

ultranationalist raving. For on this point, Japan's enemies were all too willing to accept, at the most general level, what the Japanese ideologues said. They agreed that Japan was "unique"—albeit unique in peculiarly uncivilized and atrocious ways. On neither side did the propagandists offer much ground for the recognition of common traits, comparable acts, or compatible aspirations.

◀ CHAPTER 3 ▶

WAR HATES AND WAR CRIMES

Shortly after World War Two ended, the American historian Allan Nevins, twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, published an essay entitled "How We Felt About the War." "Probably in all our history," he observed, "no foe has been so detested as were the Japanese." Nevins attributed this to the infamy of the attack on Pearl Harbor, coupled with reports of Japanese atrocities and the extraordinary fierceness of the fighting in the Pacific. "Emotions forgotten since our most savage Indian wars," he went on, "were reawakened by the ferocities of Japanese commanders"—an analogy more telling to us today, perhaps, than Nevins intended.¹

Nevins' appraisal, which no one at the time would have disputed, is a reminder of the sheer hatred the war in Asia engendered, as it became entangled with an almost spellbinding spectacle of brutality and death. Commentator after commentator in the Anglo-American camp stated flatly that the Japanese were more despised than the Germans, and usually they agreed that there was a good and simple reason for this: the Japanese were uncommonly treacherous and savage.

In retrospect, it is easier to document such sentiments than to fully understand them. For in a war of unprecedented destructiveness, which involved a large part of the world and left a death toll of more than 50 million people, how is it possible to speak of the uncommon savagery of one antagonist in particular? Where the war against Japan is concerned, two more specific questions arise. First, why were the Japanese perceived

as being more treacherous and atrocious than the Germans, who attacked neighboring countries without warning or provocation, engaged in systematic genocide against millions of Jews and other “undesirables,” killed additional millions of prisoners, especially in the Soviet Union, mobilized slave labor from many countries with the explicit policy of working “anti-social” persons to death, and executed tens of thousands of civilian and military “hostages” in retaliation for the deaths of German officers, not hesitating to obliterate whole villages in such acts of reprisal (the destruction of Lidice and Ležaky in Czechoslovakia in 1942 being but the most famous of these)? And, second, what is one to make of the other side of the coin, namely, Japanese propaganda portraying the Allies as the real barbarians of the modern age, who mutilated Japanese corpses for “souvenirs,” killed prisoners on the battlefield, introduced a new crime against humanity in their policy of attacking densely populated areas with incendiary bombs, and did not hesitate to unleash the new force of nuclear destruction against two virtually defenseless cities?

The answer to the first question, why the Japanese were more hated than the Germans despite the latter's orgy of violence, is surely in large part racial—but in ways more complicated than may be apparent at first glance. German atrocities were known and condemned from an early date, but in keeping with their practice of distinguishing between good and bad Germans, Allied critics tended to describe these as “Nazi” crimes rather than behavior rooted in German culture or personality structure. This may have been an enlightened attitude, but it was not a consistent one, for in the Asian theater enemy brutality was almost always presented as being simply “Japanese.” So ingrained was this bias that it was maintained even when Japanese behavior was presented as following the German example. In July 1942, for example, the *Washington Post* printed a cartoon entitled “Mimic” which placed Japanese violence in the Philippines in the context of German atrocities in Czechoslovakia. How did the artist choose to do this? By depicting Hitler in the background looming over the ruins of Lidice and Ležaky, while a large gorilla labeled “Japs” trampled Cebu in the foreground.

The distinction between the war in the West and the war in Asia and the Pacific is in itself simplistic, however, for it obscures the fact that the Germans were engaged in several separate wars—on the eastern front, on the western front, and against the Jews—and their greatest and most systematic violence was directed against peoples whom most English and Americans also looked down upon, or simply were unable to identify with

strongly. Foremost among these were the eastern Europeans, the Slavs, and the Jews—all of whom, along with Asians, were the target of America's own severe immigration restrictions dating back to the 1920s. Thus, historians of the war in the Western Hemisphere emphasize that the German onslaught against the Soviet Union and eastern Europe was much more savage than the attack to the west; German atrocities on the eastern front were “planned and persistent,” while on the western front they were more episodic; and as a consequence, notwithstanding a genuine horror at incidents like Lidice, as well as the normal war hate that simply came from direct confrontation, the response to the Germans in countries like Britain and the United States generally was less violent than elsewhere.² Scholars of the Holocaust, in turn, have demonstrated that although the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews was documented beyond doubt by November 1942, this generally was downplayed by American and British leaders, and was ignored or buried in the mainstream English-language media until after Germany collapsed and Western correspondents actually entered the death camps. Periodicals that regularly featured accounts of Japanese atrocities gave negligible coverage to the genocide of the Jews, and the Holocaust was not even mentioned in the *Why We Fight* series Frank Capra directed for the U.S. Army.³

In the English-speaking countries, as everywhere, the fate of one's own countrymen and countrywomen carried an emotional impact greater than reports of the suffering of faceless alien peoples, and the vivid and intimate symbolic incident was more memorable than generalized reports of violence. In this atmosphere, it was not surprising that the Japanese were more hated than the Germans, and were perceived as being treacherous, atrocious, and fanatical in ways peculiar to themselves. They humiliated the United States and Great Britain militarily in unprecedented ways, symbolized by Pearl Harbor and Singapore. They were more brutal to their Anglo-American prisoners than the Germans were (the Germans, in accord with their own racial theories, being more brutal to other races and nationalities than they were to Anglo-Saxons). And after the fortunes of war had turned against them, the Japanese exacted a terrible price in Allied casualties before succumbing, turning hitherto unheard-of places into code words of dehumanization and death: Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Imphal, Kohima. By the final years of the war against Japan, a truly vicious circle had developed in which the Japanese reluctance to surrender had meshed horrifically with Allied disinterest, on the battlefield and in decision-making circles, in taking prison-

ers or contemplating anything short of Japan's "thoroughgoing defeat." An analysis of the racial aspects of the war can assume full meaning only in this larger context of violence, atrocity, and hate.

In the wake of Pearl Harbor, the single word favored above all others by Americans as best characterizing the Japanese people was "treacherous," and for the duration of the war the surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet remained the preeminent symbol of the enemy's inherent treachery.⁴ The attack also inspired a thirst for revenge among Americans that the Japanese, with their own racial blinders, had failed to anticipate. In one of his earliest presentations of the plan to attack Pearl Harbor, even Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, who presumably knew the American temperament firsthand from his years as a naval attaché in Washington, expressed hope that a shattering opening blow against the Pacific Fleet would render both the U.S. Navy and the American people "so dispirited they will not be able to recover." Colonel Tsuji Masanobu, who planned the brilliant assault on Singapore, recalled similarly that "our candid ideas at the time were that the Americans, being merchants, would not continue for long with an unprofitable war, whereas we ourselves if we fought only the Anglo-Saxon nations [and not the U.S.S.R. as well] could carry on a protracted war."⁵ Such hopes were kindled by the rising tide of nationalist propaganda that portrayed Western culture as effete and the average American and Englishman as too selfish to support a long war in a distant place; and the months that followed Pearl Harbor seemed to confirm these prejudices. The Americans were driven from the Philippines, a United Kingdom force of a hundred thousand men surrendered to thirty-four thousand Japanese in Singapore, and throughout Southeast Asia prize after prize dropped like ripe fruit into the laps of the Japanese. Small wonder that, even after they were checked at Midway and Guadalcanal in mid-1942, many Japanese remained convinced that the Anglo-American enemy was indeed psychologically incapable of recovering.⁶ In actuality, the contrary was true, for the surprise attack provoked a rage bordering on the genocidal among Americans. Thus, Admiral William Halsey, soon to become commander of the South Pacific Force, vowed after Pearl Harbor that by the end of the war Japanese would be spoken only in hell, and rallied his men thereafter under such slogans as "Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs." Or as the U.S. Marines put it in a well-known variation on Halsey's motto: "Remember Pearl Harbor—keep 'em dying."⁷

That this exterminationist rhetoric reflected more than just rage at being attacked without warning is apparent, however, in the crudely racist nature of the immediate American response to Pearl Harbor. As *Time* magazine reported it in the opening paragraphs of its coverage, "Over the U.S. and its history there was a great unanswered question: What would the people, the 132,000,000, say in the face of the mightiest event of their time? What they said—tens of thousands of them—was: 'Why, the yellow bastards!'"⁸ Such immediate evocations of the "yellow" enemy were utterly commonplace. Even the urbane *New Yorker* magazine responded to the attack on Hawaii with a short story in which the Japanese emerged as "yellow monkeys" in a barroom conversation.⁹ There was, however, a curious twist to this generally racist response, reflecting the long-standing assumption that the Japanese were too unimaginative and servile to plan and execute such a stunning military maneuver on their own. Germany, it was widely and erroneously believed, must have put them up to this.¹⁰ In a logical world, such secondhand treachery should have made the Germans doubly treacherous. It did not. The Japanese attack remained the arch symbol of the stab in the back, just as the Japanese soldier soon came to be seen as more barbarous and diabolical than his German counterpart.

Even after Japan surrendered and accepted the Allied dictates of "demilitarization and democratization" with unexpected docility, the memory of a terribly atrocious foe was kept alive. Between 1945 and 1951, military tribunals convened throughout Asia found several thousand former Japanese military men guilty of committing atrocities and other conventional war crimes.¹¹ At the same time, in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, which met in Tokyo from early 1946 to mid-1948, the victors accused some of the twenty-eight Japanese military and civilian leaders on trial of actually having engaged in a conspiracy to commit atrocities. They had unleashed, the prosecution charged, the "wholesale destruction of human lives, not alone on the field of battle . . . but in the homes, hospitals, and orphanages, in factories and fields; and the victims would be the young and the old, the well and the infirm—men, women and children alike."¹² By this date, however, at least a small number of Allied observers had concluded that the meaning of "atrocious" had itself become ambiguous in an age of wholesale slaughter. Thus, in the single sweeping dissenting opinion at the Tokyo tribunal, Justice Radhabinod Pal of India dismissed the charge that Japan's leaders had engaged in a conspiracy to commit atrocities, and went so far as to

suggest that a stronger case might be made against the victors themselves. The clearest example of direct orders to commit "indiscriminate murder" in the war in Asia, Pal argued in his lengthy dissent, may well have been "the decision coming from the allied powers to use the atom bomb."¹³

Justice Pal's controversial opinion not only challenged the fixation on Japanese or Axis atrocities *in vacuo*, but also called attention to the fact that, in the war in Asia, the portrait of the enemy as a perpetrator of atrocities really began and ended with the bombing of civilians—by the Japanese in China, starting in 1937, and by the United States in Japan in 1944 and 1945, culminating in the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Because air raids against civilian populations had become so commonplace by the end of World War Two, it is easy to forget how shocked the Western powers were when the Japanese began bombing Chinese cities in 1937, and how much Japan's actions at that time served to convince most Europeans and Americans that this was a race and nation still beyond the pale of civilization. Condemnation of Japan by the League of Nations and the U.S. government was explicit on this. On September 28, 1937, one day after a resolution on the subject was unanimously adopted by an advisory committee to the League, the Department of State denounced Japan on the grounds that "any general bombing of an extensive area wherein there resides a large population engaged in peaceful pursuits is unwarranted and contrary to principles of law and of humanity."¹⁴ President Franklin Roosevelt spoke movingly about the barbarity of bombing in his famous "quarantine speech" of October 5, 1937, and the Department of State made further formal condemnations of such activity on March 21 and June 3 of the following year. On the latter occasion, the government's statement included the fighting in Spain as well as in China, but the charge was the same. "When the methods used in the conduct of these hostilities take the form of ruthless bombing of unfortified localities with the resultant slaughter of civilian populations, and in particular of women and children, public opinion in the United States regards such methods as barbarous," the statement read. "Such acts are in violation of the most elementary principles of those standards of humane conduct which have been developed as an essential part of modern civilization."¹⁵ A resolution condemning the "inhuman bombing of civilian populations" also was introduced in the U.S. Senate in June 1938, and the ensuing discussion made it clear that the Japanese were seen as being the major practitioners of this "crime against humanity," pursuing

a course "reminiscent of the cruelties perpetrated by primitive and barbarous nations upon inoffensive people."¹⁶

Although the outcry against the "yellow bastards" who attacked Pearl Harbor tapped an old strain of anti-Oriental sentiment in the United States, by the mid-1930s missionaries and popular writers such as Pearl Buck had helped create a countervailing tide of respect for the long-suffering common people of China. While this mitigated gross color prejudices in some circles, it at the same time heightened anti-Japanese sentiments among Americans as Japan began to step up the pace of its aggression against China in the 1930s. The emotional impact of photographs and newsreels depicting the Chinese victims of Japanese bombing after the Sino-Japanese conflict flared into open war in July 1937 was thus quite spectacular in the West, and helped to freeze two images in the minds of most observers: of the Japanese as indiscriminate killers of women and children; and, more generally, of the horror of all-out war in an age when the technologies of death were developing so rapidly. (Picasso's mural *Guernica*, based on the destruction of the Spanish town by bombing, was completed in April 1937.) When war erupted in Europe in 1939, President Roosevelt immediately followed up on his earlier condemnation of the bombing of civilians with an eloquent plea to all belligerents to refrain from this "inhuman barbarism." "The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities which have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years, which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenseless men, women and children," the president began, "has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity."¹⁷

The German bombing of Warsaw in 1939 and Rotterdam, London, and Coventry in 1940 was denounced as wanton terror. Thus, in 1939 the Foreign Office condemned the "inhuman methods used by the Germans in other countries," and declared that "His Majesty's Government have made it clear that it is no part of their policy to bomb nonmilitary objectives, no matter what the policy of the German Government may be." Early in 1940, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, similarly denounced the bombing of cities as "a new and odious form of attack," while in the same year Roosevelt again pleaded that all parties refrain from bombing civilians, and went on to "recall with pride that the

United States consistently has taken the lead in urging that this inhuman practice be prohibited.”¹⁸

By 1942, the situation had been turned about almost completely, as the Royal Air Force and U.S. Army Air Forces became the apostles of strategic bombing and proceeded to perfect the techniques of massive urban destruction with incendiary bombs, while the Axis powers self-righteously condemned such terror tactics. British and American planners had, in fact, secretly agreed on the desirability of bombing enemy cities many months before Pearl Harbor, and in the summer of 1942 the Royal Air Force began to repay Germany in earnest for the bombings of two years earlier by destroying Hamburg with the newest weapon in the airborne arsenal: incendiaries that created uncontrollable fire storms. From an early date, British leaders supported dense “area” bombing in Germany to destroy civilian morale in addition to more conventional military and industrial targets, and after Pearl Harbor Churchill frequently turned his gift for the vivid image to anticipation of grinding the Japanese to powder, ravaging their cities, or laying their urban areas in ashes. Following the Quebec Conference of August 1943, the British minister of information reported that the Allies intended to “bomb, burn and ruthlessly destroy” both Germany and Japan, and subsequent developments proved him to be a forthright and accurate spokesman.¹⁹

The prospect of putting Japan’s cities to the torch actually had been envisioned in U.S. military circles since shortly before Pearl Harbor, when General George C. Marshall, the chief of staff, instructed his aides to develop contingency plans for “general incendiary attacks to burn up the wood and paper structures of the densely populated Japanese cities.”²⁰ As a general rule, however, even while supporting the RAF in the raids against German cities, U.S. planners tended to express greater reservations than their British counterparts about the deliberate terror bombing of civilians to destroy morale. They presented themselves instead as supporters of the more restrained strategy of high-altitude daytime “precision” bombing of military and industrial targets; and this was, in fact, the general policy followed during the first few months after the U.S. Army Air Forces commenced bombing the Japanese homeland in late 1944.

Precision bombing was abandoned dramatically on the night of March 9–10, 1945, when 334 aircraft attacked Tokyo at low altitude with incendiary bombs, destroying sixteen square miles of the capital city and making more than a million people homeless. Between eighty thousand and one hundred thousand civilians died in the Tokyo raid—“scorched

and boiled and baked to death” was how the mastermind of the new strategy, Major General Curtis LeMay, later phrased it. The heat from the conflagration was so intense that in some places canals boiled, metal melted, and buildings and human beings burst spontaneously into flames. It took twenty-five days to remove all the dead from the ruins. With the exception of the fires that raged through Tokyo and Yokohama at the time of the Kanto earthquake in 1923, this was the largest urban conflagration in recorded history. Radio Tokyo referred to the new U.S. policy as “slaughter bombing,” and in the days and months that followed, incendiary attacks against urban areas became the primary U.S. aerial strategy against Japan. By May, incendiaries comprised 75 percent of the bomb loads, and in the final reckoning firebombs accounted for close to two thirds of the total tonnage of explosives dropped on Japan. By the time Japan surrendered, sixty-six cities, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had been subjected to both precision raids and general urban-area attacks. The exact number of civilians killed by both incendiaries and the atomic bombs is uncertain, but probably was close to four hundred thousand.²¹

Although Allied military planners remained sensitive to the moral issue of bombing civilians (and to the possibility that reliance on obliteration bombing might provoke a public reaction detrimental to the postwar development of the air forces), no sustained protest ever materialized. The Allied air raids were widely accepted as just retribution as well as sound strategic policy, and the few critics who raised ethical and humanitarian questions about the heavy bombing of German cities were usually denounced as hopeless idealists, fools, or traitors.²² When Tokyo was incinerated, there was scarcely a murmur of protest on the home front. Privately, some insiders did acknowledge the moral ambiguity of the U.S. strategy against Japan, at least in passing. In a confidential memorandum of mid-June 1945, for example, one of General Douglas MacArthur’s key aides, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, frankly described the U.S. air raids against Japan as “one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history.”²³ Such thoughts were seldom voiced publicly, however. And when Allied prosecutors sitting in the gutted capital city of Japan in 1946 accused the country’s leaders of promoting the indiscriminate destruction of “men, women and children alike,” they still did so with little sense of irony. Japan had merely reaped what it sowed.

What Japan sowed among its enemies, and even among erstwhile allies within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, was death and

the seeds of violent loathing. The bombing of Chinese cities was but the first great planting of this hatred, and in the months and years that followed, the Japanese often seemed to go out of their way to call the condemnation of the outside world down upon themselves. Their atrocities frequently were so grotesque, and flaunted in such a macabre manner, that it is not surprising they were interpreted as being an expression of deliberate policy and a calculated exhibition of some perverse "national character." What else was one supposed to make, for example, of the "friendly contest" between two officers in late 1937, avidly followed in some Japanese newspapers, to see who would be the first to cut down 150 Chinese with his samurai sword; or of the rape and murder of nuns in the streets of Hong Kong; or of the corpses of tortured Englishmen hanging from trees in Malaya, with their severed genitals in their mouths; or of the water torture of old missionaries in Korea and Japan, who were then repatriated to tell their tales? No one will ever know how many individuals fell victim to atrocities committed by Japanese troops, or how many Japanese actively participated in such acts. The command responsibility for many such incidents also is destined to remain controversial—particularly if responsibility is understood to include not merely direct orders, but also socialization, indoctrination, and indifference. Many Japanese atrocities were unquestionably "stray" events, as Justice Pal sometimes argued. There can be little dispute about the wide range of conventional Japanese war crimes, however, or about the actual occurrence of certain shocking incidents which were singled out for special publicity in the Allied camp and contributed greatly to the effectiveness of propaganda depicting the Japanese collectively as an inherently savage race. Even skeptics who recalled the unsubstantiated atrocity stories which had been circulated to stir up anti-German passions among the Allies during World War One conceded that most of the wartime reports about atrocious Japanese behavior were essentially true.²⁴

Japanese atrocities conformed to several broad categories: massacres of noncombatants, the maltreatment and killing of prisoners, routinized torture, forced labor, and institutionalized murder in the form of lethal medical experiments. The last of these crimes, which took place on a very small scale in Japan proper (notably at Kyushu Imperial University in 1945) and on a large scale in Manchuria (under the murderous contingent of scientists known as "Unit 731") were not exposed until some time after the war ended.²⁵ By contrast, the other kinds of atrocities were well publicized. Indeed, after Pearl Harbor the reporting of such incidents was,

at certain key moments, carefully orchestrated by the American and British governments.

We have already seen how the period embracing the China and Pacific wars opened and closed with the spectacle of civilian populations being slaughtered by aerial bombardment. Massacres of civilians by Japan's ground forces also marked the commencement of this period in 1937, and carried through to its end in 1945. If anything, the massacres mounted in horror, for by the end the Japanese were not only slaughtering their erstwhile Asian compatriots within the Co-Prosperity Sphere, but killing their own kin and countrymen as well.

The Chinese people were the first victims of Japanese massacres. Eradication of Chinese "bandits"—the Japanese euphemism for patriotic resistance groups who opposed them—occurred on various occasions in the early 1930s, but it was in 1937, with the Rape of Nanking, that the killing of noncombatants escalated to a massive scale. Nanking fell on December 12 after heavy shelling and bombing, and for the next six weeks Japanese troops engaged in the widespread execution, rape, and random murder of Chinese men and women both in the captured city and outlying communities. The total number of Chinese killed is controversial, but a middle-range estimate puts the combined deaths from both the shelling and subsequent atrocities at two hundred thousand.²⁶ Much smaller killings occurred in other Chinese cities that fell into Japanese hands, including Hankow and Canton. In attempting to consolidate their control over northern China, the Japanese subsequently turned to "rural pacification" campaigns that amounted to indiscriminate terror against the peasantry. And by 1941–42, this fundamentally anti-Communist "pacification" campaign had evolved into the devastating "three-all" policy (*sankō seisaku*: "kill all, burn all, destroy all"), during which it is estimated that the population in the areas dominated by the Chinese Communists was reduced, through flight and death, from 44 million to 25 million persons.²⁷

Outside of China, massacres small and large by Japanese ground forces were reported from every country that fell within the Co-Prosperity Sphere.²⁸ After the British surrendered Singapore in February 1942, the overseas Chinese there became an immediate target of Japanese oppression, and upwards of five thousand were summarily executed in the course of a few days. Some were beheaded, others drowned in the ocean, and yet others machine-gunned and bayoneted.²⁹ For the Japanese enlisted man, the bayonet was the poor man's counterpart to the samurai sword carried

by officers; and for the Freudian analyst, the wanton frenzy with which these conscripts plunged this weapon into Allied prisoners as well as defenseless people everywhere in Asia must be of more than passing interest. It certainly caught the attention of observers who reported on the war in Asia to the West, and more than one American propaganda film included an acted-out scene of Japanese soldiers tossing babies in the air and spearing them with their bayonets. In the months following Pearl Harbor, Japanese bayonets cut down scores of Asians and Europeans throughout the new imperium. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden informed the House of Commons in March 1942 that some fifty British officers and men had been bound and bayoneted during the takeover of Hong Kong, and it was widely reported that the same weapon had been used against doctors, nurses, and hospital patients in Singapore as well as Hong Kong during the takeover. Hundreds of American and Filipino stragglers in the Bataan Death March of April 1942 were bayoneted; and, at a later date, General William Slim's army found Burmese villagers tied to trees and, again, killed by bayonet thrusts. The method was economical, for it saved ammunition. But for many Japanese (including popular graphic artists, who turned it into the Japanese common man's sword of righteousness), the bayonet also possessed a peculiar fascination.³⁰

There was, however, variety in the methods of massacre. The Japanese also machine-gunned their victims, decapitated them with swords, drowned them, and occasionally doused them with gasoline and set them afire. In Borneo and other locales within the colonial domain of the Netherlands, upwards of one hundred Dutch civilians were killed early in 1942 as a reprisal for the destruction of the oil fields and other critical installations. Some were maimed and thrown into the ocean to drown.³¹ Manila, where random atrocities had occurred during the Japanese takeover of 1941–42, was subjected to a terrible slaughter in February and March of 1945, after land forces of the Imperial Navy refused to surrender the city. Close to a hundred thousand of the city's population of seven hundred thousand were killed by shelling and bombing, by crossfire in the streets, and by Japanese sadists.

Some of the greatest atrocities in Manila took place after MacArthur had announced the liberation of the city, culminating in the torture and murder of some one thousand Filipino hostages held in Christian churches in Intramuros, the old walled quarter of the capital, where the Japanese made their last defense. Carlos Romulo, the distinguished Filipino editor who escaped from Bataan in 1942 and returned with

MacArthur's forces in 1945, described the horror of returning to find Manila "black and gutted and reeking," a "city of the tortured and the dead." "These were my neighbors and my friends whose tortured bodies I saw pushed into heaps on the Manila streets," Romulo recorded, "their hands tied behind their backs, and bayonet stabs running through and through. This girl who looked up at me wordlessly, her young breasts crisscrossed with bayonet strokes, had been in school with my son. I saw the bodies of priests, women, children, and babies that had been bayoneted for sport, survivors told us, by a soldiery gone mad with blood lust in defeat."³² Once again the world was confronted by the now emblematic mark of the imperial bayonet.

As the Imperial Army and Navy fell on the defensive and began to face certain defeat in all theaters of the war, contingents of the armed forces began to kill their own countrymen and comrades in arms, and to take their own lives in gruesome and desperate acts of suicide. The "banzai charge" and the reluctance of Japanese fighting men to surrender were observed in battle after battle, beginning with Guadalcanal. And on July 9, 1944, Allied observers on Saipan were presented with a horrifying new spectacle as hundreds of Japanese civilians living in the critical island outpost killed their families and themselves rather than surrender. They had been told the Americans would rape, torture, and murder them, and that it was more swift and honorable to take their own lives. Whole families died in full view of the invading Allied forces by killing themselves with hand grenades provided by the Japanese military or leaping from high cliffs into the sea or onto the rocks below. Some, attempting to surrender, were shot or bayoneted by Japanese soldiers. Thousands of noncombatants did in fact defy the Japanese orders and give themselves up to the Americans, but it was the terrible spectacle of the civilian slaughter that impressed itself most deeply on the public consciousness of the Allies. Not only was the story widely reported, but some of the civilian deaths were captured on film by the U.S. military and became part of the regular indoctrination program for Marines.³³ Months later, on Okinawa, local Japanese commanders again ordered the civilian population to commit suicide rather than surrender, and here the agony of flight, entrapment, and death was prolonged for weeks. When the battle of Okinawa ended, ninety-five thousand civilians had been killed by enemy fire, by Japanese soldiers, by loved ones and trusted acquaintances, and by their own hands. As the artist Maruki Toshi observed decades later, after she and her husband Iri had painted a huge mural of the Okinawa tragedy,

the Japanese militarists ended up slaughtering the very people they were presumably protecting.³⁴

George Orwell, who spent part of the war years writing propaganda broadcasts for British radio, observed on several occasions in 1942 that while Japanese rhetoric attacking European and American repression in Asia was undeniably “clever” and “inviting,” such appealing words were belied by Japan’s already demonstrated record as an occupying power in Korea, Formosa, Manchukuo, and China. “To those who say that the cause of Japan is the cause of Asia against the European races,” he suggested, “the best answer is: Why then do the Japanese constantly make war against other races who are Asiatics no less than themselves?” Orwell went so far as to argue that for centuries the Japanese had espoused “a racial theory even more extreme than that of the Germans,” holding their own race to be divine and all others hereditarily inferior.³⁵ As time passed, more and more Asians within the new Japanese sphere in southern Asia came to a similar conclusion. They were routinely slapped by Japanese soldiers; ordered to bow to the east, where the Japanese emperor resided; told to learn Japanese; subjected to refined tortures by the hated Kempeitai, or military police; and mobilized for labor projects which proved fatal for tens of thousands of workers. Even collaborators such as Burma’s Ba Maw and Sukarno in Indonesia were appalled by the contempt which many Japanese displayed toward other Asians. “The brutality, arrogance, and racial pretensions of the Japanese militarists in Burma,” Ba Maw recalled in his outspoken memoirs, “remain among the deepest Burmese memories of the war years; for a great many people in Southeast Asia these are all they remember of the war.”³⁶

In their penchant for slapping non-Japanese Asians about, Japanese soldiers, especially enlisted men, were treating others in the same way their superiors treated them. Racial arrogance came together here with the all-too-human transfer of oppression; and although such practices made the Japanese hated, these were crude rather than atrocious acts. Torture was another matter, and in this regard the Japanese military police operating in the Co-Prosperity Sphere combined a repertoire of more or less conventional techniques (water torture, beating, starvation, burning, electric shock, pulling joints from their sockets by knee spreads and suspension) with a perverse racial twist: in many overseas locales, the strong-arm work of the Kempeitai was delegated to Korean and sometimes Formosan recruits.³⁷ For scores of thousands of Asian noncombatants,

however, Japan’s most brutal wartime policy took the form not of punishment or torture, but of employment under the Japanese.

The war years witnessed at least four sustained acts of criminal Japanese treatment of Asian labor, involving Korean and Chinese workers in Japan proper, Indonesians both within and outside their native land, and Southeast Asian laborers assembled to help construct the notorious Burma-Siam “railroad of death.” Between 1939 and 1945, close to 670,000 Koreans were brought to Japan for fixed terms of work, mostly in mines and heavy industry, and it has been estimated that 60,000 or more of them died under the harsh conditions of their work places. Over 10,000 others were probably killed in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. More precise figures are available concerning Chinese laborers mobilized to work in Japan. Of 41,862 men assembled in China for such work between April 1943 and May 1945 (in accordance with a Japanese cabinet decision of November 27, 1942), over 2,800 died before leaving China, close to 600 perished on the boats coming to Japan, and over 200 more passed away before reaching their work assignments in factories throughout Japan. Subsequently, 6,872 Chinese workers were recorded as having died at their Japanese work sites, leaving less than 31,000 to be repatriated after the war ended.³⁸ Estimates concerning conscripted labor in Southeast Asia vary greatly, although it is well known that Indonesians in particular suffered grievously under the Japanese occupation. Japanese recruitment of Indonesian laborers (*rōmusha*) was so harsh that some villages were stripped of almost all able-bodied men, causing severe socio-economic dislocations, while the number of deaths among the *rōmusha* themselves was in the hundreds of thousands. As many as 300,000 Javanese, Tamil, Malayan, Burmese, and Chinese laborers may have been mobilized to build the Burma-Siam railroad between October 1942 and November 1943; of this number an estimated 60,000 perished in the disease-ridden jungle. In addition to such organized abuse of Asian males, in the war theaters and occupied areas countless non-Japanese (as well as poor Japanese) girls and women were forced to prostitute themselves as “comfort girls” for the emperor’s soldiers and sailors.³⁹

After World War Two, the story of the Burma-Siam railway became famous in the West through a brilliant book and movie, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, which told of a captured British officer who became so emotionally involved in helping to complete the construction of the “railroad of death” that he attempted to prevent his own side from

destroying it. In defiance of the generally accepted conventions of war governing prisoners, the Japanese did employ POWs on war-related projects, and some 60,000 to 70,000 Allied captives—mostly Australian, British, Indian, and Dutch—were eventually put to work alongside the “native” labor on the Burma-Siam railway. Early in 1945, reports that later proved quite accurate reached the West to the effect that some 15,000 of these prisoners had died.⁴⁰ It was this sort of report, concerning atrocities against white troops, which helped confirm Anglo-Americans in their belief that the Japanese were more atrocious than the Germans, although by this time the pattern of special hatred toward the Japanese enemy had already been firmly established.

Although both German and Japanese atrocity stories were covered regularly in the English-language media, three incidents which received special attention in 1943 and the opening weeks of 1944 were widely interpreted as confirming that the Japanese were uniquely barbaric. All three incidents were made known to the English-speaking public through official channels many months after the U.S. and British governments learned about them, and all involved the killing of Caucasian prisoners. This was propaganda of the most sophisticated sort, turning concrete events into icons and symbols; and in evaluating these emotional accounts of Japanese atrocities against white prisoners, it is helpful to keep in mind our earlier observations concerning Germany's several wars. On the eastern front, it is estimated that the Germans took as many as 5.5 million Soviet prisoners, of whom at least 3.5 million were dead by mid-1944. Being more sensitive to the fate of their own countrymen, however, most citizens of the United States and the United Kingdom had a very different picture. Of 235,473 U.S. and U.K. prisoners reported captured by Germany and Italy together, only 4 percent (9,348) died in the hands of their captors, whereas 27 percent of Japan's Anglo-American POWs (35,756 of 132,134) did not survive.⁴¹ No one had such numbers at their fingertips at the time, but the trend was clear. Thus, there was a logical explanation for the perception that the Japanese treated prisoners more brutally than the Germans, but the perception was nonetheless culture-bound and racially biased.

The first truly sensational incident involving Allied POWs occurred in April 1943, when the White House announced that the Japanese government had condemned to death several of the American flyers who participated in the Doolittle raid over Japan one year previously. This raid against Tokyo and several other cities, led by Lieutenant Colonel James

Doolittle from U.S. carriers far off the Japanese coast, had caused negligible material damage but had given a huge psychological boost to the Allies, while shocking Japan's leaders and causing them to reassess their expansionist ambitions. Eight of the flyers were captured when they were forced to land in occupied China, and on August 20, 1942, they were tried for war crimes under a military law which the Japanese had adopted exactly one week previously. The law explicitly concerned “enemy flyers who have raided Japanese territories, Manchukuo, or our operational territories,” and made it a capital offense to bomb civilians or nonmilitary targets. The law also contained a proviso stating that it was retroactively applicable to acts committed before August 13, and the death penalty was to be carried out by shooting. In extenuating circumstances, enemy flyers found guilty might receive a reduced sentence of from ten years to life imprisonment. The eight Doolittle flyers were sentenced to death under these regulations in a military hearing in China, but when the judgment was reviewed in Tokyo, five of the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. The remaining three American flyers were executed on October 10.

Both the new regulations and the “severe punishment” meted out to the Doolittle flyers were widely publicized in Japan later in October. The Japanese claimed that the Doolittle raiders killed some fifty civilians, including patients in an easily identifiable hospital and children deliberately machine-gunned in a schoolyard; and, indeed, their condemnation of this “cruel and inhuman act” read like a page from Western texts of four or five years earlier, when the Japanese were bombing the Chinese cities. “Bestial,” “evil,” “crazed,” “inhuman,” “lost to all sense of humanity” were some of the phrases used in the press, while the Japanese government's formal statement concerning the Doolittle flyers, dated October 19, stated that “those who ignored the principles of humanity have been severely punished in accordance with military law.” Despite the publicity which the new law together with the punishment of the Doolittle flyers received in Japan, all this remained unreported in the West until April 23, 1943, when the White House itself released the information.⁴²

President Roosevelt's denunciation of Japan's act was couched in much the same words as Japan's denunciation of the flyers: “barbarous,” “uncivilized,” “inhuman,” “depraved.” And, indeed, the response the story provoked in the United States was comparable to the rage that greeted the news of Pearl Harbor. As the British embassy in Washington reported to its home office, the news itself, combined with the emotional

response of high American officials, “sharply increased the stimulus of national anger and humiliation which makes of the Pacific front permanently a more burning issue than [the] European front is ever likely to be.” On the same day as the British dispatch, the *New York Times* headlined its Sunday review of the incident “Japan’s Barbarous Act Has No Parallel in War,” with a subhead further explaining “Tokyo Stands Alone as a Cruel Captor in Defiance of Geneva Convention.” Not even Germany, the *Times* stated, diabolical as its treatment of enemy civilians had been, had yet been accused of killing uniformed men for performing their duty.⁴³ In 1944, the torture and trial of the Doolittle flyers became the subject of one of Hollywood’s most dramatic war films, *The Purple Heart*, which ended with a memorable prophecy by one of the Americans sentenced to die:

It’s true we Americans don’t know very much about you Japanese, and never did—and now I realize you know even less about us. You can kill us—all of us, or part of us. But, if you think that’s going to put the fear of God into the United States of America and stop them from sending other fliers to bomb you, you’re wrong—dead wrong. They’ll blacken your skies and burn your cities to the ground and make you get down on your knees and beg for mercy. This is your war—you wanted it—you asked for it. And now you’re going to get it—and it won’t be finished until your dirty little empire is wiped off the face of the earth!⁴⁴

The Purple Heart was the first major American movie to deal explicitly with the Japanese torture of American prisoners, and its appearance in 1944 followed the carefully planned release of information concerning two other shocking incidents. Early in October 1943, the U.S. government released the translation of an entry in a diary found on the body of a Japanese soldier killed in New Guinea. The passage in question was discovered by language officers in General MacArthur’s command, and recorded the beheading of a captured airman the previous March. It was indeed a gripping short document, containing almost poetic references to the composure of the young man (“I glance at the prisoner and he seems prepared. He gazes at the grass, now at the mountains and sea”); passing expressions of compassion (“When I put myself in his place the hate engendered by this daily bombing yields to ordinary human feelings”);

jargon concerning the samurai code (“I realize that the emotion I felt just now was not personal pity but manifestation of magnanimity that becomes a chivalrous Samurai”); rage and racism (a Japanese disemboweling the decapitated corpse exclaims, “Here’s something for the other day—take that,” and then goes on to remark that “these thick-headed white bastards are thick-bellied too”); the gross obscenity of death (the severed head on the ground “like a white doll,” the trunk left with “not a drop of blood” in it); and the nonchalance of the casual gossip (“If I ever get back alive this will make a good story to tell. That’s why I write it down”).⁴⁵

To the Western reader, of course, the soldier’s “good story” was, on the contrary, a great tragedy. The *New York Times*, which like many newspapers published the full translation beginning on its front page, editorialized that, like a flashlight in the darkness, the diary illuminated “the real nature of our Asiatic enemy.” More terrible even than the murder of the Doolittle flyers, which at least had been cloaked with a pretense at judicial procedure, here there was nothing but “primitive blood lust and brutal butchery”—a naked, tribal savagery which, in fact, was inherent in Japanese culture. “The Japanese,” the *Times* explained, appropriating the enemy’s own rhetoric, “have kept their savage tradition ‘unbroken through ages eternal,’ from the fabulous age of their savage gods to the present day.” Turning to the samurai code, the *Times* explained that whereas in feudal times the samurai had tested their swords on beggars, Japan’s modern samurai “prefer their white enemies, whose necks they consider to be particularly frail.”⁴⁶

On January 28, 1944, over three months after publicizing the diary from New Guinea, the U.S. government released information concerning another Japanese atrocity against prisoners of war. This was the most devastating story of all: an account, based on reports from escaped prisoners, of the Bataan Death March of April 1942, during which thousands of Americans and Filipinos died of illness and exhaustion or were summarily killed. The government had possessed this information for over half a year before deciding to release it, and its announcement on January 28 was coordinated with a parallel statement by the British government describing Japanese atrocities against British and Commonwealth prisoners.⁴⁷ With this, the floodgates were opened, and a torrent of Japanese atrocity stories poured forth that continued unabated into the months and even years that followed Japan’s surrender. No conceivable abuse seemed

to be beyond the Japanese. They shot bailed-out pilots in their parachutes, transported prisoners in densely packed "hell ships," starved and beat their prisoners, performed vivisections on them, emasculated them, decapitated them, crucified them, burned or buried them alive, nailed them to trees, used them for bayonet practice.

These brutal acts were not isolated instances, Westerners were informed, nor were they acts common among men at war. Neither could they be dismissed as the frenzies of tormented men stranded abroad and locked in a war they were doomed to lose. The Bataan Death March, after all, occurred at the height of Japan's early victories. Rather, to quote a typical response to the Bataan horror, such atrocities revealed "the true nature of the enemy . . . an enemy that seems to be a beast which sometimes stands erect."⁴⁸ Not until May 1945, when the Nazi death camps were exposed, did public horror and indignation against the Germans reach, at least in the United States, a pitch comparable to the feelings directed against the Japanese. And by that time, the Germans had already surrendered.⁴⁹

By that time too, the willingness of the Japanese to accept incredible casualties had persuaded many observers in the Allied camp that this was an enemy that not only deserved to be exterminated, but had to be. Among U.S. fighting men, the idea that every Japanese had to be killed began to take hold after the battle for Guadalcanal, which began as an anticipated minor clash in August 1942 and did not end until February of the following year, after an estimated twenty-four thousand Japanese had given up their lives.⁵⁰ In May 1943, one month after the White House made public the fate of the Doolittle flyers, Westerners were informed of the suicidal banzai charges in Attu in the Aleutians of Japanese forces who died almost to the last man rather than surrender; and in the final years of the war, such reports came one after another, culminating in the sensational spectacle of suicide attacks by kamikaze aircraft.

Although the kamikaze pilots were first deployed in the Philippines in October 1944, and were immediately hailed in Japan as pure and selfless martyrs who would ensure the country's victory, for military reasons the news of their appearance and accomplishments was withheld in the West for almost half a year. Reports of the kamikaze were not released in the United States until April 1945, coincident with the death of President Roosevelt and a month after the incendiary bombing of Japa-

nese cities had commenced.⁵¹ Although this intensified the sense on all sides of an inevitable fight to the bitter end, such sentiments were by then deeply rooted. A U.S. Army poll taken in 1943 already indicated that about half of all GIs believed that it would be necessary to kill all Japanese before peace could be achieved.⁵² Men in the field were told they faced an enemy unlike any other, and had no choice but to kill or be killed. "You are fighting a shrewd, cruel, merciless enemy, who knows how to kill and who knows how to die," General Sir Thomas Blamey told an Australian unit in Port Moresby in 1942, in a typical sample of Allied battlefield talk. "Beneath the thin veneer of a few generations of civilization he is a subhuman beast, who has brought warfare back to the primeval, who fights by the jungle rule of tooth and claw, who must be beaten by the jungle rule of tooth and claw. Kill him or he will kill you."⁵³ A terser send-off, laced with black humor, was this briefing for a U.S. Marine unit: "Every Japanese has been told it is his duty to die for the emperor. It is your duty to see that he does so." By the final year of the war, one out of four U.S. combatants stated that his primary goal was not to help bring about Japan's surrender, but simply to kill as many Japanese as possible.⁵⁴ Here indeed were the makings of carnage: a losing army and navy ordered not to surrender, and a winning force disinclined to take prisoners and obsessed with the task of slaughter. By the end of the arduous Burma campaign, General Slim calculated that the kill ratio was more than one hundred Japanese for every one of his own men lost, and smaller but nonetheless still incredible ratios were reported from other theaters of the war.⁵⁵

It is understandable that men in battle become obsessed with annihilating the foe. In the case of the Japanese enemy, however, the obsession extended to many men and women far removed from the place of battle, and came to embrace not just the enemy's armed forces but the Japanese as a race and culture. How pervasive such sheer genocidal attitudes became is hard to say, for on all sides there were always a great number of people who simply desired a quick end to the killing. Public-opinion polls in the United States indicated that some 10 to 13 percent of Americans consistently supported the "annihilation" or "extermination" of the Japanese as a people, while a comparable percentage were in favor of severe retribution after Japan had been defeated ("eye for an eye," "punishment, torture," etc.). In an often-quoted poll conducted in December 1944 asking "What do you think we should do with Japan as a country after the war?" 13 percent of the respondents wanted to "kill

all Japanese" and 33 percent supported destroying Japan as a political entity (the identical question asked for Germany on the same date omitted the option of killing all Germans, and found 34 percent of the American respondents in favor of destroying Germany as a nation).⁵⁶ Like the soldiers who confessed in 1945 that their goal had become killing rather than simply winning, even after the war ended and the Japanese turned their energies to the tasks of peaceful reconstruction, a surprising number of Americans expressed regrets that Japan surrendered so soon after the atomic bombs were dropped. A poll conducted by *Fortune* in December 1945 found that 22.7 percent of respondents wished the United States had had the opportunity to use "many more of them [atomic bombs] before Japan had a chance to surrender."⁵⁷

Knowledgeable observers who followed American attitudes at the levels where opinions were shaped and policies made certainly concluded that support for an annihilationist policy against the Japanese was extremely strong—probably even more so than the polls indicated. On New Year's Day 1944, for example, several weeks before the news of the Bataan Death March had been released, the weekly report to the Foreign Office by the British ambassador in Washington was already referring to the "universal 'exterminationist' anti-Japanese feeling here."⁵⁸ An impressive variety of publicists, politicians, and military figures gave credence to this observation. In the media, for example, the syndicated military analyst Major George Fielding Eliot declared that the Allies' aim must be "the complete and ruthless destruction of Japanese industry, so that not one brick of any Japanese factory shall be left upon another, so that there shall not be in Japan one electric motor or one steam or gasoline engine, nor a chemical laboratory, not so much as a book which tells how these things are made." A 1943 best-seller stated that the fight against Japan had to continue "until not alone the body but the soul . . . is annihilated, until the land . . . is plowed with salt, its men dead and its women and children divided and lost among another people."⁵⁹ Carthage, sacked and razed by the Romans in 146 B.C., struck the more historically minded as an apt model for Japan. Admiral William Leahy, Roosevelt's chief of staff, described Japan as "our Carthage" to Henry Wallace in September 1942, meaning "we should go ahead and destroy her utterly." Some months later, *Collier's* ran an editorial entitled "Delenda est Japonia," taking the motto from Cato the Elder's practice of ending every one of his speeches to the Roman Senate for eight years with the line "*Delenda est Carthago*," or "Carthage must be destroyed."⁶⁰

In May 1943, and for some time thereafter, the Navy representative to the first interdepartmental U.S. government committee that was assigned to study how Japan should be treated after the war revealed himself to be a literal believer in Admiral Halsey's motto "Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs." He called for "the almost total elimination of the Japanese as a race," on the grounds that this "was a question of which race was to survive, and white civilization was at stake."⁶¹ Prime Minister Churchill, in a triumphant visit to Washington the same month, roused a joint session of Congress with a speech in which he spoke of "the process, so necessary and desirable, of laying the cities and other munitions centers of Japan in ashes, for in ashes they must surely lie before peace comes back to the world."⁶² Elliott Roosevelt, the president's son and confidant, told Henry Wallace in 1945 that the United States should continue bombing Japan "until we have destroyed about half the Japanese civilian population."⁶³ While the president's son was expressing such personal views in private, the chairman of the War Manpower Commission, Paul V. McNutt, told a public audience in April 1945 that he favored "the extermination of the Japanese in toto." When asked if he meant the Japanese military or the people as a whole, he confirmed he meant the latter, "for I know the Japanese people." A week later, McNutt, a former U.S. high commissioner in the Philippines, called a press conference to make clear that his comments reflected his personal views rather than official policy.⁶⁴ Several days before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Vice Admiral Arthur Radford was quoted as saying that "the Japs are asking for an invasion, and they are going to get it. Japan will eventually be a nation without cities—a nomadic people."⁶⁵

These were not the only voices in the chorus of opinion concerning Japan. Behind the scenes moderate and conciliatory appraisals of the Japanese were offered by a number of individuals, notable among them a small group of analysts centering around Captain Ellis Zacharias in Naval Intelligence, social scientists including Ruth Benedict and Clyde Kluckhohn in the Office of War Information, and Japan specialists led by Hugh Borton and George Blakeslee in the State Department. Their voices were muted, however, and the overwhelming thrust of public opinion in the United Kingdom as well as the United States demanded, if not the extermination of the Japanese people, then most certainly the country's "thoroughgoing defeat." Support for this came from every part of the political spectrum, and was rationalized, often at considerable length, by three basic lines of argument. In brief, they were these:

1. The “suicide psychology” argument, whereby it was maintained that the Japanese themselves, by their own fanaticism, invited destruction. The political scientist Harold Quigley, one of America’s leading experts on China and Japan, turned to this popular thesis in April 1945 when asked if Japan would seek peace once Germany had collapsed. On the contrary, he predicted, in all likelihood “samurai tradition will be followed to the point of national hara-kiri.” This argument placed the onus of massive destruction squarely on the Japanese. As the weekly *United States News* put it early in 1945, the proper question was not whether the Japanese should be exterminated, but rather “whether, in order to win unconditional surrender, the Allies will have to kill Japan’s millions to the last man.”⁶⁶

2. The “lessons of World War One” argument, whereby the rise of the Nazis in Germany was attributed to the incomplete victory of the Allies in World War One. Anything less than thoroughgoing defeat, it was maintained, would permit later nationalists to claim Japan had never really been defeated and, in Admiral Halsey’s words, to “use this peace as Germany did before them—to build up for another war.”⁶⁷ A companion or counterpart thesis to this reading of history was the “hundred-year-war” argument—the widely accepted belief that the Japanese, like “patient” Orientals in general, thought in terms of millennia rather than centuries, and centuries rather than years or decades; and that the current conflict, in the view of Japan’s leaders, was but a step in Japan’s hundred-year-war plan for world conquest. *Collier’s*, for example, ran an editorial entitled “Japan’s 100-Year-War Plans” only two weeks before the bombing of Hiroshima—quoting, as often was done, Japanese militarists in support of its thesis. “The Japs have a 2,500 year history, more or less, though their reliable records go back only to about 230 A.D.,” the magazine told its readers. “They can therefore take the long view of wars and truces”—and consequently a decisive defeat was essential.⁶⁸

3. The “psychological purge” argument, under which it was argued that great destruction and suffering should be inflicted upon Japan not simply as punishment, or because this was essential to end the war, but rather because only by turning Japan’s cities into ashes could the Japanese people as a whole be purged of their fanatic, militaristic sense of national and racial destiny. This was a natural corollary of the “lessons of World War One” argument, as Senator Thomas Hart made clear in the spring of 1945. Hart, a retired admiral who served as commander in chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet from 1939 to 1942, warned Americans to beware of

peace offers by the Japanese: “They don’t seek real peace—only an armistice to give some years for preparing another attempt to dominate the entire Far East, and then the remainder of the world. Those savages [Japan’s militarist leaders] have, for many years, taught the Japanese that such is the divine mission of the Yamato race. It’s in their blood and must be washed out.” Liberals and leftists also tended to see Japan’s thoroughgoing defeat as a psychological necessity which would purge the national psyche of the appeals of militarism and blind emperor worship for years to come—a kind of historical shock therapy, as it were. Thus, the State Department’s Alger Hiss stressed the importance of “Japan’s being thoroughly defeated in the sense that . . . her entire national psychology be radically modified,” while the prolific leftist Asia specialist T. A. Bisson argued that without “total victory” it would be necessary to fight the war with Japan “over again a generation hence.”⁶⁹

In such ways as these, diverse premises led to the same conclusion: that it was necessary and desirable to bring the war home to every man, woman, and child in Japan. This meant total victory on the battlefield. It meant unconditional surrender by the ruling elites. And it meant terror, heartbreak, and unforgettable memories for every family in Japan. Japanese propaganda concerning “fighting to the bitter end” and, indeed, a “hundred-year war” fueled these hates and passions and, for many, agonizing conclusions. And the clarion call for Japan’s “thoroughgoing defeat” in turn reinforced the Japanese militarists as they struggled to rally the Japanese people to die en masse for their country. As one of the major Japanese newspapers put it after the battle of Iwo Jima, “Enemy plans to wipe Japan and the Japanese people off the face of the earth are no propaganda manifestations.”⁷⁰

One of the more provocative diversions in doing military history involves imagining things that did not happen, and there are several such hypothetical possibilities that attract students of the war in Asia. What if the Japanese had attacked only the British and European colonies in Southeast Asia, for example, or had been detected en route to Pearl Harbor? What if the U.S. aircraft carriers had been at the Hawaii anchorage as expected, or the Japanese had followed up with a second wave of attacks that included targets such as the fuel storage tanks? Suppose Hitler had not declared war against the United States following Japan’s attack (it is still not clear why he did), or the Japanese had changed their naval codes and plugged their disastrous intelligence leaks before Midway, or

the Japanese naval command at Leyte had been bolder and more imaginative—how would such developments have affected the course of the war? How long could the Japanese have held out if the United States had adopted a “Pacific first” strategy, as Admiral Ernest King and others consistently urged? On the other hand, how long could they have dragged out the war if they had not overextended themselves? Or again, what if the Allies had been willing and able to temper their demands for unconditional surrender, or the emperor of Japan had been less conservative and more willing to work actively for peace? Could the war have been ended sooner, before the terrible slaughter of the final years? To such familiar counterfactual speculations, we may add another that is more fanciful, though certainly no less provocative: if the Japanese had won, what sort of war-crimes trials would they have conducted?

A reasonable answer can be pieced together from the accusations the Japanese directed against the enemy during the war. It is easy to imagine, for example, that Japanese prosecutors would have adopted some sort of “conspiracy” charge, much as Allied prosecutors in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East did. More precisely, they probably would have focused on four general areas of alleged conspiracy: (1) the long-term Anglo-American ambition to gain hegemony over Asia, dating back to the nineteenth century; (2) more recent and concerted attempts to weaken Japan through military and economic pressure, probably dating from the Versailles and Washington conferences of 1919–22, and in any case from no later than the Manchurian Incident of 1931 (in the Tokyo war-crimes trials, Japan’s “conspiracy against peace” was dated from 1928); (3) the wartime conspiracy of the two powers (or three, including China) to permanently reduce Japan to the status of a “third-rate nation” at best, or even a “slave state,” as reflected in pronouncements concerning unconditional surrender, dismemberment of the Japanese Empire, and so on that emanated from top-level Allied conferences and were commonplace in the statements of Allied officials; and (4) a “conspiracy to commit atrocities,” surely focusing in large measure on the policy of terror bombing of urban areas, culminating in the decision to use nuclear weapons against Japan. In addition to this hypothetical indictment, it is predictable that the Japanese also would have held military trials of Allied servicemen accused of committing atrocities and other conventional war crimes. There is little reason to believe that they would have conducted posthostility tribunals of whatever sort with anything but the harshest exercise of victor’s justice. That, however, is not the point. Imagining such war-

crimes trials is a useful way of sharpening the focus of Japan’s case against the Anglo-American enemy and looking at the issue of atrocities, war crimes, and war responsibility from a different perspective.

Japanese long-range planning was notoriously poor prior to and during World War Two. Military projections were short-term. Occupation plans were drawn up posthaste after the invasion of the southern region had been initiated. Certainly, planning for the “postwar” period had little or no place in a bureaucracy that had lost control of the war by the end of 1942. Nonetheless, in the summer of 1943, a Japanese committee called the Greater East Asia War Inquiry Commission published what amounted to a preliminary prosecutor’s brief against the United States and Great Britain. The commission was comprised of prominent civilians drawn from big business, politics, the academic world, and the diplomatic corps, and its “first” (and apparently last) report was published in English in July under the title “The American-British Challenge Directed Against Nippon.”⁷¹ After a brief introduction by foreign-policy adviser Arita Hachirō, which spoke of the need “to expose the outrageous words and actions of the enemy nations, words and actions which violate all the principles of justice and humanity,” the report launched into a detailed summary of the causes of the present conflict. The Greater East Asia War was described as “the counteroffensive of the Oriental races against Occidental aggression,” and the United States was depicted as having been Japan’s primary antagonist since the turn of the century, when it hypocritically demanded an open door in China while using the Monroe Doctrine to prohibit outsiders from interfering in the Americas. The decades that followed witnessed a steady increase in anti-Japanese sentiment and activity on the part of the Americans: attempts to neutralize Manchuria and gain U.S. railroad rights there after the Russo-Japanese War; criticism of Japan’s position in China at the peace conference at Versailles in 1919; pressure to force Great Britain to give up the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the early 1920s; the imposition of an unfavorable naval ratio at the 1921–22 Washington Conference; anti-Japanese immigration and commercial policies; support, along with Great Britain, of Chiang Kai-shek’s attack on Japan’s legitimate rights and interests in Manchuria and China, especially after the 1931 Manchurian Incident; and the ABCD (American, British, Chinese, Dutch) encirclement that began at the end of the 1930s, involving both economic strangulation and the strengthening of the Anglo-American military presence in Asia and the Pacific, most notably in Singapore and the Philippines. “The arrogant

Anglo-Saxons, ever covetous of securing world hegemony according to the principle of the white man's burden," the commission declared in commenting on the ABCD encirclement, "thus dared to take recourse to measures designed to stifle Nippon to death. It is small wonder that Nippon had to rise in arms."

Much of this lengthy report dealt in detail with the "villainous character of the encirclement ring" in the years just prior to Pearl Harbor, when trade with Japan was embargoed and Japanese assets were frozen. The longer-term "conspiracy" also was amply itemized, however, with much of the historical argument against the Anglo-American powers actually being taken from the standard English-language text of the time, A. Whitney Griswold's *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, published in 1938. The commission also argued that the current conflict with Japan was inseparable from two fundamental developments in American history: westward expansion and racial struggle. They called attention to the relocation or annihilation of the American Indians as the pioneers moved west, briefly mentioned the rise of Yellow Peril sentiments, and concluded that "when the problem is considered in this light . . . understanding is secured for the first time in regard to the United States' practically morbid jealousy of the Empire of Nippon, the sole first-class power among the colored nations of the world." British policy toward Japan was fundamentally the same as that of the United States, the report observed, differing only in that it was "not as vulgarly exhibitionistic." If Japan had not risen to break the encirclement ring, "the only paths that lay ahead of her were suicide or annihilation. Nippon chose to rise in self-defense."

The Greater East Asia War Inquiry Commission did not address developments after Pearl Harbor, but charges that the Allied powers were plotting to reduce Japan to insignificance as a power, and had engaged in the planned atrocity of massacring civilians through air power, came from all sides within Japan. Prime Minister Tōjō himself had described Allied policy as announced at the Cairo Conference, where the "unconditional surrender" formula was first mentioned, as being to reduce Japan to the status of a "slave state"; and the bombing of civilians and nonmilitary targets, as already seen, was made a capital offense in the wake of the Doolittle air raid.⁷² Where conventional war crimes and atrocities were concerned, Japan's case against the enemy would have dwelled upon what it meant to be on the Japanese side of a war governed by such slogans as "Kill or be killed" and "No quarter, no surrender."

Since the 1880s, the Japanese military had been enjoined to exemplify true valor and avoid reprehensible behavior against the enemy. The important Imperial Precepts to Soldiers and Sailors, issued by the emperor in 1882 and memorized by servicemen during World War Two, stated in the third of its five articles that military men should behave in such a way as to earn the esteem of the enemy. "If you affect valor and act with violence," the precepts stated prophetically, "the world will in the end detest you and look upon you as wild beasts. Of this you should take heed." The *Senjinkun* (*Field Service Code*) which Japanese servicemen carried in their pockets similarly admonished them not to stain the honor of the Imperial Way by atrocious behavior.

The Japanese public was not completely unaware of brutal behavior by Japanese troops abroad. The press carried accounts of the "friendly contest" to cut off the heads of 150 Chinese, and the diarist who described the beheading of an airman in New Guinea had looked forward to recounting the episode back home. Accounts of massacres such as the Rape of Nanking, the Bataan Death March, and the sack of Manila, however, appear to have been successfully censored, and even withheld from relatively well-placed individuals. Sidney Mashbir, one of General MacArthur's intelligence officers, for example, described how a high Foreign Ministry official became visibly shaken right after Japan's surrender when he was informed of the sack of Manila and shown corroborating reports and photographs.⁷³ To the majority of Japanese, as to the Anglo-Americans, atrocities committed by one's own side were episodic, while the enemy's brutal acts were systematic and revealed a fundamentally perverse national character.

Some of the rumors concerning Allied atrocities which circulated among Japanese servicemen and civilians were sensational and quite imaginary. The Chinese were reported to roast their captives and cut out their hearts.⁷⁴ Young American men, it was said, qualified for the Marine Corps by murdering their parents, and routinely raped and killed women in Asia (this was one of the rumors behind the mass suicides by Japanese civilians on Saipan and Okinawa).⁷⁵ The Allies killed prisoners on the battlefields by laying them on the ground and running them over with tanks and bulldozers, and intended to drastically depopulate Japan itself if they won. In perhaps the most fanciful rumor of all, it was said the Allies planned to turn Japan into an international park and kill all but five thousand attractive women, who would serve as guides.⁷⁶ Other reports, however, were not imaginary. The Japanese accused the Allies of mutilat-

ing Japanese war dead for souvenirs, attacking and sinking hospital ships, shooting sailors who had abandoned ship and pilots who had bailed out, killing wounded soldiers on the battlefield, and torturing and executing prisoners—all of which did take place.

There is a popular belief that men who have experienced combat and been fortunate enough to survive return home to regale their cronies with war stories. In fact, many have seen and done such terrible things that they choose not to recall them at all. They turn to the building of a new life and attempt to bury the past. It is only after the passing of years that the past resurfaces and demands to be reencountered. Certainly, this was true of many veterans of the war in Asia, and in the most honest of these retrospective accounts one confronts not only the dehumanization that occurred on all sides in the jungles and on the atolls where the Pacific War was fought, but also acknowledgment of Allied atrocities. Thus, J. Glenn Gray, in his reflective 1959 study *The Warriors*, recalled how a few years earlier a veteran reminisced before a class of students about how his unit had unexpectedly “flushed” an isolated Japanese soldier on an island that had already been secured, and amused themselves by shooting at him as he dashed frantically about the clearing in search of safety:

The soldiers found his movements uproariously funny and were prevented by their laughter from making an early end of the unfortunate man. Finally, however, they succeeded in killing him, and the incident cheered the whole platoon, giving them something to talk and joke about for days afterward. In relating this story to the class, the veteran emphasized the similarity of the enemy soldier to an animal. None of the American soldiers apparently even considered that he may have had human feelings of fear and the wish to be spared. What puzzled the veteran in retrospect was why his comrades and he found the incident so humorous. Now, a few years later, it appeared to him grisly and cruel enough; at the time, he had had no conscience about it whatever.⁷⁷

This solitary death is not identical to the execution of the Allied airman in New Guinea. It lacks the diarist. The Japanese soldier was technically not a prisoner, although he was helpless. There was no ritual. But the human tragedy is much the same, and this emerges in many other recollections by Allied participants as well. A Marine interviewed almost four decades after the event, for example, recalled the fate of a Japanese

soldier on Guadalcanal who responded to an appeal to surrender and emerged from a pillbox with his hands over his head: “Now, I’m ashamed to say this, but one of our men shot him down. Not only was this a vicious thing to do but it was asinine. You can bet your life that none of the others are going to come out.”⁷⁸ The popular American writer William Manchester, in *Goodbye, Darkness*, his 1980 memoir of fighting in the Pacific, recalled a young American soldier on Okinawa, crazed by the death of a revered commander, who “snatched up a submachine gun and unforgivably massacred a line of unarmed Japanese soldiers who had just surrendered.”⁷⁹ The military historian Denis Warner, in a book about Japanese suicide units published in 1982, introduced in passing his own firsthand experience on Bougainville, where wounded Japanese attempting to surrender were ordered shot by the Australian commander:

“But sir, they are wounded and want to surrender,” a colonel protested to [a major general] at the edge of the cleared perimeter after a massive and unsuccessful Japanese attack.

“You heard me, Colonel,” replied [the major general], who was only yards away from upstretched Japanese hands. “I want no prisoners. Shoot them all.”

They were shot.⁸⁰

In a thoughtful memoir published by Presidio Press in 1981, Professor E. B. Sledge, an American biologist, painfully recalled what it was like to be a young frontline Marine at two of the fiercest battles of the Pacific, Peleliu and Okinawa, where both sides were possessed by “a brutish, primitive hatred.” Sledge, deeply religious and patriotic, watched his comrades go over the edge: severing the hand of a dead Japanese as a battlefield trophy, “harvesting gold teeth” from the enemy dead, urinating in a corpse’s upturned mouth, shooting a terrified old Okinawan woman and casually dismissing her as “just an old gook woman who wanted me to put her out of her misery.” More terrifying still, Sledge found himself coming close to accepting such conduct as normal. “Time had no meaning, life had no meaning,” he writes at one point. “The fierce struggle for survival . . . eroded the veneer of civilization and made savages of us all. We existed in an environment totally incomprehensible to men behind the lines—service troops and civilians.”⁸¹ Another Marine account of the fighting in the Pacific described this hell on earth similarly: “Death was as common as head colds. . . . I had resigned from the human

race. . . . I just wanted to kill.”⁸² And these are the reminiscences of men who fought on the winning side.

The Japanese themselves bore no little responsibility for the reluctance of Allied soldiers to take prisoners, for early in the war they established a practice of booby-trapping their dead and wounded, and using fake surrenders to ambush unwary foes. Here again, certain incidents were elevated to symbolic status, and became accepted as exemplifying the ineffable and unvariable national character of the enemy. It would have been a rare Marine indeed, for example, who did not “know” the enemy—perhaps even before he had even seen a Japanese—through the story of the “Goettge patrol,” concerning over twenty Marines who responded to what appeared to be a Japanese attempt to surrender, and were ambushed, shot, and bayoneted to death. The incident occurred on August 12, 1942, at the very outset of the Guadalcanal campaign, and the psychology of “Kill or be killed” ruled the battlefield thereafter.⁸³ Although the slogan became well known to civilians on the home front in the United States and the United Kingdom, however, few could appreciate what this really meant; and, indeed, few really wanted to know. “What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway?” asked Edgar L. Jones, a former American war correspondent in the Pacific, in the February 1946 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. “We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.” Jones went on to speak of such practices as adjusting flamethrowers so that they did not kill their Japanese targets instantly. At the same time, he also took care to attribute such behavior to the nature of modern war itself, and to emphasize that it was done by all sides, but by no means condoned by all or even most fighting men.⁸⁴

On the Allied side, some forms of battlefield degeneracy were in fact fairly well publicized while the war was going on. This was especially true of the practice of collecting grisly battlefield trophies from the Japanese dead or near dead, in the form of gold teeth, ears, bones, scalps, and skulls. For some servicemen, gold teeth and severed ears became a fetish even before they had engaged in combat. In *Guadalcanal Diary*, a best-seller published late in 1942, the journalist Richard Tregaskis recreated the conversation of young men bolstering their courage before encountering their first Japanese. “They say the Japs have a lot of gold teeth. I’m going

to make myself a necklace,” said one. “I’m going to bring back some Jap ears,” another declared. “Pickled.”⁸⁵ In the diary of a seaman, published after the war, we find tucked away in an entry in July 1944 the casual mention of a Marine who had already collected seventeen gold teeth, the last from a Japanese soldier on Saipan who was wounded and still moving his hands.⁸⁶ Sledge, in his memoir of Peleliu and Okinawa, records an even more excruciating scene of a wounded Japanese thrashing on the ground as a Marine slit his cheeks open and carved his gold-crowned teeth out with a *kabar*.⁸⁷

Despite the attention given in Allied propaganda to Hideyoshi’s three-and-a-half-century-old ear mound, in the current war in Asia it was Allied combatants who collected ears. Like collecting gold teeth, this practice was no secret. “The other night,” read an account in the Marine monthly *Leatherneck* in mid-1943, “Stanley emptied his pockets of ‘souvenirs’—eleven ears from dead Japs. It was not disgusting, as it would be from the civilian point of view. None of us could get emotional over it.”⁸⁸ Even as battle-hardened veterans were assuming that civilians would be shocked by such acts, however, the press in the United States contained evidence to the contrary. In April 1943, the *Baltimore Sun* ran a story about a local mother who had petitioned authorities to permit her son to mail her an ear he had cut off a Japanese soldier in the South Pacific. She wished to nail it to her front door for all to see. On the very same day, the *Detroit Free Press* deemed newsworthy the story of an underage youth who had enlisted and “bribed” his chaplain not to disclose his age by promising him the third pair of ears he collected.⁸⁹

Scalps, bones, and skulls were somewhat rarer trophies, but the latter two achieved special notoriety in both the United States and Japan when an American serviceman sent President Roosevelt a letter opener made from the bone of a dead Japanese (the president refused it), and *Life* published a full-page photograph of an attractive blonde posing with a Japanese skull she had been sent by her fiancé in the Pacific. *Life* treated this as a human-interest story, while Japanese propagandists gave it wide publicity as a revelation of the American national character.⁹⁰ Another well-known *Life* photograph revealed the practice of using Japanese skulls as ornaments on U.S. military vehicles. For practical reasons, however, skulls were not popular as personal trophies, for, as we learn from the gruesome details of contemporary accounts, they were cumbersome to carry and the process of removing the flesh from a severed head (by boiling

, sometimes in lye, or setting it out for the ants to eat) was smelly and offensive.

Most combatants did not engage in such souvenir hunting, and *eahterneck* itself published a cartoon which expressed contempt and pity for all scavengers of the dead.⁹¹ At the same time, most fighting men had personal knowledge of such practices and accepted them as inevitable under the circumstances. It is virtually inconceivable, however, that teeth, ears, and skulls could have been collected from German or Italian war dead and publicized in the Anglo-American countries without provoking an uproar; and in this we have yet another inkling of the racial dimensions of the war.

Of greater interest is what the reminiscences cited earlier reveal: that many men in the field participated in or at least witnessed the killing of helpless, wounded, or captured Japanese. Here again, behavior which was presented to Western audiences as revealing the unique and inherent savagery of the Japanese occurred on both sides. Even Westerners who acknowledged this, however, usually went on to depict such Allied acts as a just retribution in the Old Testament sense. A familiar subject of anti-Japanese graphics, for example, was a white airman in a parachute being gunned down by a Japanese pilot. "And how are your ethics today?" ran the heading of an advertisement which used this scene.⁹² Japanese, however, suffered the same fate when the tables were turned. "A few Japs parachuted when they were hit," a young seaman wrote in his diary late in 1943, "but a few sailors and Marines on the 20 mm opened up on the ones in the chutes and when they hit the water they were nothing but a piece of meat cut to ribbons." The gunners, he went on, were mildly chastised by their superiors and in the same breath praised for their good shooting. In any case, he added, it was the Japanese themselves who started doing this.⁹³

Some massacres of Japanese, like that of the wounded soldiers attempting to surrender on Bougainville, were ordered to take place by Allied officers, or at least received tacit support from superior officers after the event. A U.S. submarine commander who sank a Japanese transport and then spent upwards of an hour killing the hundreds and possibly thousands of Japanese survivors with his deck guns, for example, was commended and publicly honored by his superiors even though he included an account of the slaughter in his official report. To Navy colleagues, many of whom were repulsed by this action, the fact that the officer received high praise rather than censure was interpreted as an

endorsement of such practices by the submarine high command.⁹⁴ An equally grim butchery took place on March 4, 1943, the day after the three-day battle of the Bismarck Sea, when U.S. and Australian aircraft systematically searched the seas for Japanese survivors and strafed every raft and lifeboat they found. "It was rather a sloppy job," a U.S. major from the 5th Bomber Command wrote in his official battle report, "and some of the boys got sick. But that is something you have to learn. The enemy is out to kill you and you are out to kill the enemy. You can't be sporting in a war."⁹⁵

The slaughter on the Bismarck Sea is of particular interest for two reasons. First, the theater of operations was close to New Guinea, where the beheading of the Allied airman which so aroused popular rage against the Japanese "savages" occurred. (By coincidence, the sea battle and the beheading even took place in the very same month.) And second, the killing of Japanese survivors was no secret. The Allied press followed military censorship stipulations faithfully, and apparently was not placed under severe restrictions in its coverage of this action. Thus, *Time*, in a good example of Old Testament fervor, informed its readers on March 15, 1943, that "low-flying fighters turned lifeboats towed by motor barges, and packed with Jap survivors, into bloody sieves. Loosed on the Japs was the same ferocity which they had often displayed. This time few, if any, Japs in battle green reached shore." When, two weeks later, *Time* published a single letter to the editor questioning the morality of such "cold-blooded slaughter," this triggered a spate of subsequent letters ridiculing the notion that "brotherly love" had any place in the current conflict. One respondent began with a list of Japanese atrocities, and then asked if the original letter writer would be "remorseful about killing a helpless rattlesnake after he had spent his 'strike.'" Another wrote: "Thoroughly enjoyed reading of the 'cold-blooded slaughter.' . . . Another good old American custom I would like to see is nailing a Jap hide on every 'backhouse' door in America." Still another stated that if the Americans did not treat the Japanese as atrociously as they treated others, "we would have lost 'face'" in their eyes.⁹⁶

The kill-or-be-killed psychology was of course a vicious circle, and this should be kept in mind when considering one of the most potent beliefs of the war years: that Japanese fighting men did not surrender. There were occasions when fair numbers of Japanese were taken prisoner, but it is true that in the jungle and island battles of the Pacific, most Japanese fought until they were killed, or committed suicide. They did

so for many reasons, prominent among them the fact that they were socialized to sacrifice themselves for the emperor and the state, and ordered not to surrender by their commanders. The Japanese were told they were fighting a holy war against a demonic foe, and many died believing they were giving their lives for a noble cause—"mad dogs" to their enemies, but martyrs in their own eyes and heroes in the eyes of their countrymen and countrywomen. Mass psychology and mass frenzy may have played a part in these deaths, even inebriation in some of the banzai charges, but so did duty, honor, and obedience in ways familiar everywhere: Japanese fighting men also died simply because their country or sovereign called upon them to do so. Still others fought to the bitter end because they believed, with good reason, that surrender would bring ostracism upon their families.

What is often overlooked, however, is that countless thousands of Japanese perished because they saw no alternative. In a report dated June 1945, the U.S. Office of War Information noted that 84 percent of one group of interrogated Japanese prisoners (many of them injured or unconscious when captured) stated that they had expected to be killed or tortured by the Allies if taken prisoner. The OWI analysts described this as being typical, and concluded that fear of the consequences of surrender, "rather than Bushido," was the motivation for many Japanese battle deaths in hopeless circumstances—as much as, and probably more than, the other two major considerations: fear of disgrace at home, and "the positive desire to die for one's nation, ancestors, and god-emperor." Even those Japanese who were willing to risk surrendering anyway found it difficult to do so. A summary report prepared for the OWI immediately after the war ended, for example, noted that documents pertaining to Japanese prisoners were "full of accounts of ingenious schemes devised by POWs to avoid being shot while trying to give themselves up," due to the fact of "surrender being made difficult by the unwillingness to take prisoners" on the part of Allied fighting men.⁹⁷

As the American analysts themselves acknowledged, these Japanese fears were not irrational. In many battles, neither Allied fighting men nor their commanders wanted many POWs. This was not official policy, and there were exceptions in certain places, but over wide reaches of the Asian battleground it was everyday practice. The Marine battle cry on Tarawa made no bones about this: "Kill the Jap bastards! Take no prisoners!"⁹⁸—and certain U.S. units became legendary for living up to this motto wherever they fought. An article published by a U.S. Army captain shortly

after the war, for example, carried the proud title "The 41st Didn't Take Prisoners." The article dealt with the 41st Division under MacArthur's command, nicknamed "the Butchers" in Tokyo Rose's propaganda broadcasts, and characterized the combat in the Pacific in typical terms as "a merciless struggle, with no holds barred." Prisoners were taken primarily when it suited military needs for intelligence purposes. Thus, we learn that in a mission that rescued several hundred Allied prisoners at Aitape in 1944, a task force of the 41st Division "even took forty-three prisoners, mostly labor troops, despite the division staff officer's complaints that they had enough prisoners already." In a small but costly battle at Wakde Island off Dutch New Guinea the same year, "the general wanted a prisoner, so we got him a prisoner."⁹⁹ The reputation of not taking prisoners also became associated with Australian troops in general. In many instances, moreover, Japanese who did become prisoners were killed on the spot or en route to the prisoner compounds.

Stories of this nature frequently emerge in conversations with veterans of the Pacific War, often—like J. Glenn Gray's veteran—in a tone almost of disbelief concerning the blind savagery of those days. No source, however, captures the war hates and war crimes of this merciless struggle more soberly than Charles Lindbergh's diary. For over four months in mid-1944, Lindbergh lived and flew as a civilian observer with U.S. forces based in New Guinea, and as the weeks passed he became deeply troubled, not by the willingness to kill on the part of the soldiers, which he accepted as an inherent part of the war, but by the utter contempt in which Allied fighting men held their Japanese adversaries. The famous "Lone Eagle," whose isolationist sentiments had placed him among the conservative opponents of President Roosevelt's policies, really hearkened back to what Gray has called the more chivalrous tradition of the professional militarist, who accepts the necessity of war while maintaining respect for his adversary, recognizing courage as courage and duty as duty, irrespective of the uniform worn. Lindbergh found no such sentiments among the Allied forces in the Pacific, where officers and enlisted men alike saw the enemy simply as animals and "yellow sons of bitches," and his detailed journal may be the most forthright firsthand account available of the "other" side of the Pacific War.

On May 18, 1944, about two weeks after Lindbergh had tied in with a Marine unit, he recorded that the camps were full of reports of Japanese torture and the beheading of captured American pilots. A month later, on June 21, he summarized the conversation of an American general who

told how an unsuspecting Japanese prisoner was given a cigarette and then seized from behind and had his throat "slit from ear to ear" as a demonstration of how to kill Japanese. Lindbergh's objections were treated with tolerant scorn and pity. The journal entry for June 26 told of a massacre of Japanese prisoners and of Japanese airmen being shot in their parachutes. Of several thousand prisoners taken at a certain place, Lindbergh was informed, "only a hundred or two were turned in. They had an accident with the rest. It doesn't encourage the rest to surrender when they hear of their buddies being marched out on the flying field and machine guns turned loose upon them." The Japanese deserved such treatment, it was explained to Lindbergh, for they mutilated prisoners and shot airmen in their parachutes. The entry for July 28 spoke of kicking in the teeth of Japanese, sometimes before and sometimes after executing them.

On July 13, Lindbergh wrote, "It was freely admitted that some of our soldiers tortured Jap prisoners and were as cruel and barbaric at times as the Japs themselves. Our men think nothing of shooting a Japanese prisoner or a soldier attempting to surrender. They treat the Japs with less respect than they would give to an animal, and these acts are condoned by almost everyone." On July 21, he wrote again about the desire to ruthlessly exterminate all Japanese. "A Japanese soldier who cuts off an American soldier's head is an Oriental barbarian, 'lower than a rat,' " he observed, whereas "an American soldier who slits a Japanese throat 'did it only because he knew the Japs had done it to his buddies.'" Lindbergh still believed that "Oriental atrocities are often worse than ours," but the line was increasingly hard to draw. One day later, he wrote of being told by a U.S. infantry colonel that "our boys just don't take prisoners." On July 24, he visited a battle site where Japanese corpses had been ransacked for gold teeth, others had been dumped in garbage pits, and a cave was filled with dead Japanese who had tried to surrender but been told to "get the hell back in and fight it out."

On August 6, Lindbergh described the blackboard in the pilots' alert tent, with a naked girl chalked in at the bottom and a Japanese skull hung on the top. A few days later, he wrote that when the word went out to take Japanese prisoners, and was accompanied by material inducements, prisoners were brought in in great numbers, but usually there was no incentive for doing this. He reported the slaughter of all inmates of a Japanese hospital, and went on to mention that the Australians often threw Japanese out of airplanes on their way to prison compounds and

then reported that they had committed hara-kiri. At the same time, however, reports of Japanese castrating prisoners and even engaging in cannibalism persuaded Lindbergh that "barbaric as our men are at times, the Orientals appear to be worse." Another journal entry in early August mentioned a patrol unit that had taken up the hobby of making penholders, paper knives, and the like out of the thigh bones of dead Japanese. On August 30, Lindbergh visited Tarawa, recalled the terrible casualties there, and told of a naval officer who lined up the few Japanese captured, kept those who could speak English for questioning, and had the rest killed. In early September, he noted that on some islands Marines actually dug up dead bodies in their search for gold teeth. Elsewhere they collected noses as well as ears, teeth, and skulls. When Lindbergh finally left the Pacific islands and cleared customs in Hawaii, he was asked if he had any bones in his baggage. It was, he was told, a routine question.¹⁰⁰

In the opening days of 1943, almost a year and a half before Lindbergh arrived on New Guinea, General Blamey gave an emotional speech to his exhausted Australian troops, who were just beginning to turn the tide against the Japanese on that same bitterly contested island. "You have taught the world that you are infinitely superior to this inhuman foe against whom you were pitted," he said. "Your enemy is a curious race—a cross between the human being and the ape. And like the ape, when he is cornered he knows how to die. But he is inferior to you, and you know it, and that knowledge will help you to victory." The general went on to compare his men to the courageous Roman legionnaires of ancient times, and to tell them that although the road ahead was long and hard, they were fighting for nothing less than the cause of civilization itself. "You know that we have to exterminate these vermin if we and our families are to live," he concluded. "We must go on to the end if civilization is to survive. We must exterminate the Japanese." In an interview around the same time that was reported on page 1 of the *New York Times*, Blamey, visiting the Buna battlefield, was quoted in much the same terms. "Fighting Japs is not like fighting normal human beings," he explained. "The Jap is a little barbarian. . . . We are not dealing with humans as we know them. We are dealing with something primitive. Our troops have the right view of the Japs. They regard them as vermin." The general even went on to refer to the enemy as simply "these things."¹⁰¹

One cannot imagine a more categorical distinction than this between the superior self and inferior other, but General Blamey had no

monopoly on such rhetoric. Japanese leaders spoke in analogous ways, calling on their "pure" countrymen to drive the Anglo-American devils out of Asia, even to annihilate them completely, and calling also on their own history for near-legendary models of fortitude and bravery. In their castigation of the enemy, they offered close counterparts to the Blamey text. An editorial on the American firebombing of Japanese cities, for example, stated that "this is most emphatically not war," but rather an "attempt at the terrorization of the civilian population through the most horrible means ever conceived by a fiendish mind." By these immoral acts, the Americans had shown themselves once and for all to be "utterly lacking in any ability to understand the principles of humanity. Whatever may be the state of their material civilization, they are nothing but lawless savages in spirit who are ruled by fiendish passions and unrestrained lust for blood. Against such enemies of decency and humanity, the civilized world must rise in protest and back up that protest with punitive force. Only through the complete chastisement of such barbarians can the world be made safe for civilization."¹⁰²

There are many such parallel declarations in the propaganda of both sides, and these become even more suggestive when we consider another passage in General Blamey's speech. "You have lost many comrades," he told his men, "but you have learnt that it is the highest and sweetest achievement of us all that we should die for our country." Such words could have been placed in the mouth of a Japanese commander almost without change (they would not have said "sweet"); but when the Japanese did speak of the nobility of dying for emperor and country, their enemies offered this as evidence of their peculiar fanaticism, irrationality, even collective psychosis and death wish. The Japanese, in turn, belittled the Allied dead. Holy wars permit scant space for reflecting on a common humanity, whether the commonality lie in bravery and idealism, or obedience and helplessness, or arrogance, oppression, and atrocity.

Most of the propaganda the Allies and Japanese engaged in concerning the enemy's atrocious behavior was rooted in actual occurrences, and the horror, rage, and hatred this provoked on all sides was natural. Of greater interest now, however, is the way such behavior was offered as confirmation of the innately inferior and immoral nature of the enemy—a reflection of national character—when, in fact, the pages of history everywhere are stained with cruelty and unbridled savagery. The "civilization" which both the Allies and the Japanese claimed to be defending had failed to stem these impulses, and World War Two simply witnessed new

as well as old ways of carrying out mass destruction and individual violence. Allied propagandists were not distorting the history of Japan when they pointed to much that was cruel in the Japanese past. They had to romanticize or simply forget their own history, however, to turn such behavior into something uniquely Japanese—to ignore, for example, the long history of torture and casual capital punishment in the West, the genocide of the Indian population in the Western Hemisphere by the sixteenth-century conquistadores,¹⁰³ the "hell ships" of the Western slave trade, the death march of American Indians forcibly removed from the eastern United States in the 1830s, the ten thousand or more Union prisoners of war who died at Andersonville during the U.S. Civil War, the introduction of "modern" strategies of annihilation and terrorization of civilians by Napoleon and Lee and Grant and Sherman, and the death marches and massacres of native peoples by the European colonialists in Africa and Asia, right up to 1941.¹⁰⁴ In their genuine shock at the death rituals which the Japanese military engaged in, moreover, the Westerners tended to forget not only their own "epics of defeat" (immortalized in such names as Roland, Thermopylae, the Alamo, and Custer), but also the self-sacrifice against hopeless odds of thousands of Allied fighting men. To give but one example, the number of United Kingdom airmen who gave their lives in World War Two was ten times greater than the number of Japanese who died as kamikaze pilots. The acceptance of certain death by the latter did indeed set them apart, but the difference can be exaggerated.¹⁰⁵

In this milieu of historical forgetfulness, selective reporting, centralized propaganda, and a truly savage war, atrocities and war crimes played a major role in the propagation of racial and cultural stereotypes. The stereotypes preceded the atrocities, however, and had an independent existence apart from any specific event. Seemingly casual expressions—General Blamey's reference to the infinite superiority of his men, and his call to exterminate the inhuman Japanese, the apes, the vermin; or Japanese references to their purity, and their call to chastise the fiendish foe or kill the Anglo-American devils—such expressions, in actuality, were not at all random. They belonged to webs of perception that had existed for centuries in Western and Japanese culture, and the atrocities were taken as simply confirming their validity. It is these more fundamental perceptions that are the subject of the chapters that follow.