

of Hideyoshi in the 1590's, when the Japanese exterminated half of Korea in a vain attempt to conquer China, in order to use China as a base from which to conquer the rest of Asia, which would in turn serve as a base to conquer the rest of the world -- or such parts of it as the Japanese knew about. Hideyoshi never reached even the Chinese frontiers. His frustration was not forgotten. The Japanese Government and people became obsessed with the ideas of isolation and peace, but they continued to hypnotize themselves with the notion that they were the finest, hardest, bravest fighting race on earth, and that the hour of their ultimate destiny would not find them unready.

When Japan opened her gates to the West, after 1853, and began modernizing all her institutions, after 1867, the military and preparedness part of her modernization was among the most conspicuous. The Japanese put their army and navy in shape, and created the industrial bases for modern fighting, before they got around to establishing a parliament or a constitution. The schools were set up in close conjunction with the militarist cult of modern patriotism, and with the army conscription system. Japan attacked China in 1895. Japan attacked Russia in 1904. Japan attempted to blackmail China in 1915. Only in 1922 did the Japanese give ground, at the Washington conference; they retreated in the face of Anglo-American determination to keep the peace, coupled with overwhelming Anglo-American naval superiority. This retreat was momentary, and the first shock of political or economic crisis was enough to put the mobilization and preparedness system back into high gear.

The invasion of China's Manchurian provinces by the Japanese gave the militarists the opportunity to clamp down a censorship, to go about their preparation in perfect secrecy, to brush away inquiry with the statement that they were involved in hostilities. In the ten years following this episode, ten years which corresponded to my ambassadorship in Tokyo, the Japanese devoted all their national energies to getting ready for war.

Part of this preparation was forced upon the Japanese by the unexpectedly effective war effort of the Chinese. Under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese forced the Japanese to extend a half-political half-military campaign with limited objectives into a full-scale war. What had begun, in the view of the Japanese, as a sort of border operation became a life and death struggle involving Japan's military standing. The Chinese never dared hope that they themselves could easily and swiftly drive the Japanese into the sea; but they were successful in holding the Japanese, in draining away much of Japan's excess power, in preventing the Japanese from utilizing other military and diplomatic opportunities for aggression. It would be unworthy of us Americans to underrate the enormous service which the Chinese national armies rendered the world in the decade 1931-1941. Many of our people, even of our experts, went so far as to overrate the accomplishments of the Chinese, and to assume that Japan had been bled white, and would be incapable of new campaigns elsewhere. On December 7, 1941, and thereafter, there was an inclination for opinion to swing to the opposite extreme and to assume that China's efforts had been in vain, and that Japan was stronger than ever.

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