

OUR QUARREL WITH JAPAN

THE EDITOR

MR. CHURCHILL had announced that if Japan went to war with the United States, a British declaration on the American side would follow "within an hour". Japan, knowing that she could reckon on British fulfilment of that pledge (no "New Order" of lies having yet been adopted at 10 Downing Street), did not wait for it to take place. She declared war simultaneously on the United States and on Britain.

The ground of quarrel for the two countries is indeed fundamentally the same. Not solely, or chiefly, a sequence of attacks upon the interest and of outrage upon the citizens of each, with disguise of falsehood so thin that it can never have been seriously intended even to deceive! The quarrel extends far beyond any particular offence against national rights. What is at stake is whether the Far East shall be abandoned to pirate Japan—that she may work there her special sort of will. Her purposes are known to extend far indeed—from Eastern Siberia in the North to Indo-China, Netherlands East Indies, Australia and India in the South. British and American and French hands have promoted in that Far East the cause of peaceful civilization. Is it to be cancelled by surrender to a Power none the less barbarous because its methods and instruments of cruelty are scientific? To the Power which still, in this twentieth century, silences free speech, tortures prisoners to extract confession, practises war as in the main the art of foul play, and so substitutes assassination for the election procedure of government elsewhere that vital statistics show her premierships to be among the most dangerous callings in the country?

Great Britain and the United States have many a national interest which Japan has injured. Sometimes, as a variant, she has proposed to them "a thieves' bargain" for simultaneous robbery all over the world, in which each of the trio would connive at the performances of the other two! The deepest concern, British and American, is not to exact reparation for anything that has been done. It is to stop this horror from developing.

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Last incident in the series is so typical that it will serve to illustrate the whole.

When on Friday, December 5, 1941, scores of Japanese planes were on their way to drop tons of explosive upon Americans at Honolulu, the Cabinet spokesman in Tokyo whose task it was to instruct the foreign press met journalists of various nations in conference. He bade them cable to their respective newspapers that negotiation was about to be resumed "in all sincerity" for maintenance of peace!

Resumed indeed it was, for a very short time at Washington, until news of what was happening at Honolulu led Mr. Cordell Hull to address the Japanese "special envoy" in language surely unique for diplomatic interchange. At the very moment when the smiling Mr. Kurusu was there for special Sunday conversations with the Secretary of State, Americans were dying by hundreds in city fields three thousand miles away, blown to pieces with bombs which Mr. Kurusu must have known that his country's airmen were dropping. It became all too plain why that "special envoy" had been sent at the eleventh hour, and why emphasis had been laid to the journalists at Tokyo on the "sincerity" of the negotiation about to be resumed. Japan specializes in "the undeclared war", and such is part of its preliminary technique. In the words of her present favorite mentor, Adolf Hitler, she "could not be expected to forego the advantage of a surprise".

Such is her character. Such she has shown herself, ever since in 1910 she annexed Korea despite her solemn pledge that she would do nothing of the kind. Especially since her forces burst for pillage into Manchuria, to the accompaniment of a deluge of falsehood about entreaty from Manchurians for Japanese help. For the last ten years her record has been one of ever increasing shamelessness, of dishonored pledges past all counting, so that each new Japanese signature became a newspaper jest. Our quarrel with her is in essence the same as our quarrel with Germany. Pleas about "room to live", accessibility of raw materials, facilities for trade, are just now absurdly irrelevant: they should count for no more than the burglar's appeal to his judge on the ground of what sociologists had proved about unequal distribution of wealth. What Japan wants, and cherishes wild hope of obtaining in the present world chaos, is a free hand in East Asia, to make her people the master-race over slave-races of the Pacific, like the German *Herren-Volk* dominating Poles and Czechs. This is the gauntlet that America and Britain have taken up.

They could indeed "do no other".