no reason why Tokyo couldn't wait for a few days, but did promise to get an answer as soon as possible. This would be Monday at the earliest, since he had to consult several friendly governments with interests in the Far East. The answer Hull had in mind was his version of Roosevelt's hastily scribbled *modus vivendi*.

On Monday, November 24, Hull invited representatives of England, China, Australia and Holland to his office and passed around copies of the latest draft of the Roosevelt plan. Dr. Hu Shih, the Chinese ambassador, was troubled. Why should five thousand Japanese be allowed to remain in Indochina? Hull replied that in General Marshall's opinion, even twenty-five thousand troops wouldn't be a menace. "While my government does not recognize the right of Japan to keep a single soldier in Indochina," he explained "we are striving to reach this proposed temporary agreement primarily because the heads of our Army and Navy often emphasize to me that time is the all-important question for them, and that they must be fully prepared to deal effectively with a possible outbreak by Japan."

The Dutch minister, Dr. Alexander Loudon, forthrightly declared that his country would support the *modus vivendi*, but the other three had to wait for instructions. Irrked and impatient, Hull said, "Each of your governments has a more direct interest in the defense of that area of the world than this country. But your governments, through some preoccupation in other directions, do not seem to know anything about this matter under discussion. I am definitely disappointed at this unexpected development, at their lack of interest and lack of disposition to co-operate."

The next day Dr. Hu apologetically handed Hull a note from his Foreign Minister stating that Chiang Kai-shek had had a "rather strong reaction" to the *modus vivendi* and felt that America was "inclined to appease Japan at the expense of China."

Exasperated, Hull said America could of course kill the *modus vivendi*, but if so, she was "not to be charged with failure to send our fleet into the area near Indochina and into Japanese waters, if by any chance Japan makes a military drive southward."

Although it was dark by the time Dr. Hu left, Hull called together his staff for further discussion. He himself was strongly in favor of sending the *modus vivendi* to the Japanese despite the slender chance of acceptance. If nothing else, it would underline "for all time to come that we were doing everything we could to avoid war, and a Japanese rejection would serve more fully to expose their predetermined plan for conquest of the Orient."

Later that night a cable for Roosevelt arrived from Churchill:

. . . OF COURSE, IT IS FOR YOU TO HANDLE THIS BUSINESS AND WE CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT AN ADDITIONAL WAR. THERE IS ONLY ONE POINT THAT DISQUIETS US. WHAT ABOUT CHIANG KAI-SHEK? IS HE NOT HAVING A VERY THIN DIET? OUR ANXIETY IS ABOUT CHINA. IF THEY COLLAPSE, OUR JOINT DANGERS WOULD ENORMOUSLY INCREASE. . . .

Obviously Chiang Kai-shek had carried his complaints to London and this subtle rebuff wore out Hull's last patience, MAGIC had assured him that Proposal B was the last offer Japan would make and that the negotiations would definitely be terminated at the end of the month. That Tojo was prepared to make still further concessions in a sincere attempt for peace he did not know, nor would he have believed it if he had. Ever since midsummer he had been "well-satisfied that the Japanese were determined to continue with their course of expansion by force."

That was why Chiang's objection and Churchill's half-hearted endorsement, coupled with his own doubts and exhaustion from months of negotiating, caused him at this moment to shelve the *modus vivendi*. Instead he would offer the Japanese "a suggested program of collaboration along peaceful and mutually beneficial, progressive lines." His assistants began putting this new proposal into draft form.*

Stimson was making an entry in his diary. He described a meeting that noon of the so-called War Cabinet at the White House:

. . . [Roosevelt] brought up the event that we were likely to be attacked perhaps next Monday [December 1], for the Japanese are notorious for making an attack without warning, and the question was . . . what we should do. The question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves. It was a difficult proposition. Hull laid out his general broad propositions on which the thing should be rested—the freedom of the seas and the fact that Japan was in alliance with Hitler and was carrying out his policy of world aggression. The others brought out the fact that any such expedition to the south as the Japanese were likely to take would be an encirclement

* At Sugamo Prison, after the war, Tojo told Kenryo Sato that if he had received the Roosevelt *modus vivendi*, the course of history would probably have changed. "I didn't tell you at the time, but I had already prepared a proposal with new compromises in it. I wanted somehow to carry out the Emperor's wishes and avoid war." Then he heaved a big sigh. "If we had only received that *modus vivendi*!"

of our interests in the Philippines and cutting into our vital supply of rubber from Malaysia. I pointed out to the President that he had already taken the first steps towards an ultimatum in notifying Japan way back last summer that if she crossed the border into Thailand she was violating our safety and that therefore he had only to point out [to Japan] that to follow any such expedition was a violation of a warning we had already given.*

The following day, November 26, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., arrived at the White House just as Roosevelt was starting his breakfast. The phone rang before the President could eat his kippered herring. It was Hull, who told of the Chinese protests to the *modus vivendi*. "I will quiet them down," Roosevelt said and went back to his breakfast. By now it was cold, so he pushed it aside, inspiring Morgenthau to jot down in his notes: "I don't think the President ought to see me or anybody else until he has finished his breakfast."

Hull was already on the phone with Stimson, telling him that he had "about made up his mind not to give . . . the proposition [the *modus vivendi*] . . . to the Japanese but to kick the whole thing over—to tell them that he has no other proposition at all."

This prompted Stimson to check with Roosevelt by phone to find out if the paper he had sent the night before about the new Japanese expedition from Shanghai into Indochina had been received. Roosevelt reacted so violently that Stimson commented in his diary that he "fairly blew up—jumped up into the air, so to speak"—and said no, he hadn't seen it and it "changed the whole situation because it was an evidence of bad faith on the part of the Japanese that while they were negotiating for an entire truce—and entire withdrawal [from China]—they should be sending this expedition down there to Indochina."

Not much later Hull appeared in person. He recommended that in view of the opposition of the Chinese they drop the *modus vivendi* and offer

* This entry was later used by revisionist historians such as Charles Beard to bolster their claim that President Roosevelt purposely maneuvered Japan into an attack on American territory. A superficial reading of the controversial diary entry and subsequent remarks by Stimson seem to indicate that the anti-Roosevelt group is correct, but a study of the records of the discussions between the President and his advisers in the last days of November make it evident that they were expecting an onslaught on Singapore, Thailand or some other part of the Southeast Asian continent. They certainly did not appear to anticipate an initial attack on any American territory such as the Philippines or Guam, much less Hawaii. Thus, when Roosevelt said "we were likely to be attacked" he probably used "we" meaning the ABCD powers. It was a "difficult proposition" just because he did not expect a direct assault on the United States, and the problem was to make an attack on Singapore or Thailand seem to be a "first shot" against America. There were two ways to carry on this "maneuvering"—with a diplomatic warning to Japan or with a message to Congress so phrased that if Japan made a move south, even without directly menacing American territory, we would take it to be an assault on our vital interests—and, as it were, an assault on the United States. In the absence of positive proof this assumption, and it can only be an assumption, seems much more logical and fair than the wishful reasoning of those who disapproved of almost everything Roosevelt did.

the Japanese a brand-new "comprehensive basic proposal for a general peaceful settlement."

Still angry at the news of the Japanese convoy, Roosevelt approved, and that afternoon Kurusu and Nomura were summoned to the State Department. At five o'clock Hull handed them two documents, "with the forlorn hope that even at this ultimate minute a little common sense might filter into the military minds of Tokyo."

Kurusu and Nomura expectantly began reading the first paper, an Oral Statement which set forth that the United States "most earnestly" desired to work for peace in the Pacific but that it believed Proposal B "would not be likely to contribute to the ultimate objectives of ensuring peace under law, order and justice in the Pacific area . . ." In place of Proposal B, Hull offered a new solution and it was embodied in the second paper, marked "Strictly Confidential, Tentative and Without Commitment." Kurusu read its ten conditions with dismay. It peremptorily called for Japan to "withdraw all military, naval, air and police forces from China and Indochina"; to support no other government or regime in China except Chiang Kai-shek's; and, in effect, to abrogate the Tripartite Pact.

It was far harsher than the American proposal made on June 21 and Hull had drawn it up without consulting General Marshall or Admiral Stark, who happened to be in the act of drafting still another memorandum to Roosevelt begging for more time to reinforce the Philippines. Hull's proposal again raised the dead issue of the Tripartite Pact, though Kurusu had already given written assurance it had little significance, and introduced a new proposal calling for "a multilateral nonaggression pact among the British Empire, China, Japan, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union and Thailand and the United States." Kurusu knew this would complicate an already complicated situation and cause more delay. When Nomura sat down, too stunned to talk, Kurusu asked if this was the American reply to Proposal B.

It was, said Hull, and pointed out the economic advantages to Japan if she accepted: an offer to unfreeze Japanese funds, make a trade agreement based upon reciprocal most-favored-nation treatment, stabilize the dollar-yen rate, reduce trade barriers and grant other considerable economic concessions.

Kurusu foresaw that in Tokyo this would be regarded as an insult, as a bribe, and began taking exception to the conditions. He didn't see how his government could possibly agree to the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all troops from China and Indochina, and if the United States expected Japan "to take off its hat to Chiang Kai-shek and apologize to him," no agreement was possible. He requested that they informally discuss the proposal at greater length before sending it on to Tokyo.

"It's as far as we can go," said Hull. Public feeling was running so high that he "might almost be lynched" if he let oil go freely into Japan.

Kurusu observed with mordant humor that at times all "statesmen of firm conviction" failed to find public sympathy. Wise men alone could see far ahead and they sometimes became martyrs, but life was short and one could only do his duty. Dejected, he added that Hull's note just about meant the end, and asked if they were not interested in a *modus vivendi*.

The phrase had become an unpleasant one to Hull. We explored that, he said curtly.

Was it because the other powers wouldn't agree? Kurusu asked.

It was uncomfortably close to the truth. "I did my best in the way of exploration," said Hull.

4.

The first news of Hull's reply reached Tokyo late in the morning on November 27. It came in a message from the military attaché in Washington to Imperial Headquarters which began by announcing that the United States had replied in writing to Proposal B but that "there was no gleam of hope in negotiations." Staff officers huddled around the communications room, anxiously waiting while the rest of the message, containing the gist of Hull's proposal, was being decoded.

The message was sent at once to the Palace, where a liaison conference was in session. It arrived just as the meeting adjourned for lunch and Tojo read it aloud. There was dumfounded silence until someone said, "This is an ultimatum!" Even Togo, who had held forth slight hope of success, never expected this. "Overpowered" by despair, he said something in such a stutter that no one could understand him; the Hull note "stuck in the craw." His distress was intensified when he saw that several Army men were pleased, "as if to say, 'Didn't we tell you so?'"

But to one Navy man, Admiral Shimada, it was "a jarring blow." Hull's reply was "unyielding and unbending" and didn't so much as recognize the fact that Japan had made significant concessions.

The demands were equally outrageous to a peacemaker like Kaya. Hull obviously knew that Japan would have to refuse them. He was rejecting an immediate accommodation and seemed to be wanting endless discussions instead. It was just a stall for time. America had made up her mind to go to war—to attack Japan! That Japan had already offered to withdraw troops from southern Indochina at once wasn't enough; Hull wanted all troops withdrawn at once from Indochina and China. An impossibility.

What particularly infuriated every man in the room was the categorical demand to quit *all* of China. Manchuria had been won at the cost of considerable sweat and blood. Its loss would mean economic disaster. What

right did the wealthy Americans have to make such a demand? What nation with any honor would submit?

Hull's proposal was the result of impatience and indignation, but the passage that most incensed the Japanese had been tragically misunderstood. To Hull, the word "China" did not include Manchuria and he had no intention of demanding that the Japanese pull out of that territory. Back in April he had assured Nomura that there was no need to discuss recognition of Manchukuo until a basic agreement had been reached, and he imagined that the issue was disposed of. To the Japanese, however, the Hull note had to be taken at face value. After all, the Americans had hardened their position on a number of issues since the days of the Draft Understanding.

The American reply should have been clear on this point; at the very least, the Japanese reaction would have been far less bitter. The exception of Manchuria would not have made the Hull note acceptable as it stood, but it might have enabled Togo to persuade the militarists that negotiations should be continued; it could very well have forced a postponement of the November 30 deadline.*

Thus it was that two great nations who shared a fear of a Communist-dominated Asia were set on a collision course. Who was to blame—the United States or Japan? The latter was almost solely responsible for bringing herself to the road of war with America through the seizure of Manchuria, the invasion of China, the atrocities committed against the Chinese people, and the drive to the south. But this course of aggression had been the inevitable result of the West's efforts to eliminate Japan as an economic rival after World War I, the Great Depression, her population explosion, and the necessity to find new resources and markets to continue as a first-rate power. Added to all this were the unique and undefined position of the Emperor, the explosive role of *gekokujo*, and the threat of Communism from both Russia and Mao Tse-tung which had developed into paranoiac fear.

Americans, too, suffered from paranoiac fear, theirs of the "yellow peril," and yet, oddly, they had no apprehensions about Japan as a military foe and reveled in stories of Nipponese ineptitude. According to one story going around Washington, the British had built warships for Japan

* All of the men at the liaison conference, from Tojo to Togo, believed that Hull's reference to "China" included Manchuria. In 1967 a number of Tojo's close associates were asked what might have happened if Hull had clarified that point. Kenryo Sato, learning the truth for the first time, slapped his forehead and said, "If we had only known!" Very excitedly he added, "If you had said you recognized Manchukuo, we'd have accepted!" Suzuki, Kaya and Hoshino would not go that far. Kaya, now a leading politician, said, "If the note had excluded Manchukuo, the decision to wage war or not would have been rediscussed at great length. There'd have been heated arguments at liaison conferences over whether we should withdraw at once from North China in spite of the threat of Communism." At least, said Suzuki, Pearl Harbor would have been prevented. "There might have been a change of government."

so top-heavy that they would capsize in the first battle. The Japanese air force was also generally ridiculed, its pilots regarded as bespectacled bunglers, more to be laughed at than dreaded. Perhaps this sense of superiority subconsciously tempted some American leaders, including Roosevelt, to drive the Japanese to the limit of their forbearance.

How could a nation rich in resources and land, and free from fear of attack, understand the position of a tiny, crowded island empire with almost no natural resources, which was constantly in danger of attack from a ruthless neighbor, the Soviet Union? America herself had, moreover, contributed to the atmosphere of hate and distrust by excluding the Japanese from immigration and, in effect, flaunting a racial and color prejudice that justifiably infuriated the proud Nipponese. America should also have perceived and admitted the hypocrisy of taking such a moral stand on the four principles.* Her ally, Britain, certainly did not observe them in India or Burma, nor did she herself in Central America where "gunboat diplomacy" was still upholding the Monroe Doctrine. Her self-righteousness was also self-serving; what was morality at the top became self-interest at the bottom.

Finally, America made a grave diplomatic blunder by allowing an issue not vital to her basic interests—the welfare of China—to become, at the last moment, the keystone of her foreign policy. Until that summer America had had two limited aims in the Far East: to drive a wedge between Japan and Hitler, and to thwart Japan's southward thrust. She could easily have attained both these objectives but instead made an issue out of no issue at all, the Tripartite Pact, and insisted on the liberation of China. For this last unattainable goal America's diplomats were forcing an early war that her own militarists were hoping to avoid—a war, paradoxically, she was in no position to wage. America could not throw the weight of her strength against Japan to liberate China, nor had she ever intended to do so. Her major enemy was Hitler. Instead of frankly informing Chiang Kai-shek of this, she had yielded to his urgings and pressed the policy that led to war in the Far East—and the virtual abandonment of China. More important, by equating Japan with Nazi Germany, her diplomats had maneuvered their nation into two completely different wars, one in Europe against Fascism, and one in the Orient that was linked with the aspirations of all Asians for freedom from the white man's bondage.

There were no heroes or villains on either side. Roosevelt, for all his

* Morality is an unstable commodity in international relations. The same America that took a no-compromise stand on behalf of the sanctity of agreements, maintenance of the status quo in the Orient, and the territorial integrity of China, reversed herself a few years later at Yalta by promising Russia territory in the Far East as an inducement to join the war in the Pacific. A rapprochement with Japan in 1941 would admittedly have meant American abandonment and betrayal of Nationalist China. Yet it might have led to a more stable non-Communist China in the long run.

shortcomings, was a man of broad vision and humanity; the Emperor was a man of honor and peace. Both were limited—one by the bulky machinery of a great democracy and the other by training, custom and the restrictions of his rule. Caught up in a medieval system, the Japanese militarists were driven primarily by dedication to their country.* They wanted power for it, not war profits for themselves; Tojo himself lived on a modest scale. Prince Konoye's weaknesses came largely from the vulnerable position of a premier in Japan, but by the end of his second cabinet he had transformed his natural tendency for indecisiveness into a show of purpose and courage which continued until his downfall. Even Matsuoka was no villain. Despite his vanity and eccentricities this man of ability sincerely thought he was working for the peace of the world when he saddled Japan with the Tripartite Pact; and he wrecked the negotiations in Washington out of egotism, not malice.

Nor were Stimson and Hull villains, though the latter, with his all-or-nothing attitude, had committed one of the most fatal mistakes a diplomat could make—driven his opponents into a corner with no chance to save face and given them no option to capitulation but war.

The villain was the times. Japan and America would never have come to the brink of war except for the social and economic eruption of Europe after World War I and the rise of two great revolutionary ideologies—Communism and Fascism. These two sweeping forces, working sometimes in tandem and sometimes at odds, ultimately brought about the tragedy of November 26. America certainly would never have risked going to war solely for the sake of China. It was the fear that Japan in partnership with Hitler and Mussolini would conquer the world that drove America to risk all. And the ultimate tragedy was that Japan had joined up with Hitler mainly because she feared the Anglo-Saxon nations were isolating her; hers was a marriage in name only.

A war that need not have been fought was about to be fought because of mutual misunderstanding, language difficulties, and mistranslations as well as Japanese opportunism, *gekokujo*, irrationality, honor, pride and fear—and American racial prejudice, distrust, ignorance of the Orient, rigidity, self-righteousness, honor, national pride and fear.

Perhaps these were essentially the answers to Händel's question: "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?" In any case, America had made a grave mistake that would cost her dearly for decades to come. If Hull had sent a conciliatory answer to Proposal B, the Japanese (according to surviving Cabinet members) would have either come to some agreement with America or, at the least, been forced to spend several weeks in debate.

* After his trial Tojo admitted that the independence of the Supreme Command had led to Japan's ruin. "We should have risen above the system we inherited, but we did not. It was the men who were to blame. . . . Especially myself."

And this hiatus would in turn have compelled postponement of their deadline for attack until the spring of 1942 because of weather conditions. By this time it would have been obvious that Moscow would stand, and the Japanese would have been eager to make almost any concessions to avoid going into a desperate war with an ally which now faced inevitable defeat. If no agreement had been reached, America would have gained precious time to strengthen the Philippines with more bombers and reinforcements. Nor would there have been such a debacle at Pearl Harbor. There is little likelihood that the implausible series of chances and coincidences that brought about the December 7 disaster could have been repeated.