**War Comes to Washington**

BY I. F. STONE

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I FIRST heard the news from the elevator man in the National Press Building. The ticker at the Press Club, normally shut off on Sunday, carried the first flash telling of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was a beautiful late-autumn Sunday, the sky clear and the air crisp. At the entrance to the White House a small crowd had gathered to watch Cabinet members arrive. In the reporters' room inside, a group was clustered around the radio. I talked to Ambassador Hu Shih by telephone, and he said he felt "really sad" and sounded as though he meant it. The Navy Department seemed busy but calm; the War Department less so. Soldiers in helmets, carrying guns with fixed bayonets, guarded the entrance to the War Department's half of the huge old Munitions Building. They looked awkward and uncomfortable.

The public-relations office of the War Department refused a request for background material on the comparative military strength of the United States and Japan on the ground that since four o'clock that afternoon all information on the composition and movement of troops abroad had been declared a secret. The Navy Department, less strict, was still giving out information already "on the record," thus saving reporters a trip to the Library of Congress. In the Navy Department reference room women employees, hastily summoned from their homes, sent out for sandwiches and coffee and joked about Japanese bombers. There as elsewhere one encountered a sense of excitement, of adventure, and of relief that a long-expected storm had finally broken. No one showed much indignation. As for the newspapermen, myself included, we all acted a little like firemen at a three-alarm fire.

The first press release from the State Department spluttered. It said the Secretary of State had handed the Japanese representatives a document on November 26 stating American policy in the Far East and suggestions for a settlement. A reply had been handed the Secretary of State that afternoon. The release declared that Secretary Hull had read the reply and immediately turned to the Japanese Ambassador and with the greatest indignation said: ". . . I have never seen a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions—in famous falsehoods and distortions on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them." I asked several other reporters at the State Department just what the Japanese had told Secretary Hull to make him so angry. Nobody seemed to know, and the release did not explain. Hull's language was later described by one reporter as being "as biting if not as deadly as his fellow-mountaineer Sergeant York's bullets." It is a long time since Secretary Hull was a mountaineer.

The Japanese memorandum, released later, made it easier to understand the Secretary's stilted indignation. One has to go back to Will Irwin's "Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy" to match this memorandum. "Ever since China Affair broke out owing to the failure on the part of China to comprehend Japan's true intentions," said one of the more humorous passages, "the Japanese government has striven for the restoration of peace, and it has consistently exerted its best efforts to prevent the extension of war-like disturbances. It was also to that end that in September last year Japan concluded the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy." The memorandum indicates only the vaguest shadow of any American intention to appease Japan. At one time the President seems to have offered to "introduce" peace between Japan and China and then—I suspect after the visit to the White House of Hu Shih and T. V. Soong—withdrawn it. But the kind of peace the President might have "introduced" could hardly have been to Japan's liking, though the idea may have made the Chinese uneasy. The Japanese memorandum accuses our own government of "holding fast to theories in disregard of realities," of trying to force "a utopian ideal" on the Japanese, and of "refusing to yield an inch on its impractical principles." I hope these compliments were fully deserved.

The proposals made by Secretary Hull in his letter of November 26 were so obviously unacceptable to a government like Japan's that one wonders why we negotiated at all. Japan was to withdraw all its troops from China and not to support any other government there except "the National Government . . . with capital temporarily at Chungking." Our War Department is said to have asked the White House for three more months in which to prepare, and it may be that the Japanese were also anxious to delay a crisis. It is suspected in some quarters here that the attack on Pearl Harbor was the work of a minority in Japan fearful of further "stalling." The attack came before the Emperor could reply to the President's personal appeal for peace. If it forced the hand of the Japanese government, it also succeeded in uniting our own country behind Mr. Roose-
velt. The reactions of the isolationist press and of Senators like Wheeler are indicative. If Mr. Roosevelt leaned too far in one direction to please the anti-appeasement and pro-war faction, his tactics served to prove to the other side that he had done all in his power to avoid war, that war was forced upon him. Lincoln in the same way hesitated and compromised and sought to " appease" before war came.

We are going into this war lightly, but I have a feeling that it will weigh heavily upon us all before we are through. The vast theater on which the struggle between this country and Japan opens makes the last war seem a parochial conflict confined to the Atlantic and the western cape of the Eurasian continent. This is really world war, and in my humble opinion it was unavoidable and is better fought now when we still have allies left. It is hoped here that the actual coming of war may serve to speed up the pace of production and shake both capital and labor out of a business-as-usual mood far too prevalent. There has been a general feeling that the production problem could not be solved until war was declared. We shall see. It is possible that a whipped-up hysteria against labor and progressives will serve to stifle the very forces that could be used to bring about an "all-out" effort. It is also possible that the coming of war will open the way to greater cooperation in the defense program, to a broader role for labor in the mobilization of industry, to a lessening of attacks on labor in Congress, and to improved morale.

My own confidence springs from a deep confidence in the President. For all his mistakes—and perhaps some of them have only seemed mistakes—he can be counted on to turn up in the end on the democratic and progressive side. I hate to think of what we should do without him, and when I drive down to work early in the morning past the White House I cannot help thinking with sympathy of the burdens that weigh him down. On the threshold of war, and perhaps ultimately social earthquake, we may be grateful that our country has his leadership.

British Unions and the Law*

It is a commonplace that war as now practiced is a highly capitalized industry. Modern battles are won or lost not only by the fighting forces but in mines, steel mills, and machine shops. The characteristic phenomenon of today is not the nation in arms; it is the nation making arms. No Englishman who lived through the months after Dunkirk when the cry was "give us weapons" is likely to forget that truth.

Military technique from the day of the longbow to that of the tank has always had social roots. Under present conditions the discipline and morale of the workshop, though different in character from the discipline and morale of the services, are equally decisive for victory or defeat. The relations of a government bent on the maximum utilization of productive resources to workers' professional associations is of vital importance to all countries which have not, like Nazi Germany, disposed of the problem by the simple expedient of abolishing trade unions and killing or imprisoning active trade unionists.

Are special restrictions on trade-union activity desirable in war time? If so, what forms should they take? Every nation must answer those questions for itself, as its own circumstances and genius dictate. In the debates on the subject now occurring in America, however, references are made periodically to the British experience.

It may be worth while, therefore, to describe the main features of the situation in Great Britain, not in order to provide an example for imitation, but with the humbler object of clearing the ground of needless misconceptions.

LEGALIZATION

British trade-union law is a jungle in which lawyers, as well as laymen, have more than once lost their way. It would be inhuman to attempt to lead the reader through every winding of the maze; but one preliminary fact may be recalled, since it offers a clue to much subsequent history. It is that whereas in a score or so of countries before the present war freedom of association was the subject of constitutional guaranties, British trade-unions entered the nineteenth century as "unlawful combinations" and even after their statutory prohibition was repealed continued to be affected by a strong taint of illegality. Special legislation was required to legalize them; legislation was subject to judicial interpretation; judge-made law required the renewed intervention of Parliament, in order to correct it. Cases in point are the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, restoring to unions rights which they supposed had been secured them by the legislation of the seventies but which had been subsequently undermined by the courts, and the Trade Union Act of 1913. Both have since been qualified in certain important respects by the last major piece of legislation, the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act.

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