



*As Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, War Department General Staff, from April, 1940, to February, 1942, SHERMAN MILES saw from a close vantage point the building up of our war Army and the simultaneous rise of the Far Eastern crisis that culminated at Pearl Harbor. He had previously served several times with naval or joint military-naval staffs, and also as operations officer in Hawaii. He graduated at West Point in 1905, and served in the Cavalry, Artillery, and General Staff through the various grades until promoted to brigadier general in 1939 and major general in 1942. He is at present a Representative in the Massachusetts legislature.*

*Atlantic Monthly July 1948*

## PEARL HARBOR IN RETROSPECT

by SHERMAN MILES

1

PEARL HARBOR struck a country satiated with war's alarms. True, we had put through the draft and had actually reached the shooting stage with German submarines. But as a people we were still talking of war, without really accepting its imminence. Then, into our national complacency, came a surprise blow at our strongest point!

We underestimated Japanese military power. So far as military and naval estimates were concerned, Japan had to be judged largely on her past record. Power cannot be gauged solely on strength reports, even if actual strength be known. Japan's war record was not impressive. She had fought but one great power (if the Russia of 1904-1905 can be so rated), plus a push-over against an isolated German colony. Most indicative of all were the four years before Pearl Harbor in which she had waged active warfare in China. We knew pretty accurately China's deficiencies in modern equipment, resources, and training. Our maps and time scales, as we followed the war, clearly indicated a low rating for Japanese military prowess when judged by modern standards.

We had a yardstick. No better measure exists of what a power plant can do, if you cannot put your own gauges on it, than what it has done. We had no reason to doubt our yardstick's approximate accuracy. Yet it was wholly false.

I remember an incident that happened a short time before Pearl Harbor. We feared that the Japanese forces in Indo-China might advance on the northern end of the Burma Road, at Kunming. Secretary Stimson asked me how long such a movement would take. Military Intelligence had considered the terrain and the opposing forces, and applied its yardstick. I accordingly replied, "Three months," and stuck to it when the Secretary tried

to shake me. Compared to what the Japanese later did in Malaya, Burma, and the Philippines, my estimate for a Kunming advance was rather like assigning to a race horse the speed of a Percheron. The efficiency of Japanese military power, measured in space and time, in the six months between Pearl Harbor and Midway surprised the world.

Japanese ability to attack Hawaii, or alternately Panama or the West Coast, was primarily a naval problem. Unfortunately, our Navy underestimated Japanese sea and sea-air power even more than we in the Army underestimated the efficiency of their land and air forces. The Japanese Navy had seen even less of modern warfare than had the Japanese Army. No yardstick, true or false, could be applied. Whether because or in spite of that, the Japanese Navy was held in low esteem by our naval authorities. I remember Admiral Kelly Turner expressing in a British-American staff conference, six months before Pearl Harbor, his confidence in our ability to hold the Japanese Navy in home waters simply by having our fleet cruise in the mid-Pacific. I suggested that that would simply be "shadowboxing" — to the Admiral's annoyance, I fear. There was also the flat statement of Admiral Kimmel's war plans officer that there would "never" be an attack on Pearl Harbor by air. More specifically, the temporary detachments of carriers and cruisers from the main body of the Pacific fleet, at least tacitly approved by the Navy Department, almost coincidentally with their November war warnings, were practical reflections of the Navy's thinking on the possibility of Japanese major operations at sea.

Another important factor entered, almost to the last, into our estimates. It was the question of whether or not Japan would, on her own initiative, immediately involve us in war on the termination

of her diplomatic conference in Washington. It became evident in the fall of 1941 that that conference would probably end without agreement. Our increasing economic pressure on Japan, plus the militaristic cast of the government that then came into power there and their partial loss of face in China, spelled a probable resumption of their policy of conquest. In what direction would the Japanese strike, and against whom?

There were many reasons, political and economic, to suppose that they would strike to the south. They already occupied Indo-China, under a thin veneer of legality. Beyond lay the riches of Malaya and the East Indies. Oil and rubber they particularly needed. There were also possibilities in the direction of Australia, Burma, and India.

That was, indeed, the line they took. It meant unprovoked war with the British and the Dutch, but not necessarily with us. We assumed that they knew the strong feeling in this country against involvement in war. "America First" was still abroad in the land, and very vocal. Crippling strikes threatened. Even in our new Army, bewilderment and discontent had coined the slogan "Over the hill [desertion] in October." We had lately saved that Army from complete disintegration by only a single vote in the House of Representatives!

Had Japan not attacked us when the Washington conference failed, there were but two courses of action that could have resulted in our interference with her policy of conquest. The President might have persuaded Congress to declare war, or he might have interposed U.S. forces in the path of the Japanese advance. The Administration's difficulties would have been great and its success problematical in either case. And how the isolationist elements in the country — the "Hearst-McCormick-Patterson Axis," "America First," and others — would have howled! American lives to be sacrificed in defense of British and Dutch colonies, and Siam! All this the Japanese must have known. They certainly missed a bet, once they realized that their negotiations in Washington would fail, in not going about their southern business and leaving us out on a limb.

Through "magic," our code-breaking device, we read a strong hint along this line to Tokyo from Ambassador Nomura in Washington. And he was right; for, whatever we did, the Japanese stood to gain time for the seizure and consolidation of their southern conquests, and the still greater advantage, in the long run, of fighting an America torn by dissension. They chose, instead, to bring us in at once, and by so treacherous an attack that complete unity in our war effort was instantly assured. We underestimated their war power, yes; but their fundamental failure to understand America and our potential in a long war (also pointed out to them by their Ambassador) was colossal.

It has been argued that the Japanese were bound to attack our fleet on resuming their policy of con-

quest because it constituted an intolerable strategic threat on their flank. The fleet was certainly an important element in Pacific strategy, and its damage or elimination was highly desirable from the Japanese point of view. But as a matter of fact, it was not an immediate menace to Japan, nor could it have seriously deterred her in the early months of whatever campaign she might decide to initiate behind the shield of her mandate islands. For our fleet, in any operations in the Far East, would have been distinctly inferior to the Japanese in air and sea power and particularly in logistic support.

We had no bases beyond Hawaii capable of handling the fleet. We lacked the "train," the great force of supply and repair ships, that would be necessary for such distance operations. This also the Japanese must have known. Not even the most extreme misconception as to the relative efficiency of the opposing forces would have led our fleet so far from its base for a considerable period of time. Or if it had, Admiral Yamamoto could have solved his problem still more tragically for us.

## 2

NEITHER factor discussed above — our underestimate of Japan's war power or our evaluation of the advantages that would accrue to her if she put on us the onus of making war — neither consideration caused us to ignore the possibility of an immediate Japanese attack on us when the Washington conference terminated, or the probability that we should eventually be involved in her war. The war warnings of November 24 and 27, together with the many discussions which culminated in the unprecedented appeal of President Roosevelt to the Japanese Emperor, clearly show this. It was also abundantly clear that the decision to bring us in initially or to put the onus on us rested solely with Japan.

The high command of our Army and Navy thought they had prepared for either eventual or immediate war, so far as it was humanly possible to do so. But still it was difficult to predict, and indeed we did not predict that the Japanese would commit so great a blunder as Pearl Harbor, gratuitously unifying the war spirit and potential of America. We overestimated their intelligence.

That blunder in the realm of high policy eventually cost Japan her empire. But that was not all. On the lower plane of tactics the Japanese decision to attack Pearl Harbor by surprise involved enormous risks. As General Marshall later testified: "A surprise is either a triumph or a catastrophe. If it proved to be a catastrophe, the entire Japanese campaign was ruined."

Our fleet and fortress together constituted what probably was, at that time, the most formidable strong point in the world. The fortress, with its garrison reinforced, had great firepower and a not inconsiderable air force. "The presence of the

fleet," General Marshall had told the President, "reduces the threat of a major attack." Had the fleet been held together and deployed in adjacent waters, it could have retained sea supremacy. Six months later, at Midway, weaker forces, supported by far fewer land-based planes, decisively defeated a Japanese fleet much superior to the hit-and-runners that bombed Pearl Harbor.

It is true that most of our air strength was not on the alert or otherwise available when the attack came; but the Japanese had to assume it would be, as of course it might have been. Our radar detection stations closed down after 7.00 A.M., but that again the Japanese could hardly have known. Though we could not have matched the Japanese carrier-borne air force, plane for plane, we had the great potential advantage of near-by land bases for much of our force. Hostile planes had also to count on facing well-equipped and presumably well-prepared anti-aircraft batteries, both afloat and ashore. Consideration of high policy aside, a Japanese attack on such a place-of-arms, *under alert commands*, was, on the face of it, improbable.

Our reasoning was correct. The flaw lay in that phrase "under alert commands."

## 3

THE Hawaiian fortress and naval base were built with but one potential enemy in view, Japan. Studies concerning the Japanese bore on their military characteristics. It was well known that they were given to treachery and surprise. The President himself, less than a fortnight before Pearl Harbor, remarked that "the Japs are notorious for making an attack without warning."

The strategic importance of Hawaii, coupled with the possibility of surprise on the part of its sole potential enemy, was with us always, whatever might be the probabilities of other Japanese action in any given situation and at any given time. The answer could only lie in Hawaiian readiness to meet an attack, whenever and however made. That had been Army teaching for many years — coupled with the devout hope that we might get some warning of war.

The type of attack actually made — the how of it — had by no means been overlooked by the military. Many years before 1941 our fleet had made, in maneuvers, an attack on Pearl Harbor very similar to the actual one. In the early and middle 1930's the possibility of such an attack had been seriously discussed. General Drum, when in command in Hawaii, had had a long correspondence with the War Department on the subject. Even the "vacant sea," that area between the great Pacific traffic lanes through which an attacking force could approach Hawaii undetected, had been marked down in our defense studies.

In January, 1941, the Secretary of the Navy listed

the first three Hawaiian dangers "in order of importance and probability . . . (1) air bombing attack, (2) air torpedo plane attack, (3) sabotage." The Secretary of War concurred. Generals Marshall and Short corresponded on the subject that spring, and the former pointed out that the first six hours of hostilities would probably be decisive in Hawaii. In March the two senior air officers there, General Martin and Admiral Bellinger, made a defense study in which they practically called the turn on what later happened. And in May General Short wrote the Chief of Staff describing joint maneuvers he had held with the fleet, the theme of which was the defense of Hawaii from a carrier-borne air attack.

The situation that existed in Hawaii in November and early December, 1941, presented a much less difficult problem to the commands there than had many of the countless studies and maneuvers by which the Army and Navy had for years been indoctrinated. Often our assumed situations envisaged a Japanese attack following a very short period of strained relations, or none at all — "out of the blue." Frequently our naval force, assumed to be in Hawaiian waters, consisted only of locally based submarines and air squadrons, supported by an unreinforced garrison. And rarely, if ever, did the problems offer the lead of specific warnings or directives from the War and Navy Departments.

The Pearl Harbor attack, on the contrary, followed a long period of strained relations. We had progressively imposed economic pressure on Japan. They had sent one of their leading diplomats (through Hawaii, incidentally) as the crisis approached in the long-drawn-out conference in Washington. The major part of our battle fleet was in Hawaiian waters. Our Hawaiian garrison had been materially reinforced. And lastly, well before the situation broke, the Army and Navy commanders there had received from their chiefs directives which contained clear warnings of the possible outbreak of hostilities at any time. Had such a situation been suggested as the basis of a theoretical war game or maneuver, it would probably have been rejected out of hand. For it would have been held to present no problem for solution: the answer would have been too obvious — full alert and the activation of approved plans.

I have said that the War and Navy Departments' dispatches contained clear warnings of possible hostilities. I think the record will bear me out. Let's look at it.

As early as July 25, when we froze Japanese assets, the Pacific commands, including Hawaii, were informed of it by the War and Navy Departments "in order that you may take appropriate precautionary measures against any possible eventualities." On November 24, a joint Army and Navy dispatch pointed out the possibility of Japanese "surprise aggressive movements in any direc-

tion." On November 27 the Navy Department sent another dispatch beginning: "This is to be considered a war warning" — not much doubt about that. On the same day the War Department sent another one, over General Marshall's signature, and Military Intelligence followed it up with a message to G-2's.

The Marshall dispatch read in part: "Japanese future action unpredictable but hostile action possible at any moment. If hostilities cannot, repeat cannot, be avoided the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act. This policy should not, repeat not, be construed as restricting you to a course of action that might jeopardize your defense. Prior to hostile Japanese action you are directed to undertake such reconnaissance and other measures as you deem necessary but these measures should be carried out so as not, repeat not, to alarm civil population or disclose intent. Report measures taken."

This dispatch has since been criticized as a "do-don't" order. In its drafting, Military Intelligence had no part, and I have no personal concern with the "do-don't" controversy. But aside from a certain obscurity about not disclosing intent, the "don'ts" were nothing to get excited about — don't start a war; don't alarm civilians. Those were old Army policies. The importance of the message lies in what it was meant to convey and what it did convey — to others.

It was drafted under the personal supervision of the Secretary of War, who had in mind that "defense against an attack by Japan was the first consideration." General Marshall later defined the dispatch tersely as "a command directive for alert against a state of war." It is indeed difficult to miss a clear war warning in the phrases of the message itself. The Philippines, Panama, and the West Coast received the same or a very similar dispatch, had no doubts about its intent, and acted accordingly. Only Hawaii, the vital pivot in a Japanese war, thought that such a warning had but slight local application.

Wherever or whenever Washington may have thought the Japanese cat would probably jump, Hawaii's primary mission was to meet it there if it came. Yet both the Army and Navy commands there acted as if there were *no chance* of a Japanese overseas attack on them. What they actually did and did not do, simply spelled "It can't happen here."

## 4

IT HAS since been implied that the reason Hawaii was not on the alert was that Washington thought the Japanese would not attack there. That suggestion points up very neatly the crucial issue. For the opposite was true — Washington thought the Japanese would not attack Hawaii largely because it believed Hawaii *was* alerted and prepared.

That was, admittedly, an assumption, but it was so fundamental an assumption, based on so many years of indoctrination, as well as on issued orders, that it was not questioned by anyone in Washington, from the President down. For guns don't shoot or planes fly by themselves.

General Marshall, testifying before the Congressional Committee, was asked: "Did the President of the United States, in your opinion, have a right to assume that the commands in Hawaii were properly alerted on the morning of December 7?" The General replied: "I think he had every right to assume that." Washington was surprised by the Pearl Harbor attack, but not nearly so much as it was by what the enemy encountered there.

For the War Department had actually cut into the seed corn of air power to strengthen Hawaiian defense. What could be spared only at great detriment to other commands, in planes, in antiaircraft artillery, and in radar equipment, went to Hawaii. The Philippines were left, for that period, practically helpless, and even the vital artery through Panama was neglected — until Hawaii was given what could be had. Then, and only then, about August, did Washington begin to build up Panama and the Philippines. Even so, when Pearl Harbor came, Hawaii was much better equipped for defense than either of the other two great outposts or our own West Coast itself.

But Hawaii had lowered its guard to "alert against sabotage" on land and "condition 3" afloat. On this point, General Marshall testified: "I never could grasp what had happened between the period when so much was said [in Hawaii] about air attack, the necessity for antiaircraft, the necessity for planes for reconnaissance, the necessity for attack planes for defense and the other requirements which anticipated very definitely and affirmatively an air attack — I could never understand why suddenly it became a side issue."

It has been suggested that the high command in Washington neglected an essential of Hawaiian security, unity of command. That was not neglect: unity was a practical impossibility in those pre-war days. For years Hawaii had been the Exhibit A of both the proponents and the opponents of unified command. Three weeks before Pearl Harbor the last effort to attain unity failed. Only an executive order or war could have imposed it. After the war, with all of its lessons behind us, it still took two years to make possible unity of command (and of other functions) through merger of the Army and the Navy — if indeed they have merged!

Admiral Halsey, in his book, lays the blame for Pearl Harbor on Congress, for its failure to appropriate funds necessary for adequate protection. That is rather farfetched, since the issue clearly turned, not on what the Hawaiian commands had, but on what they did and did not do with it. They were not even planning to use it —

then. And Admiral Halsey's description of the radical measures he himself took to forestall an air surprise, on his cruise to Midway, just before the attack — his famous "shoot first and argue afterwards" — comports strangely with the almost total unpreparedness in Hawaii to shoot at all.

It has also been pointed out that Military and Naval Intelligence estimates on the future course of the World War, made in the months preceding Pearl Harbor, fail to mention a possible Japanese attack there. That is quite true. But suppose we had told Hawaii that the Japanese might attack — would that have been news? Why — for what primary purpose was the garrison there, and against what single potential enemy? Why was the fleet there? What did our long-strained relations with Japan mean to the key of the Pacific? And what of our years of emphasis on Hawaiian security in the strategy of a Japanese war? Does a guard, as the opposing team goes into a huddle, have to be told: "This play may come through you"? I willingly assume my share of responsibility for the omission of the obvious.

Emphasis on the danger of sabotage has also been advanced to explain why Hawaii was not alerted against an overseas attack. But actually how strong was that emphasis? True, subversive activities had been mentioned in the message to G-2's of November 27, which read: "Japanese negotiations have come to practical stalemate. Hostilities may ensue. Subversive activities may be expected. Inform commanding general and chief of staff only. Miles." Heaven knows subversion was an issue in Hawaii, with its large Japanese population; but the crucial sentence in the message was certainly "Hostilities may ensue." So far as Hawaii was concerned, warning of Japanese hostilities meant the possibility of attack; and that danger, however problematical, exceeded all else in importance.

There was also a dispatch sent in duplicate by the Chief of the Air Corps and the Adjutant General as a precaution against sabotage of planes. But none of these dispatches superseded or modified the War Department's warning order, nor were they so interpreted by any command that received them. Even Hawaii regarded them only as supporting the decision it had already made to go on alert against sabotage only.

The War Department has been pilloried for failure to tell Hawaii that its alert did not meet either the situation or the intent of General Marshall's order. That order had required a report of action taken. The Hawaiian command reported: "Alerted to prevent sabotage. Liaison with Navy" — nothing more. The War Department did not reply. Admittedly, this was a serious oversight, for which senior officers have assumed responsibility. But to what extent does the War Department's failure to reply justify the retention of Hawaii's inadequate

alert up to the time of the attack? On that matter I must again speak as an outsider, since it was not a function of Military Intelligence to check the readiness or any other disposition of United States forces, nor did I, or anyone else in Military Intelligence, see General Short's cryptic report.

Secretary Stimson says: "My initials show that the report crossed my desk, and in spite of my keen interest in the situation, it certainly gave me no intimation that the alert order against an enemy attack was not being carried out." For General Short did not say that he was alerted against sabotage *only*. He did not say that he considered the possibility of immediate war as solely an internal and not an external threat to his command, and give his reasons. Least of all did he imply any request for confirmation of so extraordinary a decision as an alert which ignored the possibility of attack by Japanese armed forces.

But Washington's failure to grasp the situation in Hawaii and correct it goes beyond the incident of General Short's report. Nine days elapsed before the attack. Why was Washington unaware, during those critical days, that Hawaii was out of line?

The answer lies in the system of decentralization of command which had for years prevailed in the Army and the Navy. General Marshall used to say that the War Department was a very poor command post. It was hardly one at all, save on the highest plane of general directives. So far as Hawaii, Panama, and the Philippines were concerned, the War Department was the office which assigned their personnel, provided their material, and gave them the general directives under which they operated. Within that scope those outposts were independent commands.

The message to G-2's of November 27, quoted above, was not an order. Rarely did the Chief of Staff issue orders to the Pacific outposts. The fact that the "command directive" of November 27 went out over his name added emphasis, if such were needed, to that crucial dispatch.

## 5

WHEN war came, our "magic" — the breaking of Japanese codes — paid enormous dividends. It materially aided us in concentrating those slender means by which we won the Battle of Midway, the turning point in the Pacific war. It has always seemed to me that we were extremely lucky in keeping the vital secret of "magic" within an already fairly large group in Washington, and wise in rigidly limiting it to that group and the Philippine commands until we were actually at war. I well remember a day when a copy of one of the "magic" messages was missing. The Secretary himself got into that fracas, and I finally ran down the message in the possession of a person unauthorized to have it — in the White House!

After the war, "magic" supplied what appeared to many as definite indications of what the Japanese had been planning at Pearl Harbor. We had those indications before the attack. Why, then, didn't we foresee it? The question hinges on selection, guided by hindsight. If one reads first the end of a good detective story, and then starts in at the beginning and reads through, it is easy to pick out the real clues from those which would have led to other deductions. It is not so easy if one takes the clues, true and false, as they come. The "magic" intercepted and translated by us in the six months before Pearl Harbor, if printed in book form and type, would make several normal volumes. There was no lack of clues — a broad field from which to select, after the event, those which seem to point to that event and to that only.

There were many "magic" messages showing Japanese interest in conditions existing in Hawaii, largely requests for information of military value. Some concerned the location of anchorages of our warships in Pearl Harbor, by limited sections of that area, their arrival and departure, and so forth. These messages were primarily of naval interest, and the Navy apparently took them to mean two things: first, that Japanese spies there were looking down our throats — a deplorable condition which the Army and Navy had known for thirty years or more; and second, that the Japanese were planning an attack on our fleet, by air or submarines or both.

But since the fleet might eventually be a deterrent to them, it would have been strange indeed had they not made plans to attack it if they could. We ourselves had plans for contingencies far less obvious than that. It is difficult to believe that any senior Army or Navy officer in Hawaii would have found it news had he been told by Washington that the fleet was under close Japanese espionage and the subject of aggressive planning. Indeed, a naval officer would have replied that the fleet had no intention of meeting a major attack at their moorings in Pearl Harbor!

The Hawaiian commands later complained that this "magic" information was not transmitted to them — this in spite of their failure to react to the authoritative warning orders sent them when the situation was commonly known to be far more critical. By comparison, it may be noted that General MacArthur, who had access to "magic," could not later identify the more important "magic" messages; he apparently took no action on them, but alerted his command for war on Washington's warning orders.

There were two "magic" messages of a different type which have subsequently been held to have been signposts, had we so read them, to Pearl Harbor. The first was a message of November 22 from Tokyo to their ambassadors in Washington, saying:

"After that [November 29] things are automatically going to happen." The other message, of November 30, was from Tokyo to the Germans, informing them of the danger of sudden war "through some clash of arms."

The statement that "things are automatically going to happen" after November 29 simply meant that certain preliminary movements of forces and supplies, without which operations in modern war are impossible, would, on that date, be irrevocably committed. Such commitments would, for instance, be essential to the Japanese southern advance, then apparently (and actually) in preparation. The point is that Japan had a wide choice of victims; and considered as a clue to the Pearl Harbor attack, the statement that something would happen automatically somewhere after the 29th is pretty thin.

As for the sudden "clash of arms," that was exactly what we ourselves had feared. We had cautioned the Pacific commands against committing the first overt act in the warning orders sent out four days before the "clash of arms" message was intercepted.

That message is also an interesting example of the selection of a clue to prove a point, without regard to the background of "magic" as a whole. What had actually happened was this: On November 26 the Japanese ambassadors in Washington, in a radio to Tokyo, spoke, in passing, of the possibility of a British and American military occupation of the Netherlands East Indies. Tokyo promptly picked up that "very important matter" and radioed back on the 27th to find out "more about it." (It had, in fact, been discussed in Washington, but not approved.) On the 27th, and again on the 28th, the Japanese ambassadors radioed their belief that it might come about.

Now, with that background, read (as we did) *all* of what Tokyo, on November 30, told its Ambassador in Berlin to say to Hitler and Ribbentrop: "Say to them that lately England and the United States have taken a provocative attitude, both of them. Say that they are planning to move military forces into various places in East Asia and that we will inevitably have to counter by also moving troops. Say very secretly to them that there is extreme danger that war may suddenly break out between the Anglo-Saxon nations and Japan through some clash of arms, and add that the time of the breaking out of this war may come quicker than anyone dreams."

Projected on the background of the idea of American occupation of the Dutch islands, which apparently Tokyo had accepted, this famous clue takes on quite a different complexion. It is certainly hard to read into it a warning of so premeditated an attack, on Japanese initiative, as that which had, in fact, already been launched on the high seas.

"Magic" has since been read, in the light of what subsequently happened, as a clear indication that

Japan intended to involve us in her war from the outset. But that reading also requires a high degree of selectivity in "Operation Hindsight." "Magic" said the Japanese would push us out of China — of course they would if and when they were at war with us. They had already made a good start on it, without war. "Magic" warned the Japanese ambassadors not to break off the negotiations or arouse our suspicions; all of which tied in with whatever "automatic" military preparations they wished to complete, whoever their chosen victim might be, before they showed their hand in Washington.

"Magic" spoke often of the "brink of chaos," "chaotic conditions," and the "tremendous crisis" that would follow the rupture of the Washington conference. It frequently coupled us, at least eventually, with Great Britain in the war they foresaw. Tokyo told Berlin that we classed Japan with Germany and Italy (with which we were not at war) as enemies. All this, however, was nothing more than we ourselves well knew — that we could not long maintain neutrality if the war spread to the Far East.

As late as November 15 Nomura was suggesting to Tokyo that, if the conference broke down and Japan pursued an unrestricted course, the most probable immediate results would be the rupture of diplomatic relations with us, or at least a partial rupture such as we then had with Germany. And Tokyo did not say him nay. Only just before Pearl Harbor did "magic," that prolific source of information and misinformation, indicate with any clarity Japanese intention of involving us in war from the outset.

The plain fact is that the war warnings sent out by the highest military authorities nine days and more before Pearl Harbor were far more authoritative and more definitive of what the Hawaiian commands might expect, and what was expected of them, than any information or interpretations from "magic" that Military or Naval Intelligence could possibly have sent. Complete reliance was placed on the effect those warnings should have had — and did have everywhere except in Hawaii. But Tokyo apparently believed that the incredible might happen and Hawaii be surprised: Washington did not.

## 6

OF the last few days before the Pearl Harbor attack much has been said and written, but to little profit. The die had been cast. The Muse of Tragedy then had the plot well in hand. She saw to it that no circumstance occurred to ruffle the complacency in Hawaii, or to shatter the confidence of Washington in Hawaii's full alert. The Japanese fleet sailed silently through that "vacant sea" which Hawaiian defense studies had marked down as a likely line of approach. The movement was covered by effective smoke screens — Japanese activities in the South

China Sea and shilly-shally business at the Washington conference.

There was a flurry about the famous "East Wind" broadcast, meaning war with us, or at least rupture of diplomatic relations. We arranged for Hawaii to get and understand that broadcast if it came. But no one there or in the War Department ever got it. It was, in all probability, never sent. Instead the Japanese ordered the burning of certain codes. So did we.

But first came "magic" messages about merely being prepared to burn their codes. We were, I think, a bit slow to take them at face value because they seemed so queer and unnecessary. We intercepted one on November 15 in the midst of negotiations still far from deadlocked. Why should the Japanese be worried about their codes on November 15, and not only in Washington but also in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina? It was very odd. A later message of the same sort we assessed merely as a confirmation of our warnings already dispatched. Later, on December 3, "magic" told us that their embassy in Washington was to destroy most of their codes — not simply be prepared to do it. We then broke our rules and Navy radioed it to the Pacific commands, including Hawaii. We relied on routine liaison with Navy, not wishing further to jeopardize "magic" by sending two messages. Liaison did not work in that case in Hawaii. But, as a matter of fact, the Japanese were burning their codes out there; Hawaii knew it and we soon knew that they knew it.

The last twenty-four hours in Washington before the bombs fell have come in for much scrutiny. Why did the President, with most of the Japanese final answer before him, conclude that it meant war and then, after a fitful attempt to reach Admiral Stark by telephone, quietly go to bed? Why was he in seclusion the following morning? Why was no action taken on the Japanese reply by the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy when they met on that Sunday morning? Why did they not consult the President, or he send for them? Where was everybody, including my humble self? Why, in short, didn't someone stage a last-minute rescue, in good Western style?

The picture undoubtedly is one of men still working under the psychology of peace. They were, to quote Secretary Stimson again, "under a terrific pressure in the face of a global war which they felt was probably imminent. Yet they were surrounded, outside of their offices and almost throughout the country, by a spirit of isolationism and disbelief in danger which now seems incredible." They were men who thought they had done their possible to prepare for impending war, and who had no idea that there was an innocent maiden in need of rescue.

There has been a great deal of discussion on who saw the "pilot" messages and the final fourteen-

part Japanese answer; when they saw them and what they did about them. A more important point is what those "magic" messages told us.

The "pilot" messages from Tokyo informed the Japanese ambassadors in Washington, on December 6, that the final fourteen-part answer would probably, though not surely, be received by them the next day, December 7; that it was very long; that instructions would follow as to the exact time it was to be presented; and that before presenting it, the ambassadors were to "put it in a neatly drafted form," being "most careful to preserve secrecy," and "absolutely sure not to use a typist or any other person"!

Japanese methods were often curious — witness the business about code burning and the "East Wind." But so far as any logical deductions could be drawn from the "pilot" messages, they seemed to indicate Monday, December 8, as the earliest date for the presentation of the Japanese answer. The funny business about secrecy and exact timing seemed to be extravagant preparations for that presentation in Washington coincidently with an official announcement in Tokyo of the rupture of negotiations. The Japanese ambassadors had recommended just that to Tokyo ten days before.

It has sometimes been argued that a military decision should have been reached, or action taken, on the Japanese fourteen-part reply when "magic" gave it to us five or six hours before the attack. But though couched in aggressive language, the reply was only what we had been expecting for a week or more — the rupture of negotiations — and had so warned Hawaii and the other outposts. It is difficult to see what the military could have done about it. It was a matter of foreign relations, not of armed forces already warned of "hostile action at any moment."

It is significant that the authorities responsible for our foreign relations, the President and the Secretary of State, perceived no useful action that could be taken on it at that time. The President, with the full reply before him, remarked only on the rupture of negotiations and gave no sign that he foresaw immediate hostilities. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy apparently discussed, almost up to the time the Japanese carriers were launching their planes, how best to bring the United States into the war!

It was not until "magic" told us, on that Sunday morning, that the Japanese ambassadors were to burn their remaining codes and present Tokyo's reply to the Secretary of State at 1.00 P.M. that the timing became suspiciously significant. For it was a most unusual and extraordinary hour, on a Sunday afternoon, for foreign ambassadors to deliver a long-delayed reply to an elderly Secretary of State. We then suspected that Japanese military action of some sort, and at some still unknown place, might coincide with that hour. Even then the Chief of

Naval Operations demurred to a further warning, so sure was he that all forces were on the alert, and consented only that it be transmitted to naval commands at second hand through General Marshall's message.

That message was written for alerted commands. The Chief of Staff had no idea he was communicating with any other. So complete was our confidence in all Pacific alerts, so far were we from doubting Hawaiian preparedness, that, as the message was leaving the Chief of Staff's office, his operations officer, in his presence, said that if there was any question of priority, it should go first to the Philippines!

In all probability the receipt of the message could have made no material difference in Hawaii. There would not have been sufficient time to bridge the gap, mental and material, between the status of the Hawaiian commands on that quiet Sunday morning and one of effective alert.

In any event, the Muse who had so consistently worked up the tragedy saw to it that the message was delivered to all addressees, except Hawaii. She was taking no chances; but it was a busy morning for her. She had to see to it that operations against a Japanese submarine just off Pearl Harbor, beginning almost four hours before the attack, caused no general alert. She was almost caught out by a couple of gadget-happy soldiers who stayed overtime on their radar and actually saw and reported the approaching Japanese planes. But she promptly trumped that trick by producing a lieutenant who said, "Forget it." How the Greeks would have appreciated that final touch of inexorable fate!

Over two thousand men died at Pearl Harbor. They did not die in vain. Their sacrifice counted heavily in the great score that brought us final victory. But it did not count on the day the Japanese caught them unprepared and got away almost unscathed. For that the Hawaiian commands were directly responsible. Beyond that lay the system under which our armed forces were organized and operated — complete separation of the Army and the Navy, no unity of command, and decentralization within each service. That system may be criticized after the event, since in Hawaii it failed in its essential function: it did not produce, afloat or ashore, the reaction expected by higher authority or required by the crisis. Perhaps too much stress was put upon it in a country loath to admit the danger it faced, and in military establishments not taut on the starting line, not yet geared to war.

It remains to be seen whether the recent merger of the forces — land, sea, and air — guided by the lessons of a global war, can be made effective, or whether pre-Pearl Harbor conditions are inherent in a democracy before the shooting starts. They had better not be, for the next surprise attack will be quite another story.