

Glad Adventure

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The Coming of War

With the passing months the tragedy of the European war deepened and began to extend its ominous shadow over the Pacific. Japan had become an ally of Germany and, under the control of the war party, was concentrating upon military preparations. Indo-China, under constant menace, was not too distant from Philippine shores. The Japanese were driving deeper and deeper into the heart of China. General Grunert, Admiral Hart, and I held constant conferences to size up the changing military situation and to formulate plans.

As I wrote to President Roosevelt on November 13, 1940:

Out here in the Far East the situation is growing more and more tense. I have the feeling that any day Japan may start moving southwards. Indeed, she is in a sense already on the way, and every day is strengthening her grip upon Indo-China.

In view of certain undercurrents of protest in Manila against the Philippines' being dragged into an "imperialistic war," it was important to keep the issues clear. In an address given in 1940 on the Fourth of July—a day in Manila when Americans drew closely together in deeply patriotic feeling—I said:

The situation which confronts us today is a head-on conflict between two utterly conflicting philosophies or ways of life. On the one hand is

the philosophy of human brotherhood; the faith that the human personality is the supreme value of life; the belief that human rights and human freedom are paramount to all else. This was the faith which was boldly proclaimed 164 years ago today in ringing phrases by thirteen venturesome colonies; this was the faith embodied in the very heart of our Constitution; this was the foundation faith upon which our nation was built and has grown to power.

Opposing it is the philosophy of unrestrained force. We have been witnessing during the past terrible weeks the fruits of that philosophy. Battle and murder and sudden death, forced upon countries desiring only peace; neutral nations ruthlessly invaded; nonbelligerent ships bombed and submarined. Homes destroyed, women and children machine-gunned, families wiped out, cities blown to pieces, human suffering and agony indescribable. Wave after wave of fear and cruelty unloosed upon the world, spreading everywhere havoc and deterioration. . . .

In this stupendous battle for the defense of more than ten centuries of hard-won human progress, in this terrific struggle between the upbuilders and the wreckers of civilization, we must face the realities. I pray God that the United States will not be forced into the blazing conflagration; I hope profoundly that American soldiers will never again be compelled to cross the ocean to join in a European war or in any other war built upon racial hatreds. Yet some things are more precious than life itself. Without human freedom life is not worth living. Without faith life is not worth living. Without hope of a world secure for the peace-loving, life is not worth living. Burning as is our desire to remain at peace, we cannot watch the smashing of our civilization won through centuries of heroic sacrifice and struggle and see the blackout of the great principles upon which our nation fundamentally rests, and not lift a finger.

At an anniversary dinner in my honor on October 21, 1941, two years after my landing in the Philippines, I was saying:

Here in the Philippines, we stand at guard on the American frontier; and the whole future of the civilized world today hangs upon the strength and unity of groups like ourselves, devoted to a common cause. It is not a question of race or blood; it is a question of defending a way of life. . . .

It is a solemn hour. We know not when the call may come to redeem this pledge—with our lives and all that is precious to us. We stand ready. No wonder we feel strongly drawn together and one on a night like this.

All of us saw trouble ahead. In November, 1940, Admiral Hart in command of the Asiatic Fleet ordered all wives and children of

naval personnel to be evacuated to the United States. The Asiatic Fleet, instead of going to North China waters as had been customary in April, remained in Philippine waters. In May, 1941, Army wives and dependents were also ordered home. I contemplated whether all American civilian women and children should be returned home, and raised the question with the State Department. The latter, however, feeling that such a move would only cause undue anxiety and excite fear, asked me not to follow out the suggestion. Many worried civilians kept asking me whether they should evacuate their families. I could only reply that none of us knew what lay ahead; their guess was perhaps as good as mine. I pointed out that both the Army and the Navy had evacuated their families, but that the Department of State had asked me not to advise the evacuation of civilian women and children. And I added that my wife and son were remaining in Manila.

I cannot better present the international picture as it looked to us at that time than by quoting from a personal letter written to me by President Roosevelt from the White House on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1940, a little less than a year before the attack finally came:

Dear Frank:

... We of course do not want to be drawn into a war with Japan—we do not want to be drawn into any war anywhere. There is, however, very close connection between the hostilities which have been going on for three and a half years in the Far East and those which have been going on for sixteen months in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. For practical purposes, there is going on a world conflict, in which there are aligned on one side Japan, Germany and Italy, and on the other side, China, Great Britain and the United States. This country is not involved in the hostilities, but there is no doubt where we stand as regards the issues. Today, Japan and Germany and Italy are allies. Whatever any one of them gains or "wins" is a gain for their side and, conversely, a loss for the other side. Great Britain is on the defensive not alone in and around the British Isles, and not alone in and around the Mediterranean, but wherever there is a British possession or a British ship—and that means all over the world.

You say that you have the "feeling that any day Japan may start moving southwards." As you point out, we are faced with the danger of Ja-