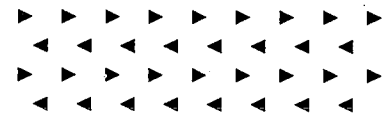


WAR WITHOUT MERCY

RACE AND POWER IN
THE PACIFIC WAR



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PANTHEON BOOKS

N E W Y O R K

New World as a just war; and the bracketed "English and Americans" in the first statement reads "Spaniards" in the original. We can perform comparable sleights of hand with other quotations of both historical and contemporary origin—substituting "Japanese" not only for the names of other races and peoples, but also for references to non-Christians, to women, to the lower classes, and to criminal elements. This is not a mere conjurer's trick. Rather, it points to the basic categories through which male-dominated Western elites have perceived and dealt with others over the centuries. Like the mark of the beast, the categories of the primitive, the child, and the mentally and emotionally deficient enemy—which in World War Two often seemed to be so specifically applicable to the Japanese, and even to entail new intellectual breakthroughs peculiar to the Japanese—were basically formulaic concepts, encoded in the Western psyche and by no means reserved for the Japanese alone.

Racism was but one form of prejudice which relied on this ritualized language (religion, class, and gender being others), and the larger racial context of the war in Asia is the subject of the chapter that follows. Here the analysis is carried in two further directions: first, suggesting through a historical overview how the war words directed against the Japanese coincided with a deeper white-supremacist outlook; and second, demonstrating how, during World War Two itself, anti-Japanese sentiment in the Anglo-American camp became entangled with larger fears concerning Asians in general (the Yellow Peril) and "colored" peoples as a whole.

◀ CHAPTER 7 ▶

YELLOW, RED, AND
BLACK MEN

Over four centuries of intimate contact between white and non-white peoples preceded the war in Asia, beginning with the European age of expansion. The Japanese survived this encounter more successfully than other nonwhites, being neither conquered nor enslaved nor turned into a colony or neocolony. On the contrary, they succeeded in shutting the Westerners out for several centuries; and when they opened their doors in the mid-1800s, good fortune, hard work, and shrewd leadership enabled them to escape being swallowed up by the Western imperialists. Instead, they became imperialists themselves, taking their first colony in 1895 (Formosa) and the second in 1910 (Korea), and recording in between those dates the first modern military victory of a nonwhite nation over a white power. When Japan defeated czarist Russia with dramatic victories on both land and sea in 1904–5, her accomplishment not only stunned the West but also electrified nationalists throughout Asia. By 1919, the Japanese appeared to have attained not merely equality but eminence on the global scene, sitting at the Paris Peace Conference as one of the Big Five victors after World War One and helping to reapportion the world. When the Japanese expanded onto continental Asia, their most cosmopolitan officials spoke of the need to emulate British colonial models. When they came under fire for accelerating their expansion in the 1920s and 1930s, they invoked the rhetoric of a "Monroe Doctrine for Asia." They were patriots and nationalists, of course, and thus believed their country possessed unique virtues, but until late in the game they also

believed themselves to be just good, practical imperialists, like their European and American teachers.

These accomplishments naturally drew special attention and consideration to the Japanese from Europeans and Americans, even murmurs of admiration; but they did not bring them genuine respect. In spite of their accomplishments in Western ways, including modern uses of technology and power, the Japanese remained firmly placed among the non-white "others"—the cleverest of the pupils of the West, perhaps, but still primarily perceived in terms of color and culture. When war erupted in the Pacific, it became clear just how enduring and universal the old images that had been attached to nonwhite peoples since the sixteenth century really were—for if we go back to the early encounters of whites and nonwhites, we find a vocabulary remarkably similar to that used against the Japanese in World War Two. The two quotations from the early 1500s in the preceding chapter were not exceptional. They were the rule, already part of a rich symbolic world which white Europeans and Americans relied on over the ensuing centuries to put others in their place.

It is revealing, for our present purposes, to note that in good part these prototypical race words were also war words. The European age of expansion was bloody and cruel in ways that still stagger the imagination, even after two world wars; and the blacks of Africa, the Indians of the "New World," the many peoples of Asia all entered the Western consciousness amidst scenes of extraordinary violence. Those violent images remained ever present, but often residual, like a great underground stream that bursts to the surface when the earth shakes. And the conflicts between whites and nonwhites were, indeed, interrupted and serial in nature. Looking back from the anti-Japanese rhetoric of the Pacific War, for example, it is possible to trace a suggestive legacy of racial war words through two great military struggles in particular: the conquest of the Indians in the Americas, and the U.S. conquest of the Philippines at the turn of the century. This was not, however, a solitary stream, but one fed by two others: one that we may call slave words and colonial words, drawn from the experience of blacks and Chinese "coolies" in America, and from the colonial enterprise everywhere; and another stream of language which deserves the label "intellectual words," involving the rationalization of racism beginning with the great debates among Spanish theologians and philosophers at the time of the conquistadores, and carrying through the "scientific racism" of the nineteenth century right up to the Pacific War.

The image of the nonwhite in European eyes was initially shaped

by the simultaneous encounter with black peoples in Africa and the natives of the Americas. The two were not treated identically. Blacks were enslaved, but until the eighteenth century were not seen as subjects capable of conversion to Christianity. The Indians were massacred, but after learned debate among ecclesiastics were also soon accepted as humans fit for conversion. Both blacks and Indians, however, confronted Europeans with the common question of "savagery," and it is this concept that lies at the base of much modern racist thinking, as scholars such as Winthrop Jordan and Richard Drinnon have demonstrated.¹

By chance, these great early racial confrontations coincided with a small discovery that fascinated Europeans: the orangutan, which became the inspiration for the apish stigmata quickly assigned to blacks, and eventually to nonwhites in general (as well as to "inferior" whites, like the Irish in English eyes). In the capitals of seventeenth-century Europe, both blacks and Native Americans were exhibited side by side with apes and baboons, and the mark of the beast enriched the languages of the conquerors in a myriad of forms. Naked savages pranced through playwrights' scripts as "Monkeys, Baboons, and Marmosites," while writers on Africa described the people they encountered there as creatures possessed of "Barbarous, Wild, and Savage Natures," "neer beasts," hybrids halfway between white men and apes. The third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, was one of those who later endorsed the hybrid thesis. Other early characterizations of black peoples may also strike the student of World War Two as anything but archaic. Supporters of slavery in the United States characterized blacks as deceitful and false, cruel and treacherous, "devoid of reason." They were "Creatures of a Kind somewhat inferior," explained a more moderate soul in 1764. The Negro, argued a defender of slavery at a debate at Harvard in 1773, was a "child," an "ideot," a "madman." Out of the terrible mortality rates that slavery brought, there also emerged another theory concerning nonwhites that carried through the centuries and was sometimes used to explain massive Japanese deaths in the Pacific late in the war: they did not feel pain as severely as the more sensitive whites did, and life was cheap to them.²

From the time of the earliest Spaniards who addressed the nature of the Indians of the New World, nonwhites were treated as polar opposites of their conquerors: as savages, children, madmen, and beasts; and, of course, as pagan and evil as opposed to Christian and good. And for these sins (along with their gold), many of them were tortured and exterminated. The Spanish conquest of the Indians, however, was not

undertaken casually. It provoked intense learned discussions in Europe concerning the true nature of the Indians, culminating in a justly famous debate between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550; and out of these deliberations we have our first inkling of the manner in which intellectual discourse at the highest levels would serve as a legitimization of racism over the centuries that followed. The problem of savagery became comprehensible in terms of the theological and philosophical theory of a Great Chain of Being—a fixed hierarchy of existence extending from God down to the basest of creatures. Even more precisely, in the debates concerning the nature of the American Indians, Aristotle was found to provide the key in his concept of the “natural slave,” as set forth in the first book of the *Politics*, in which it was declared that some men are by nature free and others by nature slaves. The natural slave was in this argument not a beast, but a lesser human, a “barbarian”; by the same reasoning, women and children were also natural slaves, and some would argue that so also were peasants.³

What the Spaniards had to say about the Indians who fell within their empire was repeated, with a good deal less philosophical agonizing, by the British and others who encountered the native populations of North America. The “Salvages” [savages], in a phrase from the 1630s, were “a dangerous people, subtile, secrete and mischeivous.” The Pequots were “barbarians, ever treacherous,” who deserved “severe execution of just revenge.” (They were slaughtered in 1637). The Mohawks, in Roger Williams’ view, were “mad dogs.” Timothy Dwight’s epic poem *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785) spoke of the “childish rage” of the savages. The Declaration of Independence enshrined the phrase “merciless Indian Savages.” The first president of the United States described the Indians as “beasts of prey,” similar to the wolf “tho’ they differ in shape.” Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, addressed them as “Children” or “My Children,” and briefly entertained the idea of improving their racial stock by encouraging miscegenation with whites—much as Franklin Roosevelt reportedly did when musing about what to do with the Japanese after the war.

There were indeed paternalistic and even heroic aspects to the American perception of the Indian—the latter emerging in the literary persona of the Noble Savage—but the overwhelming view was much closer to Washington’s than Jefferson’s. Francis Parkman, one of America’s most honored nineteenth-century historians, captured the dominant

image in his monumental lifework *France and England in North America*, published serially beginning in the 1860s and not completed until 1893. Parkman’s bestial Indian was “man, wolf, and devil all in one,” a race doomed to die and deserving of such a fate. The twenty-sixth president of the United States agreed. Before he became president, Theodore Roosevelt publicly identified himself as a supporter of the virtual extermination of the American Indian. “I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian,” he stated in a speech in 1886. “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t inquire too closely into the case of the tenth. The most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian.”⁴

With Theodore Roosevelt’s frank statement, we stand not only on the eve of the twentieth century, but also on the eve of America’s first war in Asia: the conquest of the Philippines, which began in 1898. And how did Americans characterize their enemy in this conflict, in which an estimated twenty thousand Filipino “insurgents” were killed and as many as two hundred thousand civilians may have died of hunger and disease that accompanied the destruction (with U.S. combat deaths being slightly more than four thousand)? They were people who engaged in “base treachery, revolting cruelty,” in the words of the secretary of war. They were “gorillas” who hid in the bush, in the report of one general—“savages, habitually violating all the laws of war as known to civilized nations” in the words of another. A third U.S. general, vexed by the difficulty of separating enemy soldiers from the native population as the war dragged on, wrote in 1901 that “the problem here is more difficult on account of the inbred treachery of these people, their great number, and the impossibility of recognizing the actively bad from the only passively so”—words very similar to those used to justify the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in 1942. Theodore Roosevelt expressed a popular sentiment when he characterized the U.S. victory in the Philippines as a triumph of civilization over “the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.” Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem “The White Man’s Burden,” written in 1899 in response to the war in the Philippines, enshrined for all time the Western perception of Filipinos and their fellow Asians as “fluttered folk and wild . . . sullen peoples, half devil and half child.”

In the jargon of American troops, as Stuart Creighton Miller has documented in great detail, the Filipinos were “niggers,” “treacherous

savages," and "treacherous gugus" (or "goo-goos")—the latter reemerging in World War Two as "gook"—and the fighting was called "Injun warfare." One American soldier told a reporter that "the country won't be pacified until the niggers are killed off like the Indians"; another explained "the only good Filipino is a dead one. Take no prisoners; lead is cheaper than rice." In fact, there was a general policy of not taking prisoners in many areas, often justified on the grounds of enemy atrocities. "No more prisoners," one participant declared; "They take none, and they torture our men, so we will kill wounded and all of them." A U.S. private reported on the "goo goo hunt" as follows: "The old boys will say that no cruelty is too severe for these brainless monkeys, who can appreciate no sense of honor, kindness or justice. . . . With an enemy like this to fight, it is not surprising that the boys should soon adopt 'no quarter' as a motto, and fill the blacks full of lead before finding out whether they are friends or enemies." When General Arthur MacArthur was asked by a congressional committee why fifteen Filipinos were reported killed for every one wounded, he replied that "inferior races" succumbed to wounds more easily than Anglo-Saxons.⁵

For many Americans, the link between fighting Indians on the Western frontier and Filipinos in Asia was anything but figurative or symbolic: they personally fought both enemies, moving to the Philippines from frontier posts in the western territories of the United States. Arthur MacArthur, the father of Douglas MacArthur, was one of the more conspicuous U.S. Indian fighters who was reposted further west in this way. That his son commanded U.S. forces in the Pacific in World War Two is as good a reminder as any of how close in time the Indian wars, the war in the Philippines, and World War Two really were. War correspondents and GI combatants certainly kept the analogy in mind, for jungle combat against the Japanese was often characterized as "Indian fighting." The U.S. Army publication *Infantry Journal* informed its readers that the Japanese enemy were "as good as Indians ever were" at infiltration. The *New York Times Magazine*,⁶ however, in a short note to its Sunday readers (entitled "The Nips"), suggested that the analogy was an injustice to the Indians:

The Japanese are likened to the American Indian in their manner of making war. Our fighting men say that isn't fair to the Indian. He had honor of a sort. Moreover, even a dead Jap isn't a

good Jap. His loving comrades mine him and set him. It grieves us to think of K. Nippo, our poetic ex-contributor, stretched cold and still and beautiful beneath a palm in the Marshalls with a booby trap in his inside. Yet such are the Nipponese. In death as in life, treacherous.⁶

No one thought the Indians had much honor at the time they were being fought, of course; but such a use of history would have been too subtle for the war years. Of greater interest is the fact that when white people at the turn of the century spoke of "inferior races," they were now able to defend their prejudice with more than Great-Chain-of-Being theologizing and the Aristotelian postulation that some people were natural slaves; for by this date the mainstream of Western science had placed itself behind the theory of racial inequality. The academic racism of the nineteenth century drew support from such disciplines as anatomy, phrenology, biological evolution, ethnography, psychology, social psychology, theology, and linguistics to provide proof that the traits attributed to nonwhites by Europeans in earlier centuries—primitiveness, immaturity, and mental, moral, and emotional deficiency—were indeed inherent characteristics of colored peoples. The old faith in a hierarchy of existence was confirmed, with "Mongol" peoples placed between the lowly blacks and the lofty whites. The impression that nonwhites remained, in effect, "natural slaves"—that is, persons destined to serve and subordinate themselves to the superior whites—was thus implicitly revitalized by the mainstream of Western rational inquiry and empirical investigation, a welcome finding indeed in an age of intensified empire building. Even with all the new theoretical language, scientific racism had a familiar ring. Here, for instance, is a well-known example of how nineteenth-century scholars used the concept of childishness to explain the characteristics of Asians and their place in the hierarchy of races: "As the type of the Negro is foetal, that of the Mongol is infantile. And in strict accordance with this we find that their government, literature and art are infantile also. They are beardless children, whose life is a task, and whose chief virtue consists in unquestioning obedience."

The argument that the races of the world conform to a scale of development comparable to stages in the individual life cycle was pioneered in the mid-nineteenth century by scholars such as the anatomist Étienne Serres and is known to specialists as recapitulationist theory.

Recapitulationist theory postulated that the childhood of the white race was a counterpart to primitivism or savagery on the evolutionary scale, while adults of "inferior" groups were at the mental or emotional level of white male children or adolescents. "Inferior" groups by no means referred only to nonwhite races. Women, criminals, the poor and dispossessed, and despised nationalities in general could be and were all relegated to subordinate status under this theorizing—and it was exactly this sort of pseudoscientific dogma that Franz Boas and his disciples sought to repudiate with their great emphasis on culture, enculturation, and socialization.⁷

In the United States, attitudes nurtured in the harshness of slavery and Indian fighting, reinforced by the new scientific racism, also shaped perceptions of another group of Asians in the latter half of the nineteenth century: the Chinese, whom many Americans first encountered as immigrants brought over to help build the transcontinental railway. The writer Robert Louis Stevenson, traveling that same railway in the 1890s, offered a moving picture of how white people now grouped the Chinese with the unfortunate remnants of the Indian tribes. His fellow Caucasian passengers, Stevenson recorded, treated the Native Americans and Chinese almost identically as "despised races." They never really looked at the Chinese, listened to them, or thought about them, "but hated them *a priori*. . . . They declared them to be hideous vermin, and affected a kind of choking in the throat when they beheld them."⁸

Could there not be a rational explanation for this apart from plain racism—a class explanation, for example? For these Chinese were for the most part uneducated laborers; and they were laborers, moreover, who were willing to work more cheaply than others, and thus had drawn the full fury of white workers and organized labor against themselves. Stevenson himself considered this, but in the end turned for an explanation to "old, well-founded, historical hatreds"—and confessed that he "was ashamed for the thing we call civilization." And, indeed, shameful acts had been quickly visited on the Chinese in America. As early as 1854, they were barred from testifying in court cases involving whites in California, on the grounds that Indians were already barred and Indians and Chinese were of the same race. In 1879, the new state constitution of California denied suffrage to all "natives of China, idiots, and insane persons." Three years later, all further Chinese immigration to the United States was prohibited.⁹

These events occurred in tandem with the rise of scientific racism, which left little doubt about how the Chinese were to be perceived. As early as 1839, before the first Chinese emigrants even arrived in the United States, Samuel George Morton, whose pioneer work on the measurement of crania became a central prop for theories of biological determinism, wrote of the Chinese that "they have been compared to the monkey race, whose attention is perpetually changing from one object to another." Rather than contradict such demeaning impressions, Westerners who could claim to know the Chinese firsthand in their native land—the diplomats, missionaries, and traders of the nineteenth century—also dismissed them with contempt. To these world travelers, the Chinese were "depraved and vicious," and "on a level with the rudest tribes of mankind." They were "pagan savages," "idolatrous savages," and "almond-eyed heathens"; a nation of "children or idiots" who lived in an "imbecile world"; "a poor, miserable, dwarfish race of inferior beings." Their attacks on foreigners in China (who, among other enterprises, were bringing vast quantities of opium into their country) led them to be accused of "vicious treachery" and "fiendish and demonic atrocities," and to be condemned as a "lawless pack of wolves." Following a tour of China in 1873, the Englishman Sir Halliday Macartney reported that "the Chinaman is a low animal."¹⁰

As Kipling had noted, however, the Asians were not only half savage in Western eyes, but also half child. In the United States as well as in the colonial areas, the Asian half child filled a clearly defined role. He or she became the natural servant—the obedient child of recapitulationist theory, the modern metamorphosis of Aristotle's natural slave. "Boy" became a ubiquitous word for Asian males, just as it had long been for blacks in the United States. Even amidst the vilest allegations of Asian depravity, the image of the child persisted, and the most cosmopolitan of men endorsed this. Around the same time that Stevenson was crossing the American continent by rail, for example, his acquaintance Henry Adams, the famous educator, was traveling in Asia and finding it, by and large, amusing and difficult to take seriously. In Hawaii, he and his traveling companion were told that the Chinese and Japanese working on the sugar plantations were "great children." In Samoa, Adams observed that "the natives, like all orientals, are children, and have the charms of childhood as well as the faults of the small boy." He found Japan, which he visited in 1886, to be "a child's country. . . . The whole show is of the nursery."

In other musings, Adams veered in other familiar directions. In a letter to John Hay, later famous as the author of the "Open Door" policy in Asia, Adams confessed that he found most of what he had encountered in Japan to be "primitive," and "cannot conquer a feeling that Japs are monkeys, and the women very badly made monkeys."¹¹

Even Henry Adams, however, worried that "the dark races are gaining on us," and in this apprehension, just as much as in his contempt, he caught a new temper in the times: the fear that white supremacy was imperiled. This came from several directions in the nineteenth century, one of which was China; for despite the disdain shown China and the Chinese, there was also awe at the country's vast size and population, and apprehension that it was a sleeping giant about to awaken. In the United States, the first of numerous novels depicting a Chinese invasion appeared as early as 1880, and it was not long before the phrase "Yellow Peril" was known throughout the world. The first great iconographic rendering of the imagined threat from the East actually came from Germany in the 1890s, in a painting of the *Gelbe Gefahr* commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II. In this work, the nations of Christendom, personified by figures in the heroic mold, gaze apprehensively toward a dark billowing cloud in the East, wherein reposes a Buddha in a nimbus of flame. The Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, which saw the foreign legations in Peking and Tientsin besieged by thousands of frenzied Chinese associated with a mystical secret society, became another memorable icon in this developing fantasy, offering the concrete image of a violent and heathen Orient on the verge of engulfing the smaller Christian enclave.¹²

These multiple associations were inherited by Japan. After 1882, the Japanese replaced the Chinese as the major wave of Asian immigrants into the United States, and came to suffer the burden of deflected stereotypes. By the time of the Boxer Rebellion, moreover, Japan had already defeated China in the first Sino-Japanese War and established itself as the real rising power in Asia. This did not, however, simply shift the focus of Yellow Peril fears from China to Japan. Rather, it multiplied those fears. While sensational writings imagining Japan's conquest of the United States or the world now appeared on the scene, the great bogey of the menace from China remained alive and well in the popular consciousness. For the vision of the menace from the East was always more racial rather than national. It derived not from concern with any one country or people in particular, but from a vague and ominous sense of the vast, faceless, nameless yellow horde: the rising tide, indeed, of color.

The Yellow Peril was naturally the stuff of fantasy and cheap thrills, a fit subject for pulp literature, comics, B-movies, and sensational journalism. But fantasy and sensationalism shape the mind in ways beyond measure, undoubtedly a great deal more than most scholarship does; and there were many who addressed the alleged threat from the East in a manner that made a significant impact. Some, like the Hearst newspapers, warned of a "Yellow Peril" led by Japan as early as the 1890s, and maintained an unwavering editorial policy of anti-Oriental polemics over the next half century.¹³ Others, like the visionary military writer Homer Lea, offered a forecast of Japan's destiny so apocalyptically compelling that the Japanese themselves were flattered and quickly prepared a translation. Still others, like the best-selling novelist Sax Rohmer, created a fictional persona of Oriental genius so flamboyantly sinister that even people who did not read the novels or see the films based on them could recite not merely the name of the villain, but the name bracketed by marvelously venomous appendages, like some titled Prince of Darkness: "The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu, the Evil Genius."

Homer Lea and Sax Rohmer constitute, for our purposes, a suggestive coupling—a complementary yin-yang of the mind, as it were, conveying by their very differences both the richness and the elusiveness of the Yellow Peril vision as a whole. In *The Valor of Ignorance*, first published in 1909, Lea identified Japan as the most virile young power in the world and introduced his readers to *bushido*, the way of the warrior, with the tense fervor of a reluctant convert. Lea's grudging admiration of Japan was all the more effective because he devoted almost equal space to decrying the growing softness and decadence of his own country. He was an unabashed example of a white supremacist who feared that Anglo-Saxon purity was threatened by rot within as well as enemies at the gate. Unless the United States recovered its martial ardor and sense of purpose, he warned, "Japan, militarily supreme in the Pacific," would become "industrially the controlling factor in Asia. And in due time, with the mastery of the major portion of the undeveloped wealth of the earth, Asiatic militance and industrialism shall reign supreme in this world and the Mikado shall become the Mikado of kings." Either the Japanese would have to be virtually wiped out, Lea warned, or they "would become the samurai of the human race and the remainder of man shall toil and trade for them and their greatness."

Homer Lea enjoyed a revival in the United States in the months following Pearl Harbor, when his vision of Japanese supermen suddenly

seemed prophetic. Secretary of War Stimson wrote about him in his diary. Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce, wife of the publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, published a two-part essay about him in the *Saturday Evening Post* ("The cloth is being cut much too close to the author's pattern," she said); and uncounted magazines ranging from *Time* to *American Rifleman* followed suit with their own resurrections of the rediscovered prophet. In 1942, *The Valor of Ignorance* was reprinted by a prestigious publishing house with the congresswoman's essay as an introduction.¹⁴

As Clare Boothe Luce noted, however, Homer Lea was an oracle only in retrospect. His book went out of print in 1922, after eighteen thousand copies had been sold; and to the historian, the revival of this apocalyptic work in 1942 is of equal if not greater interest than its first interlude in the sun. Had Lea been widely remembered, after all, there would have been less racist complacency about the "little men" of Japan. What carried through over these prewar decades was not so much a clear sense of a specific threat from the Orient, but rather a vague premonition of future peril; and it is in this regard that the fictional "evil genius" Fu Manchu is an excellent counterpoint to Homer Lea.

The first Fu Manchu novel was published in 1913, the tenth in 1941. The author was British, and popular in both his own country and the United States, where his work usually was serialized in *Collier's* before appearing in book form. Several of the novels also were reworked as film thrillers, and the advertisement for a 1932 MGM production (starring Boris Karloff) suggests the flavor of these popular offerings. In *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, Hollywood declared the evil Chinese doctor conveyed "menace in every twitch of his finger . . . terror in each split second of his slanted eyes." Although Rohmer's villain was Chinese, the hordes of every exotic place in Asia were at his beck and call. He was more brilliant than any Westerner who went against him (his antagonist, Nayland Smith, was a tenacious bore), for not only had he mastered the languages and sciences of the West, but he also commanded the secrets of the Orient. Better than any other single individual, Sax Rohmer succeeded, through the figure of Fu Manchu, in drawing together in a flamboyant but concrete way the three main strands of an otherwise inchoate fear: Asian mastery of Western knowledge and technique; access to mysterious powers and "obscure and dreadful things"; and mobilization of the yellow horde ("shadowy," in one episode, "looking like great

apes"). Whether led by China or Japan, this was the essence of the Yellow Peril.

Sax Rohmer and Homer Lea shared, in addition to an awe of Asia's potential, a fondness for overripe prose. The creator of the Chinese doctor of doom bombarded his readers with references to "the menace of the Yellow Doctor," "the man who dreamt of an universal Yellow Empire," "the titanic genius whose victory meant the victory of the yellow races over the white," and "the breath of the East—that stretched out a yellow hand to the West" (an unusually potent breath indeed!). As the years passed, moreover, Rohmer also began to flirt with the most explosive racial fears and phobias of all: not merely a clash of white and yellow, but a union of yellow and black peoples against the whites, and the ultimate eradication of color distinctions. In the tenth Fu Manchu novel, published in 1941, the evil genius was placing advanced weaponry in the Caribbean, working with blacks, harnessing the power of Haitian voodoo to create an army of zombies, and engaged in laboratory experiments aimed at altering skin pigmentation. These wild imaginings, in which Rohmer's evil Asian was already experimenting with yellow white men and "white Nubians," amounted to symbolic miscegenation and touched on the ultimate white-supremacist fear: the obscuring and eventual obliteration of color lines.¹⁵

There were counterimages to the insidious Fu Manchu in American popular culture. The wise Chinese-American detective Charlie Chan, created by Earl Derr Biggers, appeared in magazines, novels, and movies beginning in the 1920s. When Earl Derr Biggers died in the mid-1930s, his publishers, seeking someone who could create a new Oriental sleuth, settled on John Marquand and found themselves sponsoring the debut of a surprising new protagonist in 1936: Mr. Moto, the efficient and patriotic, but essentially moderate, Japanese secret agent.¹⁶ Humble Chinese commoners found eloquent voice in the writings of Pearl Buck, who was rewarded with the Nobel Prize for literature in 1938. Beginning in the 1930s, Lin Yutang conveyed the "wisdom of the East" in a succession of best-sellers. Such writings helped to counter prejudice and foster respect toward Asians; and sympathetic media coverage of China's resistance to the Japanese created an even greater surge of pro-Chinese sentiment after Pearl Harbor. The response to Japan's attack exposed such a virulent anti-"yellow" animus in the United States and Great Britain, however, that Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang and those who shared their concerns

became among the most dire prophets of a potential race war themselves.¹⁷

As such individuals saw it, the Western fixation on the Japanese as a "yellow" or Oriental menace threatened to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, for such blatant white supremacism could easily turn the peoples of China and all Asia against the Americans and British and create what the Japanese were calling for: a solid, antiwhite racial bloc. Both Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang warned of this danger repeatedly during the war, and the former proved adept at turning some of the Westerners' favorite clichés about the enemy against themselves. In her novel *The Promise*, published in 1943 and dealing with Chinese and British forces fighting together against the Japanese in Burma, it was the British who were the most cruel and casual about the lives of others, clearly unable to believe that nonwhites "were altogether human as they were." In a speech in Los Angeles the same year, Pearl Buck stated frankly that the Japanese spoke the truth when they declared that "it is white peoples who have the deepest race prejudices." Most white people were a century behind the colored races in their view of the future, she observed, for the latter recognized that colonialism had become an anachronism. Indeed, the average white American, in his or her smug contempt for nonwhite peoples, could only be likened to "a spoiled child" about to encounter the real world. "Although we may not be willing to know it," she declared in an earlier lecture, "it is possible that we are already embarked upon the bitterest and the longest of human wars, the war between the East and the West, and this means the war between the white man and his world and the colored man and his world." If the race barriers that the whites had erected were not quickly destroyed, one could only gird for Armageddon:

... then we must prepare for a future of nothing but struggle and war on a stupendous scale, particularly for the white man. We shall have to make up for our inferiority in numbers by military preparation of the most barbarous and savage kind. We must prepare superweapons, we must not shrink from chemical warfare on a mass scale, we must be willing to destroy all civilization, even our own, in order to keep down the colored peoples who are so vastly our superior in numbers and our equals in skills. Is this a future which any human being wants to face?¹⁸

Lin Yutang, whom middle-class Americans had previously known as a gentlemanly guide to Asian high culture, was comparably pessimistic and caustic. In 1942, he told a conference on global racial problems convened by the socialist League for Industrial Democracy that war pitting the peoples of Asia and Africa against the predominantly white nations, including Germany, might erupt within twenty-five years; and the fault would lie in large part with the English and Americans, who tended to pass master-race theories off on the Nazis and ignore their own racial arrogance. In his 1943 best-seller, *Between Tears and Laughter*, Lin even commented bitterly that the average white man seemed to think "that if he shot a few yellow men on earth after his missionaries had saved their souls for heaven, that ought to make it even."¹⁹

What horrified these critics was the flood of Anglo-American commentary that wittingly or unwittingly placed Japanese aggression in the context of a race war against Oriental peoples and values in general. Thus, the *Saturday Evening Post*, exhumed of Homer Lea, responded to Pearl Harbor with an editorial on how "the Yellow Serpent struck on our Western side." Artists and cartoonists followed suit with thrashing dragons, huge figures labeled "Jap Hordes," and colored graphics saturated with yellow. *Time's* cover for December 22, 1941, depicting Admiral Yamamoto, was entirely yellow in color—and prompted predictable letters to the editor concerning the personification of Satan, "yellow ape," "mad dog," and the "most inhuman likeness of Homo Sapiens I have ever seen." One of the Hearst papers, in an editorial entitled "Peril Exposed," characterized the war in Europe as "a family fight," that is, a conflict "between white nations" which did not challenge Occidental civilization; whereas Japan, "an enemy of unexampled ferocity and greed," was fighting for Oriental ideals. Another Hearst paper declared that "The war in the Pacific is the World War, the War of Oriental Races against Occidental Races for the Domination of the World." A popular book titled *Blood for the Emperor*, published in 1943, characterized the conflict in Asia as "a holy war, a racial war of greater significance than any the world has heretofore seen." Such rhetoric was also heard on Capitol Hill, where segregationist congressmen and others were quick to identify the war in Asia as a "race war," and to evoke the specter of Genghis Khan and the prospect that the white races "may be liquidated."²⁰

Winston Churchill, who worried about the "pan-Asian malaise" and the looming "shadow of Asiatic solidarity," was himself inordinately fond

of the racial slurs that were guaranteed to alienate Asian peoples. His Chinese allies remained "little yellow men" to him, even as the same phrase became an everyday expression in discussions of the Japanese enemy. Hanson Baldwin, the respected military analyst, used this in a commentary on the Japanese fighting man; so did an American weapons manufacturer, whose advertisement for its submachine gun proclaimed, "It's blasting big red holes in little yellow men." Near the end of the war, an advertisement by a U.S. shipbuilder recalled how, in 1941, "a pagan and treacherous enemy spilled out of his homeland and overwhelmed the rich and peaceful islands of the South Seas"; now, however, the tide had turned and "the swollen yellow empire is shrinking." *Reader's Digest* featured an essay on Japanese psychology by a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army who had lived in Japan as a military attaché and spoke Japanese, which moved into its subject with the comment, "Let us look into one of these yellow heads and see what it contains." "Yellowbellies," "yellow bastards," "yellow monkeys" were all standard phrases. In one American newsreel, the Japanese were simply reduced to "the LYBs," shorthand for "little yellowbellies." Songwriters followed the fashion with such titles as "We're Gonna Find a Fellow Who Is Yellow and Beat Him Red, White, and Blue" and "Oh, You Little Son of an Oriental." Other songs were crass in other ways: "The Japs Don't Have a Chinaman's Chance," for example, and "To Be Specific, It's Our Pacific."²¹

Such demeaning and exclusionary rhetoric—so obvious to Asians, and so casually tossed off by the Western Allies—took other forms as well. Eyes, for example, were used in a manner analogous to color, as Asians were lumped together through such slang as "slant-eye," "slant," "squint eyes," and "almond eye." "Slopy" or "slopie" was GI jargon for the Chinese (a Chinese woman was a "slopie gal"). A patriotic advertisement in Melbourne in early 1942 exhorted Australians to "get ready to fight. Get ready to show these slant-eyed slash and grabs that Australians don't lie down!" Even "gook," the most popular word used by American fighting men to describe Asian people or things (as an adjective in the latter case)—which derived from "goo-goo," the ethnic label attached to Filipinos at the turn of the century—suggested both eyes ("goo-goo eyes" became famous in a popular American song of the 1920s) and craziness (as in a similar slang expression, "gaga"). In a different direction, exclusionary war words took the form of defining Allied war aims in ethnocentric terms as a defense of Christian, or Western, values. Lord Halifax, the

British foreign secretary, for example, aroused the ire of the Chinese by repeatedly declaring that the Allies were engaged in a struggle to save Christian civilization. Apart from insulting non-Christian allies and supporters, such crusading references had the doubly counterproductive effect of provoking Asians to call attention to the recklessness of the Christian world. "It is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves," wrote a Chinese professor in an American magazine, "that the most destructive wars in the world's history have been waged by the Christian countries."²²

Underlying such images was not merely racist bias, but also the three elements of racial fear that had been exemplified by that consummate symbol of the Yellow Peril, Fu Manchu. The most immediate and alarming aspect of the Yellow Peril was always the vision of the vast multitudes of Asia uniting and advancing on Europe and the Western Hemisphere like the reborn hordes of Genghis Khan. Japan's Pan-Asianism and the huge expanse of its occupied territories seemed to indicate that this aspect of the Peril had materialized. As the East began to industrialize, moreover, the Yellow Peril assumed a second ominous aspect, namely, the prospect that the peoples of Asia could eventually combine their vastly superior numbers with mastery of Western military technology. When Japan's carriers and fighter planes smashed their way to victory in 1941–42, this nightmare too suddenly seemed to have materialized. The horde was organized and effectively armed. Nor was this all. From an early date, a third aspect of Yellow Peril fears had been the attribution of vague, nondiscursive, "occult" powers to the Oriental; and this also seemed to be present in the Japanese fighting men, with their incredible endurance and perseverance under the most forbidding conditions, and their apparent willingness to die—for reasons that were all but incomprehensible to Westerners. It was such presentiments as these that account for the especially forbidding quality that was associated with Japan's avowed war aims by the Allies, and created an ambience different from that associated with Hitler's proclaimed new order. The Imperial Way, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Hundred-Year War, the New World Order; in the context of a half century of Yellow Peril sentiment, such slogans seemed to herald the doom of white supremacy—as, indeed, they were meant to do. It is in this context that rousing but alarmist speeches by Allied spokesmen such as former Ambassador Grew are to be understood. Germany would crack—but would Japan? At the level of ominous rumor, it was frequently reported during the war that the Axis Alliance

was a marriage of convenience for both the Germans and Japanese; and if and when an Axis victory was attained, Germany would be next on the Japanese menu.²³

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, a debate arose in the United States which continued for over a year and drew attention, in unanticipated ways, to the fact that anti-Oriental sentiment not only had deep roots in American history, but also was imbedded in the laws of the land. The debate began with the recognition of an anomalous fact: that even as the Nationalist government of China was being praised in Congress for its "gallant resistance" against the Japanese and elevated to the status of one of the "Big Four" Allies by President Roosevelt, the country and its people had been singled out for discrimination in two conspicuous ways. In accordance with the provisions of extraterritoriality imposed by the imperialist powers under the unequal-treaty system almost a century earlier, China still could not try American or British nationals in Chinese courts for crimes committed on Chinese soil. In addition, Chinese were prohibited from emigrating to the United States under a series of restrictive immigration laws dating back to 1882. The unequal-treaty provisions were abrogated by the United States and Britain in 1942 as a symbolic gesture toward China's equality, but the immigration issue dragged on until the final weeks of 1943. For many observers, this latter issue provided a revealing introduction to both the depth and indiscriminate breadth of anti-Oriental race hate in the United States.²⁴

U.S. immigration law was labyrinthine, but there was no question about where the labyrinth led—or, more accurately, did not lead—when Asian peoples were concerned. Although revisions of the basic immigration law in 1924 had established a quota system under which subsequent immigration was controlled (the quota for each nationality was set at 2 percent of the population from those nations resident in the United States in 1920), even this narrow "quota" door was closed to Asians (as well as Arabs). This was possible because the law also stipulated that no one could enter the United States as a permanent resident who was not eligible to become a naturalized citizen, and under prior regulations Asians already had been designated ineligible for naturalization. As was noted during the congressional debates of 1942–43, the naturalization law amounted to a pure "color" law, and placed a "stigma of biological inferiority" on the yellow races.²⁵

This was an uncomfortable matter to dwell on for a nation that was waging war against the Japanese in Asia under the banners of the "Four Freedoms" and the slogans of liberty, democracy, and equality; and the longer the discussion dragged on, the more embarrassing the revelations became, especially where China and India, the two most populous Asian allies, were concerned. It was revealed, for example, that the Chinese had been singled out by name as undesirable immigrants in no less than fifteen federal laws, or parts of laws, passed between 1882 and 1913—a dishonor done to no other nationality. Those who followed the debate also had their attention called to the adoption of a pure "white immigration" policy in 1917, through the creation of the "Asiatic barred zone." Under this act, passed by overwhelming congressional majorities over the veto of President Woodrow Wilson, a vast area of Asia and the Pacific was simply blocked out on the map as being subject to exceptionally severe immigration restrictions. In continental Asia, the "barred zone" extended from Indochina across all of southern Asia to Arabia; it also included all islands adjacent to continental Asia with the exception of the Philippines and Guam, which were both U.S. possessions. China and Japan were not included for the simple reason that immigration was restricted by other agreements, as was true also concerning emigration from the Philippines. The Supreme Court had upheld the special provisions barring Asians from becoming U.S. citizens in 1922 (the Ozawa case) and 1923 (the Thind case), and the major revision of the immigration laws in 1924 simply codified in one place the established policy of excluding Asians.²⁶

Where the Chinese in particular were concerned, as one politician summarized the situation when these matters were reopened in 1942, thirty Congresses over a period of sixty years had actively or passively found exclusion appropriate. That was the cold fact, but it took on increasingly emotional overtones as the human side of the story emerged in both the congressional hearings on the subject and essays in the media. The Christian press in the United States was especially active in exposing the indignities to which the Chinese in America had been subjected. It was revealed, for example, that fear that Chinese might attempt to enter the country illegally or under false pretenses had promoted a vigilance on the part of U.S. authorities that frequently shaded over into outright oppression. Chinese seamen attempting to take shore leave in U.S. port cities were routinely arrested, while merchants who had conducted business in Mexico and wished to sail for China from a California port had to travel

with a guard from the Mexican border to the point of departure, and pay this unwanted chaperone out of their own pocket. Chinese eligible to enter the country on a temporary basis, such as merchants and students, were required to obtain special certificates and could enter only at specific designated ports. American-born Chinese (who were citizens by birth) had to fill out a special form when applying for a U.S. passport, and were subjected to grueling questioning by immigration officials upon both departure and reentry. Incoming Chinese, including U.S. citizens, were placed in detention without any exceptions if their papers were deemed to be not in order, and in many cases this imposed grave hardships. Detention and interrogation often lasted for weeks, and in some cases, especially when China-born wives and children were attempting to join a husband or father with American resident status, it could continue for months or even more than a year. Youngsters were not excluded; indeed, their confinement, like that of any other entering Chinese, could be prolonged if their answers to a lengthy list of questions did not correspond to the answers to the same questions given separately by two other Chinese supporting their admission. Such procedures, understandably called an inquisition by one Chinese-American as these matters were being debated in 1942, were not only humiliating and psychologically destructive, but also costly, since in the end Chinese attempting to enter the country often found it necessary to obtain legal assistance to clarify their eligibility. No other national group was treated so harshly by immigration authorities, and in these circumstances it comes as little surprise to find Chinese speaking of U.S. immigration officials as "gestapo," or to learn that in 1942 a distraught Chinese woman who had come to join her merchant husband committed suicide in the San Francisco detention center after being incarcerated and questioned for several months without any prospect of being released.²⁷

Although there was general agreement that such humiliating treatment of a now-esteemed ally was unfortunate, this did not mean that the situation could be rectified easily. Why? Because any attempt to redress the insult to China would draw further attention to the larger anti-Oriental context of U.S. immigration policy. If the fifteen explicitly anti-Chinese exclusion laws were abrogated, all but a handful of Chinese would still be prohibited under the 1924 law from emigrating to the United States and becoming naturalized citizens. They would remain, in the formal realm of the law, an inferior and undesirable people. If, on the

other hand, the Chinese were put on the quota system which applied to non-Asian peoples under the 1924 law, that would be tantamount to placing them in a position superior to all other Asians—including, as one congressman put it, America's own special colonials, "the race of the little brown men of Manila." When it was claimed that the latter argument was not really valid since, apart from Japan, China was the only "sovereign" country in Asia, this too evoked embarrassing recitations from recent history. For, apart from Korea and Formosa, it was not Japan that had suppressed independence in most of Asia, but the European and American colonial structure that had existed since the nineteenth century. Where India, the second most populous country in Asia was concerned, the issue thus called renewed attention not only to British imperialism (a *bête noire* of many American conservatives as well as liberals), but also to the fact that the United States also relegated Indians to an inferior position.

Once this issue started unraveling, there seemed to be no end to it. As can be easily imagined, Japanese propagandists found the debate valuable ammunition in their appeals to other Asians, and the campaign to revise the exclusion laws gained many alarmed adherents whose primary concern was to "spike" Japan's propaganda guns. At times, the issue thus took on an almost surreal dimension, with criticism of the laws in the United States providing ammunition for the Japanese, which in turn provided further ammunition for the critics of the laws. Where the target was so vulnerable, the Japanese scored well. They informed their Asian audiences not only about the exclusion policy itself, but also about the harassment of Chinese at detention centers (where, a Tokyo broadcast to China declared, they were "practically treated like a class apart from the rest of humanity"), the social pressures that forced Chinese into ghettoized "Chinatowns" in the poorer residential areas, and the discrimination that relegated most of them to "the most menial of occupations, despised and mistreated and at best patronizingly tolerated with a contemptuous humor."²⁸

One congressman referred to this as "drivel" dished out by "chattering monkeys," another spoke of "the childish fury of this propaganda," but virtually no one, including President Roosevelt, denied its potential effectiveness. A retired Navy officer told the congressional hearings inquiring into the issue that the anti-Chinese legislation was worth "twenty divisions" to the Japanese Army. Many others agreed that placing China

under the normal quota system for immigration would not only right a historic injustice but also help avert a potential disaster ("combine canniness with good manners," as the *Saturday Evening Post* phrased it), for there was no reason to believe that China's will to resist the Japanese was unshakable. The Chinese Nationalists had fought long. They had suffered grievously. They had seen the United States and England supply military goods to Japan until almost the eve of Pearl Harbor and pursue a "Europe first" policy thereafter. They had listened to Churchill proclaim his intention to restore the British Empire, and listened in vain for a clear American disavowal of support for this plan to reconstruct the *status quo ante* of the white man's imperium. Lawmakers such as Walter Judd of Minnesota and Mike Mansfield of Montana, who were respected by their colleagues for their special expertise on Asia, spelled this out carefully, and the implications were well understood. Despite all the hoopla about the close relationship between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime and the United States, it was not difficult to envision the Nationalists' morale cracking—and if China fell from the Allied side, the consequences would be incalculable.²⁹

In this manner, a rather arcane debate about immigration laws soon came to involve the old visions of the Yellow Peril, but now in a concrete setting that pointed to the way in which China might tip the scales one way or another in a global conflagration. "If this war or its aftermath develops into a race struggle there will be about half a billion more people on the side of the colored races than on our side," declared Representative John Vorys of Ohio in a typical speech on the subject. "In such a crisis the fact that the most numerous colored race on earth has had unique relations of friendship with the United States, that single fact, may prove the salvation of the white race." Vorys' colleague in the House, Carl Curtis of Nebraska, spoke in a similar vein: "Suppose the Chinese do capitulate and join Japan, then all Asia is apt to go with her. Then you will have a race struggle in which we are hopelessly outnumbered that will last, not for 1 year or 5 years, but throughout the generations to come." Walter Judd, who had recently been elected to the House after ten years as a medical missionary in China, agreed that the future hinged on China: "There cannot be a great war between the white and colored races in the next 10 years, or the next 100 years, or the next 300 years, if we keep ourselves—the white people—and the Chinese, the largest and strongest of the colored peoples, on the same side—the side of freedom and democ-

racy." To suggest how delicate the balance was, however, Judd quoted the recent words of an individual with rare credentials: Paul Yu-pin, the Roman Catholic bishop of China. In the July 1943 issue of the Catholic journal *Commonweal*, the bishop had responded as follows when asked what the consequences would be if the United States failed to repeal the anti-Chinese exclusion laws:

Certainly China will keep in the fight until Japan is defeated. In this defeat, you of course will play a great part. But if your attitude of superiority continues, if the Far East becomes convinced that the United States has forfeited her moral right to leadership, and is fixed in her determination to look down upon the colored races, I can foresee only a prospect which makes me tremble at its horrors.

In that case the next war would almost inevitably be a war between races, and that would mean a war in which not only armies are pitted against each other, armies and industries, but a war in which child is against child, woman against woman, grandfather against grandfather. In such a war there would not even be talk of mercy and decency. It would literally be to the death, and we would not hear of unconditional surrender, but of annihilation. What Christian can envisage such things without being tempted to despair!³⁰

Using a Chinese Christian to help make his case was a sign of Judd's astute understanding of one of the ironies of this debate, that popular esteem for China and the Chinese in the United States was entangled with the perception that China might hold the key to whether white Christian civilization would survive. Thus, we find a supporter of the bill to put China on a normal immigration quota, Representative Robert Ramspeck of Georgia, defending his position in terms of "doing justice to a valiant ally whose fighting in this war may well be the balance of power between victory and defeat for the forces of Christian civilization." In this context, one can also appreciate some of the marvelous commentary exhumed by Professor Christopher Thorne, such as the Chicago newspaper that referred to China in 1943 as "our 'white hope' in the East," and the pro-Chinese lobbying group that argued in a widely distributed pamphlet that to lose China's goodwill through continuing dis-

crimination was to "incur the risk of another war in which white supremacy may be openly challenged by the Oriental races."³¹

Even the most liberal and best-intentioned friends of the Chinese were not immune to the colonial mind-set, and as a result, the final disposition of the mid-war exclusion controversy was, unsurprisingly, ambivalent. In December 1943, amidst fanfare as well as the protests of such groups as the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Federation of Labor, the Chinese exclusion laws were revised to permit a maximum of 105 Chinese eligible for naturalization to immigrate into the United States each year. Seventy-five percent of these had to come from China proper; the rest could already be in the United States as temporary residents. The basic Immigration Act of 1924 remained unaltered insofar as any other Asians were concerned. In this, Congress followed the argument of President Roosevelt, who stated that while extension of the privilege of citizenship "would give the Chinese a preferred status over certain other oriental people, their great contribution to the cause of decency and freedom entitles them to such preference."³²

China remained a problem to U.S. and British leaders to the end of the war, but its importance in the eyes of many Americans was certainly enhanced by these exercises in imagining what might happen if the Chinese joined the enemy camp; the legacy of such thinking, of course, carried over to the furor over the "loss of China" that wracked the United States after the war. Although there was some confusion over statistics, there was little disagreement concerning the fact that China's size was awesome. Estimates of the Chinese population ranged from 350 million to 500 million, and with such impressive figures to play with, it is not surprising that discussions about "holding" or "losing" China frequently assumed a hyperbolic tone. Such numbers also inspired several concrete considerations that continued well into the postwar years to arouse both hope and terror in the hearts of many Western observers: hope in the form of a rekindled dream about the fabulous potential of the "China market," and fear that Japan's defeat in itself would mean little if the rest of Asia, led by China, continued to wave the banner of national and racial liberation.

By 1943, many Americans were already worrying about postwar economic conversion from a war economy to peacetime production. As *Collier's* put it in an editorial supporting a standard immigration quota for the Chinese, China's vast population and great potential for rapid

industrialization once hostilities were ended offered "appetizing postwar possibilities" for American business. Such evocations of the fabled China market were a conspicuous feature of the 1942-43 debate over Chinese exclusion. It was, in this context, "good business," "good hard business sense," "enlightened selfishness" to repeal the humiliating immigration restrictions. Many observers felt that once Japan had been eliminated as both a military drain and a ruthless economic rival, China's potential for economic growth would prove substantial. Congressman Noah Mason of Illinois, who as a member of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization took an active part in these deliberations, did not hesitate to go so far as to declare that China offered "the only real post-war market for American manufactured goods":

China is awakening from her long sleep. She is on the verge of an industrial revolution. She will need billions of dollars worth of machine tools after this war is over to help in her industrial development. She will need railroads built, railroad engines and railroad equipment for those railroads, farm machinery for modernizing her agricultural methods, road-building machinery to build the vast system of hard roads that will be required, and mining machinery to develop her vast mineral resources. Best of all, China will have the raw materials and consequent international credits to pay for these things. So, Mr. Chairman, our potential trade with China after this war is over should furnish jobs to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of our boys when they return from the war.³³

China would also, it was anticipated, take over the textile markets formerly dominated by Japan, and provide a major market for U.S. agricultural products such as cotton. Conversely, of course, if this great potential market were closed off, the whole process of postwar U.S. economic reconversion could be imperiled. From this perspective, old words took on new connotations. The "Yellow Peril" could be turned about and seen as a "negative peril"—the denial of access to Asia deemed critical to a capitalist economy that virtually everyone believed would confront a monumental crisis of overproduction and underemployment once the war ended. Similarly, there emerged dawning awareness of a double entendre in the debate on "exclusion," as politician after politician suddenly seemed to become aware of the possible connection between past domes-

tic policies of excluding Chinese from the United States and future prospects of being excluded from the postwar China market.³⁴

Beyond this loomed the larger and more conventional Yellow Peril specter of China breaking with the Anglo-American powers and throwing its weight behind a Pan-Asian and antiwhite movement. In the war on hand, this would not simply have added the several million troops who comprised Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist forces to the ranks of the enemy, but would have freed an estimated two-million additional Japanese troops to fight against the Allies. Even assuming the Nationalists stayed the course in the battle against Japanese imperialism, however, it still remained to be asked where China and the rest of Asia would stand thereafter—whether there would develop what William Phillips, a personal representative of President Roosevelt to India in 1943, perceived as a burgeoning “white against colored complex in the East.” To the end of the war, the notion persisted in many circles that Japan could still “win by losing.” This could happen, warned Robert S. Ward, an experienced U.S. foreign-service officer stationed in Chungking in May 1954, simply because “it is in the Japanese identification of imperial aims with the appeal to a race revolt that the real peril lies.” The peoples of the East, he continued, had been exposed to “a virus that may yet poison the whole soul of Asia and ultimately commit the world to a racial war that would destroy the white man and decimate the Asiatic, with no possible future gain.”³⁵

Such presentiments of “World War Three” in the midst of World War Two betrayed a pessimism that contrasted sharply with the dream of the World War One years that that war might be the “war to end all wars.” As World War Two progressed, moreover, apprehension concerning the next global war developed in another area as well, as tensions mounted between the Soviet Union and its British and American allies. “Which War Comes Next?” asked H. C. McGinnis in *Catholic World* in July 1945, between Germany's and Japan's surrenders; and he concluded that the two hypothetical wars which then dominated popular consciousness, the race war and the struggle between Russia and the West, were not in fact mutually exclusive. On the contrary, one could easily envision the two conflicts becoming one. “Russia is also an Asiatic power,” he observed—an observation that others had voiced as well, among them Joseph Stalin himself. Certainly, it was reasonable to anticipate that a revolt against white imperialism beginning in Asia and spreading to other parts of the globe would receive Moscow's support. So, as

World War Two built to its ferocious climax, the vision of a Yellow Peril and a Red Peril began, at least for some observers, to fuse in an absolutely overpowering way:

Together with China, India and Japan, Moscow can arrange that millions of colored warriors be equipped. With Russia's expert mechanized forces spearheading an invasion of Europe and, according to current Red tactics, with stupendous concentrations of Red artillery blasting holes in white defenses through which literally scores of millions of hate-infuriated colored warriors will pour to wreak vengeance for the thousands of injustices heaped upon their people, Europe would probably become a veritable shambles. Perhaps the Americas too, for the Bering Strait is not wide. There is no hatred or no fury comparable to that engendered by racial injustices. Such a war would be altogether too horrible to even imagine.

It is now much later than the average white man thinks. . . .³⁶

Like a stone cast into the water, the race issue made itself felt in ever-widening circles. Just as attacks on the Japanese enemy carried over into animosity toward Asian peoples in general, so also did the Yellow Peril sentiment pass on into even larger fears concerning the rise of “colored” peoples everywhere. For the English, the colored problem evoked a multitude of unsettling images linking the war to the clamor for independence from colonial rule in India, Burma, Malaya, and, though still muted there, Africa. For white Americans, “color” was a blunt reminder that the upheaval in Asia coincided with rising bitterness, impatience, anger, and militance among blacks at home.

The alarm which accelerating black demands for equality caused in U.S. military and civilian circles during the war cannot be underestimated. Secretary of War Stimson agonized over the “explosive” and seemingly insoluble race problem, and confided to his diary early in 1942 that he believed Japanese and Communist agitators were behind Negro demands for equality. General Marshall confidentially told reporters in August 1943 that he “would rather handle everything that the Germans, Italians and Japanese can throw at me, than to face the trouble I see in the Negro question.” A white Southern moderate writing in *Atlantic Monthly* early in 1943 painted a doomsday picture of race riots erupting throughout the United States, incited by both radical blacks and reaction-

ary whites, with blacks soon coming to the conclusion that they had little to lose by a Japanese victory. "Like the natives of Malaya and Burma," he stated, "the American Negroes are sometimes imbued with the notion that a victory for the yellow race over the white race might also be a victory for them." At the same time, the article went on, should the United States erupt in racial violence, this probably would have "far-reaching and heavily adverse effects upon the colored peoples of China, India, and the Middle East."³⁷

In parts of the American South, fears among white people of a Japanese-Negro alliance were apparently fairly commonplace from the 1930s on, and wartime opinion surveys did indicate that at least some black Americans were willing to admit that they were reserving judgment about the Japanese. A confidential poll conducted by black interviewers found that 18 percent of blacks queried admitted "pro-Japanese inclinations," while a mid-war book on the theme "inside Black America" concluded from a survey of editorials and letters to the editor in the black press that blacks as a whole neither supported nor condemned Japan, but rather viewed the war in Asia from a "neutralized" stance. Gunnar Myrdal, whose massive pioneer study of black Americans was published in 1944, emphasized their "thoroughly American" outlook and their loyalty in the current war. As a whole, he concluded, they were as prodemocratic and antifascist as most white groups. At the same time, Myrdal also observed that a modest number took "vicarious satisfaction in imagining a Japanese (or German) invasion of the Southern states"; and he warned that if black grievances remained unredressed after the war, it was difficult to predict how they would react "if later a new war were to be fought more definitely along color lines."³⁸

Beginning in the 1930s, the Japanese did attempt to influence black opinion in the United States, but their efforts to this end were desultory and largely ineffective. In the mid-1930s, working through an agent identified as Major Takahashi Satakata, they established a connection with the radical antiwhite Black Muslim movement led by Elijah Muhammad. Prior to his deportation from the United States in the late 1930s, Takahashi apparently had succeeded in persuading a splinter group of Black Muslims known as the Development of Our Own to rally behind the cause of the emperor. In a 1942 raid on three militant Negro cults (the Temple of Islam, the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, and the Brotherhood of Liberty for Black People of America), the FBI arrested twelve black leaders, including Elijah Muhammad, for allegedly seditious activities

including voicing support for a Japanese victory, and also imprisoned a number of their followers for draft resistance. Before the war, the Japanese also established a relationship with Robert O. Jordan, a charismatic black sometimes called "Harlem's Hitler," who also was arrested after Pearl Harbor; estimates of Jordan's followers ranged from five hundred to five thousand. In addition, it was later revealed that, working through a Caucasian agent named Joseph Hilton Smyth, the Japanese government had attempted to penetrate the U.S. media by gaining control of several magazines (including two reputable publications, *Living Age* and *North American Review*) and founding, in 1940, a rather ineffectual press service named the Negro News Syndicate. Well into the war, Stimson and other top-level leaders remained convinced that the Japanese and Germans were conducting a "systematic campaign" to stir up black demands for equality, and that "a good many" black leaders were receiving payments through the Japanese ambassador in Mexico.³⁹

Japanese propaganda directed at the United States during the war did indeed attempt to appeal to nonwhites by emphasizing racial discrimination, but the real impact of the war on black opinion did not come from clandestine activities or the effectiveness of enemy radio broadcasts. It came from the very nature of the war. The struggle against both the Germans and the Japanese was accompanied by attacks on master-race theories in general, and thus cut at the roots of white supremacism and discriminatory laws and institutions in the United States. At the same time, however, blacks were still denied good jobs in the defense industries and were drafted to fight for freedom in a military establishment where even the blood plasma was segregated.⁴⁰ They were called apes by white soldiers and described in military orders as "akin to well-meaning but irresponsible children." Most skilled military positions were closed to them, and the prospects of advancement were negligible. Such circumstances politicized many blacks and sharpened their grasp of the contradictions in their own society.⁴¹

At the same time, the Japanese attack had memorable symbolic aspects for black people. While Japanese propaganda hammered at the practices of white racism, it was Japan's actions rather than its words that really altered the worldview of many nonwhites. The Japanese dared to challenge the dominant white establishment directly. Their initial victories humiliated the Europeans and Americans in unforgettable ways, forever destroying the myth of white omnipotence, or even white efficiency. By the same token, the Japanese victories demonstrated the capac-

ity of nonwhites to develop and handle the advanced technologies of the modern world. As the black leader Roy Wilkins put it, the disaster at Pearl Harbor was due at least partly to the stupid habit of white people looking down on all nonwhite nations. A conversation with a black taxi driver in a northern U.S. city, reported about a year after Pearl Harbor in a magazine survey of racial problems and the war, conveyed similar sentiments in lively everyday language:

DRIVER. "Man, those Japs really do jump, don't they? And it looks like everytime they jump, they land."

PASSENGER. "More they land, the worse it's going to be for you and me. . . ."

DRIVER. "I know it's gonna be a long war. But one thing you've got to give those Japs, they showed the white man that a brown hand could handle a plane and a machine gun too."

PASSENGER. "Yes, Hitler believes that they're fit to be allies of the great Nazis."

DRIVER. "Well, I reckon one's bad as the other, but they still can fight, and they've already knocked out a lot of the white man's conceit. And that's something."⁴²

Comparable anecdotes and rumors concerning the black response to the war sometimes assumed an almost folklorish quality, being repeatedly evoked in publications that catered to a predominantly white audience. Right after Pearl Harbor, for example, it was reported that an elderly black sharecropper had occasion to talk to his white boss and murmured, upon leaving, "By the way, Captain, I hear the Japs done declared war on you white folks." In various versions, this became a favorite story in the American press. Another often-told story concerned a young black who, upon being inducted into the Army, requested that his epitaph read: "Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of the white man." *The Nation*, the liberal weekly, told of a young man who declared he intended to get his eyes slanted, so that he could fight back the next time he got shoved around by a white man. Other sources picked up on black resentment at the way white Americans tended to frame the war in Asia in derogatory color terms. "All these radio announcers talking about yellow this, yellow that," a Harlem resident was quoted as saying. "Don't hear them calling the Nazis white this, pink that. What the hell color do they think the Chinese are anyway! And those Filipinos on

Bataan! And the British Imperial Army, I suppose they think they're all blondes?"

As the war dragged on, magazine articles began to appear in the United States under such titles as "Fighting for White Folks?" or "Fighting a White Man's War"—and it is a sign of the tensions of the times that there was no way of telling by the title alone whether the article was primarily concerned with the attitude of American Negroes or the anguished concerns of Asian supporters of the Allied powers. The potentially explosive nature of the situation became most apparent, however, when blacks began appropriating the Allied rhetoric of "fighting for democracy" as their own and drawing practical lessons from the war.⁴³

The conflict in Asia itself provided several sometimes contradictory models for black leaders, including the example of Japanese militance, the inspiration of Chinese resistance against the Japanese, and the tactics of nonviolent resistance exemplified by Gandhi in his struggle against British colonial rule in India. But the "good war" against the oppressive Axis powers was inspiration enough in itself for many American blacks, and campaigns for civil rights were organized during the war under such slogans as "Double Victory," "Victory at Home as Well as Abroad," and "Defeat Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito by Enforcing the Constitution and Abolishing Jim Crow." A well-publicized civil rights rally at Madison Square Garden in June 1942, attended by eighteen thousand persons, provided an example of what such slogans meant to many blacks. The highlight of the evening was a skit in which a black man who had just been drafted had the following lines: "I want you to know I ain't afraid. I don't mind fighting. I'll fight Hitler, Mussolini and the Japs all at the same time, but I'm telling you I'll give those crackers down South the same damn medicine." There was, it was reported, "bedlam" when these words were spoken, and the audience called for the actor to repeat them.⁴⁴

Left-wing black leaders like A. Philip Randolph did not hesitate to speak of a global union of "the darker races" emerging out of the war, and to couple this with a call for democratic revolution by repressed peoples everywhere. Neither the vision nor the warning, however, were confined to politically radical circles. Walter White, head of the traditionally non-militant National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, struck a similar chord in a small book titled *A Rising Wind*, devoted exclusively to the black and the war, and published just after Japan's defeat. Plainspoken through most of its pages, White's book ended with a sweeping warning. "World War II," he wrote, "has given to the Negro

a sense of kinship with other colored—and also oppressed—peoples of the world. Where he has not thought through or informed himself on the racial angles of colonial policy and master-race theories, he senses that the struggle of the Negro in the United States is part and parcel of the struggle against imperialism and exploitation in India, China, Burma, Africa, the Philippines, Malaya, the West Indies, and South America. The Negro soldier is convinced that as time proceeds that identification of interest will spread even among some brown and yellow peoples who today refuse to see the connection between their exploitation by white nations and discrimination against the Negro in the United States.” White spoke of “the inevitability of world-wide racial conflict unless the white nations of the earth do an about-face on the issue of race.” (Here he quoted with respect, as black leaders often did, Pearl Buck’s wartime warnings and entreaties concerning the possibility of a future race war.) And he concluded by warning that if “Anglo-Saxon practices” of racism and imperialism were not revised drastically and immediately, much of Asia, including China and India, might “move into the Russian orbit as the lesser of two dangers.” The “rising wind” (the title came from a phrase in a speech by Eleanor Roosevelt), he intimated, could easily develop into a hurricane.⁴⁵

In various ways, racial hurricanes did arise out of World War Two and change the landscape of the postwar world. They did not sweep the globe in a single violent blast, as the most dire prophets feared. They did not destroy white supremacy worldwide, although they weakened it. They took the form of national and racial liberation movements in Asia and later Africa, and the civil rights and black-power movements in the United States. They would have happened eventually, but the war accelerated them in ways beyond measure.

The contribution of the Japanese to this rising tide of racial politicization was substantial. It was they, after all, who tripped the wire that brought the United States into the conflict and turned the separate wars in Europe and Asia into a single global conflagration. They destroyed the myths of white supremacy and shattered the European and American colonial structure in Asia in a way that proved—after long postwar agony, as the colonials tried to reimpose control—to be beyond repair. The Japanese inspired countless millions of Asians with their audacity, even as they inspired hatred by their own overweening arrogance. For the

Japanese were as racist as their Anglo-American adversaries, and their slogans of Asian liberation, coexistence, and coprosperity were as propagandistic (and as sincere, to some) as the rhetoric of “four freedoms” and “fighting for democracy” was to the Anglo-American powers.

The problem of racism is often approached as if it were a one-way street named White Supremacism. That is understandable, since whites themselves coined the phrase, imposed their supremacy over most of the globe and most of the darker races, and spent over four centuries writing about the inferiority of nonwhites. The many attitudes that come together to comprise racial consciousness, however—including pride in one’s native place and culture and bloodlines—are hardly a monopoly of white peoples. When racial consciousness is also recognized as an expression of status and power vis-à-vis others—comparable to class consciousness, to nationalism and great-power chauvinism, and to gender arrogance—then it becomes clear that there is a place for serious comparative study here.

There must be, a priori, an imbalance in such a study, deriving from the fact that Europe and the United States have dominated the modern political economy. The industrialized world did not borrow a great deal from outside itself. The later developers, like Japan, did. Because Japan borrowed from the West, Japanese attitudes toward others have been mixed. They could never look upon the Westerners and call them “little men,” for example. They could not really call them apes, since they had not gone through the Western voyages of discovery and later bastardization of evolutionary theory. It would not have made sense to characterize the Westerners as children, since the Westerners were initially stronger and taught them a great deal. (On the other hand, it made good sense to call weaker and less developed peoples, like other Asians, “children”.) There were certainly no great impediments to hating or denigrating the Westerners, but the idioms had to fit: strong and threatening, beneficent and evil. They settled on demons, albeit demons with a human face.

The Japanese found the demon in their own folk culture, just as they found there the mechanisms and metaphors for relegating other Asians to inferior status. At the same time, they also spent an inordinate amount of time working on their own self-image. Since they were taking on their former teachers, and taking on an unprecedented role as well, the task of making a persuasive case for their own superiority was no small undertaking. As a consequence, the Japanese spent much more time than their

Anglo-American enemies did in identifying and belaboring—largely for home consumption—their own unique and superior qualities. In the end, they focused on their “purity,” in the sense of both bloodlines and morality.

These matters are the subjects of the chapters that follow, where it will be seen that Japanese racism worked in different ways from that of the Anglo-Americans. The idioms were different. The preoccupations were different. The psychology was different, and more complex. While the Japanese denounced the Western Allies in no uncertain terms, their attitude toward Europeans and Americans remained ambiguous; and while they preached Pan-Asianism and devoted much energy and propaganda to glorifying the “common culture” of the East, in actual practice they could hardly conceal their contempt for other Asians. Despite such differences, however, the end results of racial thinking on both sides were virtually identical—being hierarchy, arrogance, viciousness, atrocity, and death.

THROWING IN AN EXTRA CHARGE



1. This cartoon by the *Chicago Tribune's* Carey Orr, published three days after Pearl Harbor, is an unequivocal reminder of how the surprise attack became an indelible symbol of Japanese treachery in the United States, and inspired an immediate commitment to a vengeful war without mercy. Japanese military planners, obsessed with operational issues and misled by disdainful stereotypes of Americans as decadent and egocentric, gave virtually no thought to the psychological consequences of their decision to attack the U.S. fleet.