

REPORT FROM T O K Y O

An Ambassador warns of Japan's strength

by JOSEPH C. GREW

Since his return to this country from Japan last August, Joseph C. Grew has been addressing the American people to warn them that they must not underestimate the determination and the resourcefulness of the Japanese. *Report From Tokyo*, a book based on speeches delivered by him since his return, will be published by Simon & Schuster on Dec. 7, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. On these pages LIFE presents extracts from that book.

There are many questions which we have been asking ourselves since the grim forenoon of December 7, 1941. Some of these questions will be answered only by the historians of the far future. Why did Japan attack the United States and the British Commonwealth of Nations? Why did the Japanese wish to destroy us? Why did they risk the venture of war with our peoples, who are known for industrial power and for potential military capacity? Did the Japanese indeed make the most monumental miscalculation in all history? Are they foolish fanatics who have chosen a suicidal war as the only way out from their humiliation by Chinese resistance? Questions such as these have been asked me ever since my return from Tokyo.

I fear, alas, that no man living could answer all of these questions. If there is anyone who knows all the answers, I for one would like to learn from him. I know that there are many important points about the Japanese mind and spirit which have puzzled and troubled me, and which are probably not clear to the Japanese themselves. Nevertheless, I will put before you two of the main questions, and try to give answers to them which I believe come near to the heart of the matter.

First, why did the Japanese make this war upon us?

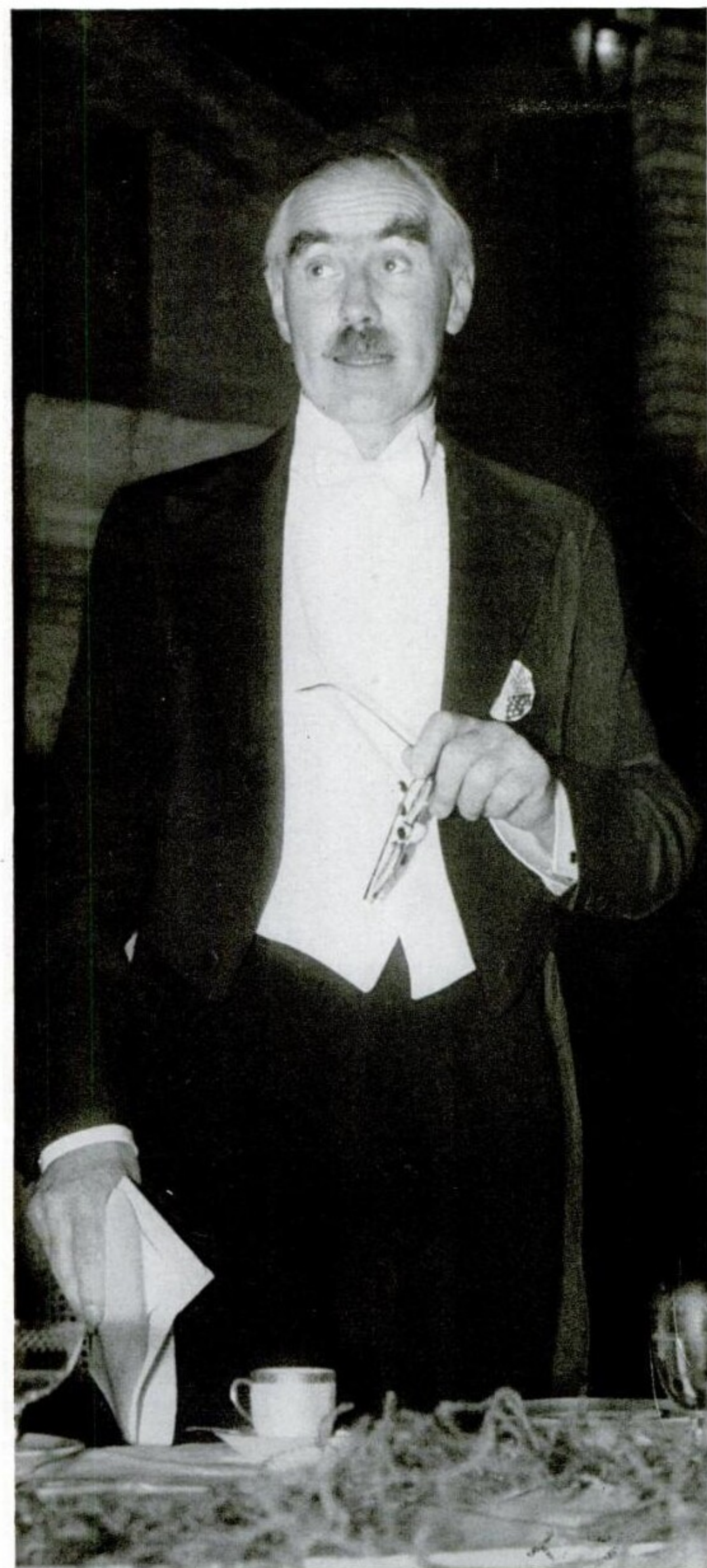
Second, how do the Japanese leaders—fanatical but coldly calculating men—dare dream of victory over the combined power of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States, China, and the other United Nations?

Why did they make war upon us? The Japanese attitude toward the English-speaking peoples is based on a concept of Japanese superiority and strength and of our inferiority and weakness. Part of this is a product of their mythology—the only neolithic mythology in the world which still plays a part in the affairs of a government. A part of it is a product of national vanity. A part of it is—in the Japanese view—logical, matter-of-fact, and well founded.

They hold Americans in contempt

It is a paradox of Japanese thinking that, despite their faith in their own innate superiority, they believe that the man who thinks he is superior is *ipso facto* handicapped. The Japanese have known what we thought of them—that they were little fellows physically, that they were imitative, that they were not really very important in the world of men and nations. Believe me, I have been shamed more than once by the braggadocio, self-confidence and condescension manifested by our English-speaking peoples; and I have grown apprehensive as, through the years, I have observed the Japanese observing us. I have realized the cold, withering contempt of the Japanese for those of our race who gloried in power without possessing the fundamentals of power, or who complacently viewed the possibility of war with Japan without understanding how formidable the Japanese really were.

The Japanese have made comparisons not favorable to us. They have pointed to their own thrift and compared it with our wastefulness. They have looked at their own national unity and national reverence and have contrasted it with our



Joseph C. Grew served as U. S. Ambassador to Japan from 1932 until war came. He repeatedly warned our Government of the danger of sudden attack. Now he says: "A primary axiom of war is to know your enemy. The American people, as a whole, are dangerously ill-informed regarding the strength of one of our enemies—Japan."

partisanship and our readiness to laugh at ourselves. They have seen the comforts with which we have surrounded ourselves, and they envy us these even while they despise us for our possession and enjoyment of them.

It is not meaningless that in Japanese thought "Oriental culture" stands as the antithesis to luxury. To many Japanese, culture means a Spartan ability to endure hard work, hard living, and hard fighting. The inconsistency of their position—the fact that they should pride themselves on their simplicity and ruggedness while fighting to gain material riches—is not apparent to most of them. They look upon us as boastful, vainglorious, rich, and flabby. They think that we are physically soft. They think that our minds are filled with gross considerations of comfort, personal greed, and shallow partisanship.

Why Japan is a tough enemy

I have no wish to praise a people who are our enemies, but I must—in the interests of our safety—list a few of their formidable characteristics:

They are united. Theirs is a unity of solidarity. Foolish or wise though their war government may be, they support it. They believe in the divinity of their Emperor and, through him, in the rightness of their war leaders. For years they have prepared themselves collectively and individually for war. Germany and Italy possess groups of unknown size and power which await only the time and opportunity to revolt. In Japan there are no such groups.

They are trained. The Japanese have said openly that their weapons were inferior to ours but they counted on the fact that we supposed them to be even less well equipped than they really were. This would give them an advantage. This advantage could be further supplemented by their discipline, by their universal training, and by the fact that all Japanese men—all the able-bodied men in Japan—have military service. Trained men and armies with fair weapons can often defeat untrained men and armies with excellent weapons.

They are frugal. The Japanese Empire has almost thrived on shortages. Bottlenecks, absences of materials, and vexing priorities have existed in other countries under conditions which would have meant abundance to the Japanese. In the midst of poverty, they have built an enormous military machine. They have not done this with wastefulness. They have done it with care and thrift and economy and conserving of materials. The food which we, even now, throw away in North America would go a long way toward supporting the population of Japan.

They are fanatical. They believe in their war, in the government which wages it, and in the incorruptible certainty of their national cause. Who knows how far back the sources of this national faith may lie? Some parts of it go back to the half-mythical centuries of their history before the time of Christ. Others rest, perhaps, in the centuries of sporadic struggles with the Chinese which ended with the great naval victories of the seventh-century Chinese fleets. The shoguns, who began the system of ruling through puppets a thousand years ago, and then the feudal lords, contributed their share. Medieval civil wars, then, bequeathed traditions which toughened Japan for foreign war today.

They are, at least in war, totalitarian. Long ago, while Germany and Italy were still picturesque agglomerations of petty states, Japan was governed by dictatorship, secret police, elite guards, suppressors of "dangerous thoughts," summary courts, and hidden executioners. The Tokugawa shogunate, which preceded the present modernized government, was effectively totalitarian and authoritarian.

We have learned in our time what totalitarianism means. It means the end of political freedom, of religious freedom, of any freedom, of any true culture. It also means concentrated political, economic, and military power. This power can be used swiftly and ruthlessly by despots who do not stop to explain—still less to justify—their ends or their means. Japan did not have to turn Fascist or National Socialist; morally, Japan already was both. Japan has needed no Hitler. In a certain sense, her militarists are an oligarchy of Hitlers. Democracy was an experiment into which the Japanese ventured only slightly and cautiously. The society itself, and its values, remain today, in wartime, regimented and authoritarian.

With such capacities, and such a government, is it surprising that Japan's leaders did not fear war and that they led their nation confidently into war? At this very moment, the Japanese feel themselves, man for man, superior to you and to me and to any of our peoples. They admire our technology, they may have a lurking dread of our ultimate superiority of resources, but all too many of them have con-

tempt for us as human beings. Add to all this their overweening ambition for conquest, and you can begin to follow the warped but persuasive lines of intuition and belief which led Japan to attack us.

Yet we now try to give an answer to the second question: do the Japanese think that they can win this war?

The Japanese leaders *do* think that they can and will win. They are counting on our underestimates, on our apparent disunity before—and even during—war, on our unwillingness to sacrifice, to endure, and to fight.

The leaders of Japan are not suicidally minded incompetents. History will show that they have made a miscalculation; but they have miscalculated less than most of us suppose. In this they find strength.

Japan has won before by the same strategy that she has followed in launching and waging this war. In 1894 and 1895, Japan defeated the gigantic Manchu Empire of China. Her armed forces won because the nation was prepared, united, determined. The Manchu court of China was corrupt and unprepared, the Chinese Government was supine and disunited, and the Chinese people never had a chance to fight. In 1904 and 1905, Japan attacked and defeated the Empire of the Tsars. Her armed forces attacked Port Arthur, like Pearl Harbor, murderously and in stealth. Port Arthur, like Bataan, withstood a siege and then surrendered. In St. Petersburg and Moscow there was revolt, occasioned largely by the corrupt mismanagement of the war and a popular distrust of the government. The Tsarist Government negotiated peace. Japan could not have defeated Russia; she did defeat the Tsarist forces when the people and government behind the armed forces were disunited and the productive system did not stand up. Finally, Japan, as one of the Allies, fought Germany in the First World War. Germany did not fight to the bitter end. The Germans did not wait for their country to be invaded. They gave in before the Rhine had even been reached—they surrendered even after they had won the Eastern front and had seemed victorious. The Japanese noted this and did not forget it.

Japan remembers these victories. As I have already stated, the Japanese may not intend to take New Orleans or San Francisco or Vancouver or Toronto—in this war. They do intend and expect, in dead seriousness, to conquer Asia, to drive us out, to force us to make a peace which will weaken us, and cause us to grow weaker with time. And then later, in five years, or ten years, or 50 years, they would use the billion men of an enslaved Asia, and all the resources of the East, to strike again.

When the Japanese militarists, committed absolutely to the course of conquest, took measure of their military resources and perceived the extent of democratic rearmament, they had to gamble. The gamble was heroic, but not that of a mere game of chance. Their well-planned campaigns southward were brilliant accomplishments. Today Japan is stronger than ever. We now face not only Japan but Japan and Japan's conquests. These conquests are greater than we have permitted ourselves to realize. They include more than ten times the area of the Japanese Empire as it stood a year ago—Chinese territory, British territory, Dutch territory, American territory. They include populations aggregating three times the population of the Japanese Empire. Many climes and vast resources. A huge aggregate of human beings, the majority of whom are docile and are capable of tremendous toil.

No one—any longer—can prattle now of defeating Japan in three months. We hear no longer about the tinder cities of Tokyo and Osaka. We do not jest about the Japanese fleet, or about their Air Force. We know that we face a destructive, united enemy, and that we must bring to bear against that enemy force as united as and greater than that which he has marshaled.

The Japs will never crack

The other day a friend, an intelligent American, said to me: "Of course there must be ups and downs in this war; we can't expect victories every day; but it's merely a question of time before Hitler will go down to defeat before the steadily growing power of the combined air and naval and military forces of the United Nations—and then, we'll mop up the Japs." Mark well those words, please. "And then we'll mop up the Japs."

Let's get down to brass tacks. I know Germany; I lived there for nearly ten years. I came out on the last train with my chief, Ambassador Gerard, when in 1917 we broke relations with Germany and shortly afterward were forced to declare war on that aggressor. I know the Germans well; truculent and bullying and domineering when on the crest of the wave; demoralized in defeat. The Germans cracked in 1918. I have steadfastly believed and I believe today that when the tide of battle turns against them as it assuredly will turn, they will crack again.

I know Japan; I lived there for ten years. I know the Japanese intimately. The Japanese will not crack. They will not crack morally or psychologically or economically, even when eventual defeat stares them in the face. They will pull in their belts another notch, reduce their rations from a bowl to a half bowl of rice, and fight to the bitter end. Only by utter physical destruction or utter exhaustion of their men and materials can they be defeated. That is the difference between the Germans and the Japanese. That is what we are up against in fighting Japan.

We must realize that the Japanese are already in the Aleutian Islands. Not far from Alaska. Not so far from other parts of our country. Our own armed forces are dealing with that situation. I mention it merely as a concrete indication of what the armed forces of Japan hope to do, and what they intend to do—and what they will do if they can. First, to bomb important American centers and then, eventually, invade America.

There is a little story that throws light upon the spirit which animates these grim warriors. Last year when our country and Japan were still at peace, I received from the Chinese Government the name of a Japanese who had been taken prisoner in China and who wished his family at home in Japan to know that he was alive and well. I communicated the information to the Government in Tokyo and received, in due course, the official reply. It was brief and to the point. The Japanese Government was not interested in receiving such information. So far as they, the Government, were concerned, and also so far as his own family was concerned, that man was officially dead. Were he to be recognized as a prisoner of war, shame would be brought upon not only his own family, but also his Government and his nation. "Victory or death" is no mere slogan for these soldiers. It is a plain, matter-of-fact description of the military policy that controls their forces, from the highest generals to the newest recruit. The man who allows himself to be captured has disgraced himself and his country.

The Japanese Army has one great advantage over her enemies in the Far East—the advantage of five years of hard fighting in the China war. They have paid dearly for it. Estimates of their casualties run as high as a million men. But for this grim price in blood they obtained a proving ground where they could build a tough, veteran army trained in that greatest of all military schools—war itself.

But the Japanese were not content with this. They gave their men further training in special areas where the terrain and climatic conditions approximate those in the regions where they were to fight. The units and commanders for the various sectors were selected months in advance and put to work. The Malayan army trained in Hainan and Indo-China, the Philippine force in Formosa, and both units practiced landing operations during the late summer and fall of 1941 along the South China coast. Even the divisions chosen to attack Hong Kong were given rigorous training in night fighting and in storming pill boxes in the hills near Canton. So realistic were these maneuvers that the troops are reported to have suffered "a number of casualties."

The Japanese High Command was able to make these careful preparations because of years of study of the areas where they expected to wage future campaigns. This study was based on a first-class espionage system. Japanese commentators have not even attempted to hide the fact that the High Command was fully informed for a year before the war of the strength, dispositions, and likely plans of their potential enemies. A good deal of this information is said to have been obtained by "observing" maneuvers in the Philippines and in Malaya. We can seriously question whether much of this information was gathered by official observers. The eyes of the High Command were probably reserve officers, disguised as humble members of the Japanese community scattered throughout the world.

They don't believe in "impassable" areas

The Japanese have borrowed more from the Germans than their tactics in the use of dive and light bombers. Like the Nazi High Command, they refuse to admit that there are any natural obstacles that their forces cannot cross. How often have the German armies shown how the Allied commanders had made the mistaken assumption that terrain that is merely difficult is impassable! In their lightning campaigns of last winter, the Japanese made the same point over and over again. Indeed, the Japanese themselves have said that their tactics have frequently been based on the principle of attacking through a particular area in the knowledge that their enemies have been lulled into a false sense of security and complacency by the very assumption of its impassability. And the Japanese

emphasize the disastrous effect on the defenders' morale once a so-called impregnable area has been pierced.

But above all, according to both the Japanese themselves and outside observers, the most important factor contributing to Japanese victories is the spirit which permeates all the armed forces of the Empire. This spirit, recognized by competent military men as the most vital intangible factor in achieving victory, has been nourished and perpetuated since the foundation of the modern Japanese Army. But the Japanese have been careful to develop a tremendous fighting spirit in their armed services and people alike. Indeed, the Japanese armed services and the Japanese nation have become so closely identified that it is difficult to tell where one stops and the other begins. Every Japanese male, of course, must perform military service under a system of universal conscription. Thus in every family, the father or son or brother has served or is serving in the Army or Navy. Every house in Japan, down to the lowliest hovel, proudly flies the Japanese flag at its front door when one of its men is in military service.

They saved their strength for the big show

Nevertheless, the Japanese ability in deception and concealment played a very considerable part in keeping our people ignorant of the true meaning of what was going on in eastern Asia. Many, for example, took the apparent failure of the Japanese Army to drive to victory in the four years of the China war as evidence of the weakness and inefficiency of the Japanese military forces. It has become more and more apparent since Pearl Harbor that, however much we hoped for peace in Asia, the Japanese themselves throughout the China war were husbanding their resources for the greater struggle which they felt lay beyond. In this connection, the Japanese budget figures released to the press are extremely interesting. They indicate that only 40% of the appropriation voted to the defense forces was expended for the conduct of the so-called China "incident." Sixty per cent—nearly two thirds of the total appropriation—was used to prepare the services and the industrial plants for the greater emergency yet to come. Similarly, of the materials and weapons furnished the services, only one fifth was sent to China—the rest being used to expand and modernize the armies and fleets which were to be called upon when the superwar really broke.

Nevertheless, despite its strength, Japan's new empire should certainly not be considered invulnerable. It has definite weaknesses which, if we take full advantage of them, will lead ultimately to the collapse of her whole position.

Japan, despite an unparalleled expansion over an area of many thousands of square miles in the campaigns of the past winter, has not succeeded in removing strong Allied positions on the flanks of her defensive chain. It is, of course, an axiom of conquest that each time you advance you are creating a future need for a further advance to protect your new position. Nevertheless, Japan hoped that by her concerted campaigns she could drive her enemies back to such a distance that she would be able to halt her forces on natural defensive lines.

This she has not been able to do. The United Nations still hold bases on and from which it is possible for them to organize and launch striking forces to attack the Japanese positions, both new and old. These will be used—amply and effectively—as the war progresses.

And finally, it must be considered a weakness of the Japanese defensive ring that communications and transport must be carried on very largely by water. As we have seen only too clearly here at home, sea-borne communications are extremely vulnerable to attack. At worst they may be cut, at best they compel the defensive country to divert much of her naval strength to convoy and anti-submarine patrol. Japan is not a country which can replace her shipping losses easily, and it may well turn out that the steady attrition of her shipping, both mercantile and naval, will play a considerable part in her ultimate defeat.

But let me emphasize once again that these weaknesses will certainly not of themselves cause Japan to be defeated. They must be exploited—taken advantage of—by determined aggressive action by the United Nations. The strength of the Japanese people lies in their fanatical obedience to authority. The great strength of the American people lies in their ability to think and act for themselves, without waiting for orders from above. Our fathers tamed a continent without waiting for someone to tell them how to do it. It took no directive from the High Command to call the Minute Men from their plows to battle. We ourselves can do no less. Let us not wait for our Government to do all our thinking for us. Our leaders in Washington already bear an immense burden. Let us not add to it by expecting them to lead us by the hand every step of the road to victory.

Let us remember one thing—it is *our* war.