

Failure of an American Mission

TEN YEARS IN JAPAN: A Contemporary Record Drawn from the Diaries and Private and Official Papers of Joseph C. Grew, United States Ambassador to Japan, 1932-1942. With photographs. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1944. 554 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by HENRY C. WOLFE

THIS is a glorious book—a book to make Americans proud. When the reviewer was in Japan in pre-Pearl Harbor 1941, he was deeply impressed by our Ambassador's "handling of delicate tasks in a difficult situation"—President Roosevelt's tribute. Here was statesmanship of the first order. But until he got into the pages of this eye-opening record the reviewer could not fully appreciate the high and steadfast purpose, the selfless toil, and the Lincolnesque idealism that went into Mr. Grew's long struggle to keep peace between Japan and the United States.

"Ten Years in Japan" is built around the Tokyo chapter of Mr. Grew's personal diary. On his tenth anniversary as Ambassador to Japan he made an entry about the "final failure of my mission." Neither then nor at any time does he show the faintest trace of bitterness, cynicism, or hatred. He had no use for the word "Jap" or its implications. He had no use, either, as he told Foreign Minister Toyoda, for Old World diplomacy. He "was accustomed to speak with the utmost frankness and straight from the shoulder." He has not tried to square his "patch-work and crazy-quilt" diary with history. He has left its errors in judgment and its apparent inconsistencies—they are amazingly few—just as he entered them.

Here for the first time is told the behind-the-scenes story of the decade of Japanese crises, intrigues, and aggressions that exploded in the tragedy of global war. On November 3, 1941, Ambassador Grew cabled Washington that Japan might strike "with dangerous and dramatic suddenness." The day of the Pearl Harbor blitzkrieg found him still working for peace, unaware that Japanese bombers had turned the Pacific into Armageddon.

Hardly had he heard the official announcement of the outbreak of hostilities than the Tokyo police closed the embassy gates. The veteran crusader for Japanese-American peace was a prisoner of the Japanese. And a prisoner he remained for more than half a year until he boarded the evacuation vessel for home.

This intimate, off-the-record journal is outstanding on many counts. One

is the author's clear, objective, authoritative outline of Japanese-American relations during his Tokyo mission. His masterly analyses of the Manchurian aggression, the *Panay* sinking, the "Chinese incident," the German-Japanese alliance, and the Russian-Japanese pact clear up many a mystery in the recent history of the Far East. He presents an invaluable interpretation of the Japanese mind, of the un-Occidental psychology behind the evasions and stupidities of Japanese foreign policy, behind the barbarity and treachery of Japan's medieval militarism.

But it is Mr. Grew's close-up of the human interest behind Japanese power politics that will charm and fascinate the general reader. "Ten Years in Japan" is vivid with humorous anecdote, personal experience, incisive portraiture, and the malapropisms of Japanese newspaper English. There is the tale of the newly arrived Junker diplomat who hailed the birth of the Japanese Crown Prince as a fitting gesture of welcome; of the political downfall of Foreign Minister Matsuoka, past master of the faux pas and chatterbox extraordinary; of the Emperor's concern for Mr. Grew's dog which had been rescued from a fall into the palace moat; of the American Ambassador's official call on the puppet Manchukuo envoy "when we got on the subject of hunting the long-haired Manchurian tiger. Then the fur really flew."



Ambassador Grew arriving on the *Gripsholm* after six months internment in Japan.

Mr. Grew played poker with Shiratori, Axis-minded spokesman of the Foreign Office, and "took much pleasure in badly rooking" the articulate Japanese jingoist. "I showed him conclusively that I can bluff as well as he, but that I generally had the cards."

In the course of his Tokyo mission the Ambassador had occasion to entertain many visiting celebrities. There was Babe Ruth. Japan went wild over him. Mr. Grew took the King of Swat golfing, admired his *savoir faire* as he was presented to delighted Japanese golfers, and observed: "He is a great deal more effective Ambassador than I could ever be."

Throughout the volume we relive the tense days and the sleepless nights of Mr. Grew's heroic struggle to avoid war. We share the suspense, the glow of temporary success, the broken hopes. In a particularly moving episode he sweats out a long, hot August afternoon over a Japanese peace offer. Prince Konoye, the Japanese Prime Minister, had proposed a peace conference with President Roosevelt on American soil. As a preliminary move the Japanese Foreign Minister, Admiral Toyoda, invited Mr. Grew to work over with him the terms of the peace offer. "We both took off our coats, rolled up our sleeves, and again pitched in to the work. . . . I wrote down everything he said, about a dozen pages of foolscap, and I almost had writer's cramp at the end." The two diplomats kept swabbing off the perspiration with cold towels provided by the Foreign Minister. Till after midnight Mr. Grew slaved over his report on the session, and it was 5:35 A.M. before the lengthy document was encoded.

In his diary Mr. Grew made this comment on Admiral Toyoda: "I think I like him more than any other Foreign Minister I have ever dealt with." And the American diplomat had dealt with a good many Foreign Ministers. He dealt with a good many Japanese too, which gives "Ten Years in Japan" first-line importance as a well focused view of the people of Japan. In this view he highlights the "cruelty, brutality, and utter bestiality, the ruthlessness and rapaciousness of the Japanese military machine which brought on this war. That Japanese military machine and military caste and military system must be utterly crushed, their credit and predominance must be utterly broken, for the future safety and welfare of the United States and of the United Nations, and for the future safety and welfare of civilization and humanity."

Every American ought to read this book, and certainly anyone who does not believe that our war with Japan was inevitable.

Variations on a Presidential Theme

THE USE OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER, 1789-1943. By George Fort Milton. Boston: Little Brown & Co. 1944. 349 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by LINDSAY ROGERS

“ON all great subjects much remains to be said.” To this truism John Stuart Mill might have added that many who start to say part end by saying exceedingly little, of what remains. In this category of false starters Mr. Milton does not belong. He is a well-known Southern journalist who, a dozen or so years ago, became a non-academic historian and established himself as a high authority on the Lincoln and post-Lincoln period. Thus, as a journalist, he has already said a good deal on the sweep of events of the inter-war period and, as an historian, on the uses of Presidential power in the sixties. He now surveys the whole period from 1789 to 1943 and is able to bring to that task additional capacities and perhaps additional prejudices acquired in several posts which he has recently held in Washington.

Indubitably his subject is a great one. The wise use of Presidential power, particularly at critical periods when its non-use or misuse would have been catastrophic, has made an indispensable contribution to our national puissance. In the post-war period Presidential power may be the decisive factor in determining whether, internationally, the Republic is to continue strong or to become weak; whether, domestically, the nation is to be kept from remaining half-prosperous and half-poor. The two objectives may really be one.

Mr. Milton devotes the major part of his attention to eight Presidents whom he considers outstanding. There are few who will have a serious quarrel with this list: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt. If the list were extended Tyler, Polk, and Hayes might have claims for inclusion. If the list were reduced by two, Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt would go off; if by three, Jackson would not stay in. Two Founding Fathers, a Civil War President, a First World War President and a Second World War President—only these would remain.

To the qualities of mind and heart of the men on his list, to the tasks they accomplished, to their methods of work and play, to their leadership of the country, to their relations with Congress and administrative associates, Mr. Milton devotes detailed attention. Of necessity he passes many judgments,

some of which are bound to be cavalier. An occasional remark on the relations between men now living, of which readers may have knowledge, will make them wonder whether opinions neatly expressed on relations of which they have no knowledge, say between Lincoln and Seward, may not be pregnant with omissions. For example, Mr. Milton, recording President Roosevelt's candidature for the Governorship of New York in 1928, at the request of Alfred E. Smith who was running for the Presidency, says the fact that Roosevelt was elected while Smith lost the State “did not immediately interrupt their friendship, but when the new governor proved no rubber stamp his predecessor began to cool.” Such a bald remark gives no intimation of the complex interplay of personality that there was in this situation, and does not hint at nascent, mutual magnanimities which rivalry between kitchen cabinets may have nipped in the bud.

But any author who covers a large canvas is, to different sections of readers, bound to seem acute or shallow, right or wrong, profound or jejune. All readers should agree that Mr. Milton carries them over a century and a half with an easy style, a confident grasp of detail, and a minimum of passages suggesting that he has tried to bite off what he should have eschewed. Hence, I eschew any re-analysis of Mr. Milton's analyses. This would require excursions into the realms of personality, intelligence, character, constitutional law, practical politics, and administrative management. I content myself with a few general observations to which Mr. Milton's thoughtful and stimulating book gives point.

Gladstone once described the constitutional transformation of the British monarchy in the nineteenth century as having consisted in the gradual and beneficial substitution of influence for power. Power went from the King to the House of Commons and then to the Cabinet. The influence of the occupant of the throne waxed and waned in relation to the character and intelligence of the sovereign, her or his longevity, and the confidence which successive Prime Ministers had in the rightness of their own views. What comparable transformations have there been in the case of the American Presidency?

Certainly the burden of the office has become measurably greater. What future President will, like Theodore Roosevelt, be able to say that he is having “a bully time”? The Presidency broke Woodrow Wilson's health, and Harding, who declared that “after all government is a simple thing” and who



—SRL cartoon by Pierotti
George Fort Milton

sought a return to “normalcy,” died in office. Shortly thereafter I wrote a rather simple piece on the uses to which the White House might put a cabinet secretariat like the one Lloyd George developed in his war administration and which had been retained for peacetime purposes. The editor of *Collier's* headed it: “How to Save the Lives of Our Presidents!”

Were not Washington and Jefferson, and perhaps even Lincoln, more influential than powerful? Since Lincoln's time the annual statute book has steadily grown fatter but executive orders and administrative regulations have multiplied a thousand-fold. Even in peacetime the extension of governmental activity results in a vast increase of the President's duties and makes him a legislator whose output rivals in importance the output of Congress itself. Is the role of the legislature still primarily that of law-making? Is it not rather to see to it that adequate powers are placed in the executive and then to prod or tame those who use the powers?

And as power has increased, influence has also increased, but the mechanics and timing of its exertion have become completely different. Is there a basis on which one can compare the uses that Washington and Wilson made of the Presidency? How indeed can one compare Wilson and Roosevelt as war leaders and their uses of Presidential power save in terms of new uses of oil and electricity? What George Washington said and did could not become known and commented on until days, even weeks, after the event. Woodrow Wilson's magnificent war speeches (for which there are now only pallid substitutes) were on the morning's breakfast tables. Events proved that rhetoric and fine ideals reached but a little way. Disraeli said that “with words we can govern men,” but he was wrong if he meant that we could do it for more than a moment.

President Roosevelt can invite the