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

1944
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To Alice, My Teammate

who, by her wise advice and encouragement through difficult years, was a solid rock of support

Foreword

THIS BOOK has a method and a purpose, both of which require a word of explanation.

First for the method. Convinced that the accurate recording of history depends upon frank contemporary comment, I have followed the practice during my thirty-nine years in the foreign service of the United States of jotting down day by day the information, impressions, and thoughts of the moment. The resulting written record has the defects of its qualities—and vice versa. Only in the pages of an honest and candid diary can we find set down the convictions and assumptions on which our decisions and actions have been based. No one at any time can aspire to infallibility, but anyone can at all times set down his honest opinions. These opinions, of course, change—partly because circumstances change and partly also because we keep acquiring new information that causes us to modify our views.

The diary entries during my ten years in Japan suffer from the shortcomings of any such record, but if occasion has more than once occurred to revise my judgments, the record has been scrupulously kept from day to day. Not only that, but I believe that this strictly contemporary record has a value that has no relationship to the wisdom or unwisdom of the various judgments it records. Opinions are therefore here reproduced that were later revised as new facts came to my attention. Views and prognostications that were later shown to be wrong have herein been set down quite as frankly as those which time proved to be right. In keeping the diary there was never a thought of eventual publication. Furthermore it was impossible, especially in a post like Tokyo, during the difficult years before Pearl Harbor, for us to have exactly the same global perspective that obtained in Washington. Perspectives develop from what one knows, and additional knowledge broadens and deepens and sharpens one's understanding.

In spite of all discouragements that I experienced, especially when periods of hopeful labor with peace-minded and constructive-minded Japanese governments were terminated by their downfall and were succeeded by reactionary cabinets, the results of

that labor having been wiped out as if by a typhoon, I worked for peace up to the end. An ambassador who on taking a foreign post throws up his hands and says "War is inevitable" might just as well pack up and come home. Our foreign service is our first line of national defense. It must hold that line if possible, and work to hold it. In the case of Japan, once the war had broken out in Europe and the initial German victories had gone to the heads of the Japanese militarists like strong wine, the outlook was ominous and I so informed our Government, warning of possible action by Japan of dangerous and dramatic suddenness. But I never wholly abandoned hope or stopped working for peace. To have done so would have been to discredit the service of which I am a member.

Here is another point to bear in mind. This book contains only a small fraction of the original diary which, for the past ten years, fills thirteen large typewritten volumes quite apart from many other volumes of my letters, speeches, records of conversations, and pertinent press clippings. Many of the items in the original possess no permanent historic value. Others overlap. Still others cannot properly be published now. And since this is an intimate off-the-record journal I have also had to keep confidential the identity of many living colleagues and other individuals who might be embarrassed or suffer some personal consequences if their names were made known. The main story has, however, not been injured by these omissions. I have avoided cluttering up the text with asterisks and footnotes but have selected and arranged the original diary entries together with other contemporary material in such a way as to present a smooth-flowing chronological narrative. While it has obviously been impractical to include in the diary all of the texts of the official documents pertaining to the story, many of these texts are available to the public in two volumes published in 1943 by the United States Government Printing Office entitled *Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, 1931–1941.*

And now a word about the purpose of this narrative. This book aims to present to our people and, I hope, to the people of all the United Nations, a more accurately focused view of Japan than is now widely held, for only through a correct conception of that country and its people can we approach with intelligence the difficult problems which will have to be solved after our military victory is complete. My last book, *Report from Tokyo,* was aimed primarily at acquainting the people of the United States with the formidable character of the Japanese military machine and to correct some of

the fallacious thinking which has widely persisted throughout our country, underrating the stamina, fighting-power, and staying-power of the Japanese enemy. Knowing that enemy through ten long years of close observation, I fear that we may have a long, hard road ahead before complete victory can be attained. Wishful thinking and complacency are dangerous. To achieve that victory and to bring about the ultimate unconditional surrender of the enemy, our united war effort must be constantly intensified and accelerated, never for a moment relaxed.

We have been presented for some years past with cumulative evidence of unmitigated subtleties, trickery, brutality, and cynical faithlessness on the part of the Japanese military caste and machine, and there is presented in my story fresh evidence of the medieval character of the Japanese military mind and temperament. A primary axiom of war is to "know your enemy." In my former book and in many speeches and broadcasts throughout our country I have tried to set forth the great strength and fanatical determination, the utter cruelty and brutality, of the Japanese military.

The present book will not have served one of its purposes, however, if it does not bring home to my readers the fact that there are many Japanese today who did not want war, who realized the stupidity of attacking the United States, Great Britain and other United Nations, and who did everything in their power to restrain the military extremists from their headlong and suicidal aggressions. In the heat and prejudice of war some will deny that there can be any good elements among the Japanese people. Yet those critics, in all likelihood, will not have known personally and directly those Japanese who were bitterly opposed to war with the United States—men who courageously but futilely gave all that was in them and ran the gravest dangers of imprisonment if not of assassination—indeed several were assassinated—in their efforts to stem the tide or, let us say, to halt the tidal wave of insane military megalomania and expansionist ambition.

Those people must and will loyally support their leaders in war; those who have to fight must and will fight to the end. But we shall need to know and to weigh all factors in approaching the difficult postwar problems. It is my hope that these intimate, day-to-day records may serve to produce for the future a wider and more helpful picture of those people as a people.

First, however, Japan's power to wage war must be wholly destroyed; the decision must be complete and irrevocable if our sons

and grandsons are not to fight this war over again in the next generation. Japan, no less than Germany, must never again be allowed to threaten world peace. Aggressive militarism must be *permanently* eradicated.

In completing this book I cannot omit an expression to three persons of my full appreciation of their helpfulness in connection with its preparation: to Eugene H. Dooman, Counselor of the American Embassy in Tokyo during the critical years before Pearl Harbor, my *fidus Achates* on whose long experience in Japan, mature advice, and incisive diagnosis of political developments I counted greatly in the formulation through those years of the views herein set forth; and to Miss Marion Arnold (now Mrs. Dana W. Johnston) and Nelson Newton, my secretaries, who gave a great deal of their time, their interest, and their devoted care to the preparation of the diary on which this book is based.

JOSEPH C. GREW

Washington
January, 1944

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I

THE ASSASSIN'S SHADOW LIES ACROSS JAPAN

(May 14, 1932–February 15, 1933)

THE TEN years that this narrative covers witnessed a series of explosive crises in the internal and external affairs of Japan. Some of these crises remained confined to the political sphere. Others took the form of assassination and military attack. The year 1932 opened with a series of political assassinations, culminating in the murder of Premier Inukai on May 15. The first section of this narrative therefore covers the period of surface calm that, for once, did not end in violence but merely in Japan's recognition of the state of Manchukuo and her decision to quit the League of Nations.

THE MISSION BEGINS

May 14-18, 1932. *On the Overland Limited, Chicago to San Francisco*

We're off. A new adventure in this kaleidoscopic life of ours—our fourteenth post and our fourth mission, and it promises to be the most adventurous of all. For five years we've watched the Turkish Republic digging out from the ruins of the defunct Ottoman Empire and hewing its way, painfully, to a new salvation. Now we enter a much bigger arena, on which the attention of the world is going to be centered for many years, perhaps for many decades, to come. Almost anything may happen except one thing: the abandonment by Japan of her investments, her property, her nationals, and her vital interests in Manchuria. She is there to stay, unless conquered in war, and the interesting question is the policy and methods she will pursue to meet international susceptibilities and what camouflage she will employ to cover uncomfortable facts.

Indeed, many interesting questions present themselves. Will Japan be content with safeguarding her present rights in Manchuria or, as some would have it, does her program include ideas of far-flung empire throughout Asia, with Korea the first step and Manchuria the second? Can she avoid a clash with Soviet Russia, with America? The big issue is whether this irresistible Japanese impulse is eventually going to come up against an immovable object in world opposition and, if so, what form the resultant conflagration will take, whether internal revolution or external war. It will depend largely upon how Japan plays her cards, and this is the problem which we are going to be privileged to watch from the inside, I hope for a long time to come.

I shall do my utmost to keep a detached and balanced point of view. An ambassador who starts prejudiced against the country to which he is accredited might just as well pack up and go home, because his bias is bound to make itself felt sooner or later and render impossible the creation of a basis of mutual confidence upon which alone he can accomplish constructive work. On the other hand, there is always the danger of becoming too much imbued with the local atmosphere. However, I know the minds of the President, the Secretary, and the Department pretty well, and that should help to keep a straight course. To begin with, I have a great deal of sym-

pathy with Japan's legitimate aspirations in Manchuria, but no sympathy at all with the illegitimate way in which Japan has been carrying them out.

One can have little sympathy with the Twenty-one Demands, formulated when the world was busy with the Great War, or with the typically Prussian methods pursued in Manchuria and Shanghai since September 18, 1931, in the face of the Kellogg Pact, the Nine-Power Treaty, and the Covenant of the League of Nations. The purely Sino-Japanese problem has so many complicated features—the interpretation of treaties, what treaties were valid, and who broke the valid treaties first—that one can regard that phase of the situation only as a technically insoluble puzzle. But fortunately our position is clear as crystal: we hold no brief for either side in the Sino-Japanese dispute; we hold a brief for the inviolability of the international peace treaties and the Open Door, and on that issue we have carefully registered our opinion and position before the world and will continue to do so when necessary. So much by way of preface to what may come.

At the very start the pot begins to boil. A correspondent of the *Herald-Examiner* met us at the station in Chicago with the Sunday-evening paper of May 15 bearing flaring headlines: JAPANESE PREMIER SLAIN; SERIOUS REVOLT; PALACE IN PERIL. This is the fourth important assassination. The military are simply taking the bit in their teeth and running away with it, evidently with a Fascist regime in view. But in spite of the press reports, I can't believe the Emperor is threatened, considering the supposedly universal veneration for the throne. There must be something wrong there. If this latest demonstration of terrorism—the murder of Premier Inukai and the exploding of bombs in various public buildings—is the work of a group of fanatics, I wonder whether such extremes may not possibly have a steadying effect on the military themselves. We shall see in due course.

At the principal stops along the way—Chicago, Omaha, and San Francisco—photographers and correspondents met us and solicited interviews, but naturally I have refused to say a word about Japan or Japanese problems or the problems of my mission; a few words about Turkey have generally sufficed to send them away in a friendly mood, which is much better than refusing to talk at all. We were highly amused by one paper in Honolulu which said:

> Ambassador Grew is a man of polish, combining an alert

> American aggressiveness with the cautious reserve of the European. He is tall, possesses an engaging smile, and he speaks with a drawl that is not Bostonian, nor is it English, but is a pleasing mixture of the two.

Sort of a general mixture, it appears.

At Omaha one correspondent asked what I considered the outstanding world diplomatic problem which has developed during the last thirty years, to which I promptly replied: "Unquestionably, the building up of an international peace structure." I declined to comment on his observation that the principal danger elements of the world today are Germany and a Russo-Japanese war.

ACROSS THE PACIFIC

May 20, 1932. *San Francisco*

Gave a luncheon for Consul General Garrels of Tokyo and Consul General Lockhart of Tientsin and their wives and J. Graham Parsons, Jr. Parsons comes as my private secretary, a Groton and Yale man, highly recommended by Mr. Peabody, our former headmaster at Groton, and others. Phi Beta Kappa. He promises well and seems eager to learn and to be helpful.

Sailed at 4 on the *President Coolidge* of the Dollar Line, the Japanese Consul General, as well as Garrels and Lockhart, coming down to see us off. Confetti and cheers. Never in my life saw so many or such beautiful flowers as were sent us.

May 20–June 6, 1932. On Board the S.S. *President Coolidge*

The voyage was comparatively uneventful, cold at first with a deep swell, then gradually warmer and calmer as we sagged to the south. This swell apparently always lasts for the first four hundred miles from San Francisco. The big ship is almost empty as far as first-cabin passengers are concerned—only fifty or sixty. On the 23rd there were suddenly six blasts of the siren, the ship stopped, and a boat was lowered. A Chinese woman in the steerage had jumped overboard, leaving three small children. She was never seen again, although we circled around for an hour or so.

I wrote fifteen letters in the first few days of the voyage and am rapidly catching up to date. Also writing speeches for Japan and reading much on Japan and Manchuria. It is at least a profitable if not an exciting voyage. The two chief distractions, besides work, are the open-air swimming pool, where we swim before breakfast and

again in the late afternoon after two or three hard sets of deck tennis, thus keeping wonderfully fit, and the talkies on alternate nights.

May 26, 1932. *Honolulu*

A great big red-letter day, our first in Honolulu. Was up at 5:30, reminding me of the occasions on which my daughter Anita and I had often risen early to watch our entrance into the lovely Bay of Naples. Soon after 6, we docked to the welcoming strains of *Aloha* played by a band on shore, which effectually awakened the rest of the family. Major Ross, Sheriff of Honolulu and aide to Governor Judd, came on board with the pilot, welcomed us in the Governor's name, and decorated us with the usual floral leis. Indeed, by evening we must have had a dozen or more leis around our necks, shedding them from time to time to make room for more—all woven with deliciously smelling flowers of different sorts.

During the day, the commanding naval officer, Admiral Yates Stirling, invited us to visit the naval station and take a ride in one of the navy hydroplanes, but we were far too busy to accept. The commanding general sent his aide to welcome us with leis. The Japanese Consul General likewise called and sent flowers. I radioed our thanks later.

The ten days from Honolulu to Yokohama were calm, warm, and pleasant, with the exception of one or two days of rain and fog. This ship could do the whole voyage from San Francisco to Yokohama via Honolulu in three or four days less than we actually take, but she has to adjust her speed to the speed of the other ships on the line.

ARRIVAL AT TOKYO

June 6, 1932. *Tokyo*

By golly, what a day! It is seldom that days which one has anticipated in imagination for weeks or months ever measure up to one's expectations, but this one has gone far beyond. I was up at the absurd hour of 4:45 A.M., hating to miss a trick. Thick fog and only the shadowy form of other ships to be seen. We had skirted along the coast of Japan last evening and had anchored in the roads of Yokohama sometime during the night after the foghorn had wailed drearily for an hour or more. Then, at 5:30, pandemonium: the stewards banging with full force at every cabin door and shouting in raucous voices for us to get up and meet the quarantine officer,

and five minutes later repeating the performance. Those stewards certainly know how to carry out their orders with the utmost thoroughness, but I wonder if others don't get the same results without making you want to punch them on the nose for the way they do it.

Anyway, we did meet the quarantine officer at 6 A.M., although it was quite unnecessary for Alice and our daughter Elsie (who had slept for only two hours) to have dressed so early, as a special Japanese officer had been deputed to look after us and he went through our passports with Parsons without seeing us at all. Another Japanese officer examined our police dog, Kim, and issued a special health certificate, while still a third man took charge of our baggage. It was all done with quiet efficiency and the least possible bother.

Then, even before we docked at 7, the reception began. Yesterday there had been a flight of welcoming radiograms. This morning one deputation after another came on board and to our cabins. These visitors included half a dozen Japanese newspaper correspondents and photographers, and finally the good Edwin Neville, Counselor of the Embassy, and his wife. We posed for photographs and were asked questions by the press; naturally I refused to say a word about politics, but my answers to their innocent questions were later adroitly manipulated into a quoted interview, the *Japan Times* bearing headlines, MR. GREW GIVES AN INTERVIEW, which began out of a clear sky: "I have written a book called *Sport and Travel in the Far East* but I know hardly anything about the present Japan. I hope to get down to serious study when I'm settled in my new post. Mrs. Grew's mother, who was a *daughter* of Commodore Perry . . ." etc., etc. Some mother-in-law!

Well, we took leave of Captain Ahlin of the *President Coolidge* and motored to Tokyo in a drizzling rain, but the ugliness of the route was lost on me as Neville and I, who drove together, had too many interesting things to talk about. Then the Embassy. Big bushes, smooth green lawns, flowers, fountains, tessellated pools, and the buildings themselves, four of them, white with black ironwork trimmings, already framed in luxuriant trees—a real oasis in the more or less ugly surroundings of the new-grown city. The residence is on the crest of a hill looking down on the chancery and the dormitories, to which one descends on little steppingstones through a thick grove of leafy woods. As for the interior of the residence, when we had explored it with the Nevilles, examined the furniture and curtains and the thick luxurious carpets in the big salon and the little

salon and the still littler salon, the smoking room with its wonderful wainscoting, its many bookshelves and abundant deep cupboards (where at least I shall have space enough to file and store, separate and catalogue, to my heart's content), the loggia, the banquet hall, the private dining room, the cloakroom, and the seven bedrooms and the four bathrooms, the ironing room, sewing room, and storerooms—while Elsie emitted little shrieks of delight and Kim wagged his entire acceptance of the new situation—I asked Alice how many cons she found, and she answered: "Not a single con; they're all pros."

We all went to the chancery, passing the swimming pool on the way. I met all the staff and then received the principal American correspondents: Babb, of the Associated Press; Byas, of *The New York Times;* Vaughn, of the United Press; Fleisher, of the *Japan Advertiser.* We chatted, and I spoke of my hope for the closest co-operation which would be of mutual benefit and urged them to drop in often. Colonel McIlroy and Captain Johnson, the Military and Naval Attachés, told Neville that their regulations required them to call on me in full uniform, but I sent back word I hoped they would forget their regulations, as we could have a much pleasanter and more satisfactory chat if they would cut out the gold lace which would undoubtedly leave me tongue-tied.

Maya Lindsley Poole and Parsons came to lunch. I didn't know Maya until she introduced herself at table. It was amusing to remember that when she was pointed out to me at the Copley Hall dance in January, 1904, as the girl who had just returned from Japan, and later when I asked to be introduced to "the girl who had just returned from Japan," I was led up to Alice instead.

At 3 Neville came to take me to the Diet to call on Viscount Saito, who could not leave the session to receive me at the Gaimusho, or Foreign Office. He is old—over seventy, I believe—and looks old and tired. Conversation was halting, and he seemed to have too much on his mind to concentrate, but he is decidedly distinguished; he was formerly an admiral in the Navy and Governor General of Korea and has now stepped into the breach as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to tide over, with his personal prestige, and probably temporarily, a difficult cabinet situation. I stayed a very short time, knowing that he was busy in the session and that we could talk only platitudes; left with him notes asking for audiences with the Emperor and Empress, copies of my letters of credence and the letters of recall of Cameron Forbes, my predecessor, and a copy