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Reginald Kearney

THE PRO-JAPANESE UTTERANCES OF W. E. B. DU BOIS

When the United States entered the first world war as a direct participant, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, in a controversial editorial that he would later regret, called upon black Americans to "close ranks" with their white fellow citizens in order to defeat the common German menace. Some years later when his country went to war against Japan, however, Du Bois lacked enthusiasm and issued no such clarion call due to his belief that Japan was a colored nation, that color was a root cause of the war, and that there was "a certain bond between the colored peoples because of world-wide prejudice."[1]

In a letter to Andrew J. Allison, the alumni secretary at Fisk University dated February 3, 1941, Du Bois said that he was glad his alma mater had not yet yielded to the war hysteria. His satisfaction, he explained, was due to the conviction that "in this war we are trying to attack Japan because of race prejudice," but he did feel that the United States might be justifiable in the event of a defensive war.[2]

As one of the most learned men of his generation and the premier spokesman and propagandist for the higher aspirations of black Americans, Du Bois analyzed international events and tried to explain how the rise of Japan affected their ongoing struggle for justice and equality. For more than three decades, his interpretations consistently sought out the positiveness in the policies of the government of Japan. More simply stated, W. E. B. Du Bois' remarks regarding Japan's position in East Asia were invariably favorable toward Japan.

Black Awareness of East Asia

Du Bois claimed that blacks had become more conscious of East Asia from the time of the Russo-Japanese War; he certainly was. In his 1905 essay, "Atlanta University," he repeated his aphorism made famous in *The Souls of Black Folk:* "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." But in the same essay he wrote that the "Yellow Peril" and the color line were intertwined, and credited the Japanese with breaking the "foolish modern magic of the word white." Before the outcome of the war was even determined, Du Bois declared that Japanese, whether they won or lost, had already awakened

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the brown and black races.[3] In the essay, "The African Roots of War," which his biographer, David L. Lewis, characterized as "one of the analytic triumphs of the early twentieth century," Du Bois outlined the special role that he envisioned Japan performing. He alleged that Japan's escape from the cordon of the color bar proved disconcerting and dangerous to white hegemony. In order to persuade Japan to "act white" and join in the suppression of the colored peoples of the world, Du Bois contended, there were "good-natured attempts to prove the Japanese 'Aryan'." He felt, however, that Japan was resistant to such overtures. As he put it, "blood is thick, and there are signs that Japan does not dream of a world governed mainly by white men." He predicted that the vast majority of humanity would rise up to end racial prejudice, imperialism, economic subjugation, and religious hypocrisy.[4] On more than one occasion, as August Meier and Elliott Rudwick pointed out, he foresaw "a race war in which Negroes, allied with Asians, would overwhelm the white race."[5]

Du Bois dreamed of the end of white hegemony in the world and hoped some kind of retribution would be visited upon the oppressors of his people. During a time when imperial powers divided countries among themselves with impunity and interpreted their subjugation of other nations by means of military might and technological supremacy as proof of racial superiority, Du Bois' many projections of scenarios leading to the reordering of racial hegemony and his seeing Japan as the instrument of righteous punishment was for him therapeutic. For as he once wrote, "without an abiding belief in the ultimate Righting of Wrong and in an Eternal Justice, no educated Negro would be safe from suicide."[6]

In a way, Du Bois saw Japan as having no other option than to join with the non-white peoples of the world in their struggles to get from under white domination. In his view, Japan, although a world power, was at the same time the "odd-man-out" trying to navigate a safe course within a cluster of predatory nations. He enumerated issues that he believed pushed Japan and the United States toward the brink of war. He reminded his readers that California had passed discriminatory laws, tried to force Japanese youngsters into segregated schools, and proscribed the purchase of land by people designated as ineligible for citizenship. Furthermore, Japanese and Chinese immigrants, he wrote, were increasingly excluded in countries such as the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.[7]

On March 5, 1932 Du Bois wrote a letter to the executive secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom contending that the Japanese Exclusion Act of the United States, the refusal of the League of Nations to take a stand on race equality, and "the cavalier treatment of Japan by America and Europe from the days of Perry down to the present Far Eastern propaganda" were vivid illustrations of the way in which race prejudice encouraged war and bedeviled the discussion of peace.[8]

Views of Sino-Japanese Rift

While Du Bois bemoaned transgressions against the Japanese, he seemed quite tolerant of Japanese aggression in China. The *Philadelphia Tribune* carried a headline which read, "Du Bois Sees End of White Rule in Asia, If Japan Holds Ground." He began with the rationalization that "relatives quarrel worst." The Chinese and Japanese, he explained, were cousins "so near akin that most Westerners cannot tell them apart." Although one might expect these two great nations to stand as a unit against European agression, he continued, Japan's evolution as a society in which the soldier was dominant allowed rapid organization in opposition to European aggression, but China chose to barter with Europe. This alarmed Japan, according to Du Bois. Moreover, Japan needed the coal and iron of Korea and Manchuria and went to war with China in 1894. The intervention of France, Germany, and Russia forced Japan to relinquish Manchuria, and then the Russians turned around and took what Japan had been denied. This was to be the antecedent to the Russo-Japanese War. Du Bois believed that Japan rightly understood that the Chinese failed to comprehend the politics of European aggression, that they failed to realize that internal chaos and disunity in China would invite predation by the European powers. Du Bois could appreciate that Japan, as "the only strong leader of the yellow people," needed coal, iron, and territory for expansion. He predicted that if Japan established itself permanently in Manchuria, the Japanese would become dominant leaders of the majority of mankind and the end of white rule in Asia would become an accomplished fact. Yet, Du Bois lamented the possibility of the complete domination of China by imperialistic Japan. In some respects, he felt, that would be a calamity. He referred to the civilization of China as marvelous, the most ancient in the world, a civilization of real peace and not of pretended peace like that of Europe and America. If China should succumb beneath modern militarism, the loss to the world would be incalculable, Du Bois concluded.[9]

From the Du Boisian perspective, Europeans and Americans were devious and rapacious while Chinese were naive and in danger of subjugation. England, France, Germany, and the United States, he charged, were unable with straight faces and proof of sincerity to ask Japan not to take Manchuria. Both France and England, according to Du Bois, "have their pockets full of the loot of Chinese territory. Hong Kong, he pointed out, "England stole in 1840, as a result of her war to compel China to import opium." Still, Du Bois wrote, "The Chinese are utterly deceived as to white opinion of the yellow race." While Chinese regarded America as a friend, Du Bois charged that they failed to realize the insult of the American Chinese Exclusion Act and were "despised and insulted in America almost as much as Negroes."[10]

Sojourn in East Asia: Manchukuo

The period of the 1930s was a critical time in U.S.-Japan relations. The imperial Japanese army invaded Manchuria, renamed it Manchukuo, and turned the resource-rich area into a puppet state under direct control of Japan despite vigorous international protest led by the United States. During this same period, African Americans beheld the Japanese very favorably due to a number of factors: certain goodwill gestures on the part of Japanese operating in the United States, news of Japan's positive disposition toward Ethiopia,[11] interpretations of Japan's role in China, and first-person reports from Japan. In the latter two areas, Du Bois made a significant contribution as a result of a 1936 journey that took him to Manchuria, China, and Japan.

Du Bois' trip to East Asia allowed Du Bois to see at first-hand Japanese imperialism operating in Manchuria. However, he failed to perceive Manchurians as victims of these policies. What Japan had accomplished in four years, Du Bois enthused, "is nothing less than marvelous." The people appeared happy, there was no unemployment, and there was public peace and order, he reported. Above all, he was convinced, "A lynching in Manchoukuo would be unthinkable." The lesson to be learned, according to Du Bois, was that "no nation should rule a colony whose people they cannot conceive as Equals."[12]

Du Bois had held positive impressions of Japan for at least thirty years prior to his arrival in Hsinksing, the "capital of the new Manchurian state." A meticulous observer and reporter, his initial impressions were reinforced by what he saw in Manchuria. The Hotel Yamato where he stayed, according to Du Bois, "was a joy . . . room with bath, . . . all those little Japanese touches, white runners over the stair carpets, spotless and clean; a clean blue kimono for each guest; slippers in each room; cool drinking water in thermos jugs; a cloth damp with hot water, passed to each guest in the grill, to wipe his hands and face before eating; and exact, quick and oh, so courteous service."[13]

While finding the Russian influence in Manchuria "at once sordid and romantic," Du Bois marvelled at Japan's new Manchukuo in the state of becoming, cast with broad streets and beautiful and large public buildings, some finished, some being built, some only projected. It moved him to remark, "Clearly this colonial effort of a colored nation is something to watch and know" and he asked and answered the question what did the Manchurian venture of Japan mean.

"I brush aside as immaterial the question as to whether Manchukuo is an independent state or a colony of Japan," Du Bois told his readers. The most important questions for him were: what was Japan doing for the people of Manchuria? Was Japan Building in Manchuria "a caste of Superiors and Inferiors"?[14] Were the Japanese reducing the masses of Manchuria to slavery and poverty? Were they stealing the land and monopolizing the resources? Were the

people of Manchuria happier or more miserable as a result of having a foreign power on their soil? After a week of traveling about, north, west, and south, in cities and towns, walking the streets night and day, talking with officials, visiting industries, and reading reports, Du Bois found colonialism in Manchuria to be very different from that of Africa and the West Indies under white European control. Admitting there was more to be done, he concluded that there was an absence of racial or color caste; law and order was impartially applied; there was public control of private capital for the general welfare; there were well-developed services to provide for health, education, city-planning, housing and other social ends. "The people," he testified, "appear happy, and there is no unemployment." Most importantly, he found peace and order, and a lynching there would be unthinkable. He found nothing that savored of caste. The separate schools for Manchukuoans and Japanese, he observed, were "based largely, if not wholly, on the fact that one people speak Chinese."[15] But the Japanese held no absolute monopoly of the offices of the state. Du Bois left Manchuria convinced that "colonial enterprise by a colored nation need not imply the caste, exploitation and subjection which it has always implied in the case of white Europe."[16]

Du Bois got a chance to stand at Port Arthur where in 1905 Japan "made Europe surrender to Asia." He called it "historic ground." He also declared, "Manchuria is the natural mainland of the isles of Japan. In his view, Japan took Manchuria in order to preserve its national autonomy. He described how Russia wrested the area from China, seized and fortified the harbor of Port Arthur; Germany took over and fortified the Shantung Peninsula; England had Hong Kong, and the French were in what was then Indo-China. It was clear to Du Bois that "Japan was surrounded with guns pointed at her heart."[17]

In his explanation of why Japan left the League of Nations, Du Bois agreed that if Japan had not taken Manchuria, one of the other imperialist powers would have. Du Bois accepted the view that Manchuria's land and resources were absolutely necessary to Japanese development and expansion as a nation. In doing so, he also acquiesced with the hypothesis: "Unless I take Manchuria now . . . you will seize it at the VERY first moment you can." "England, France and America gorged with the loot of the world, suddenly became highly moral on the subject of annexing other people's land," he taunted. Moreover, he reminded *Pittsburgh Courier* readers that England held India, Hong Kong, half of Africa, and Australia; France had dominion over North Africa and Syria; the United States possessed half of Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and the Panama Canal Zone. Du Bois, while enumerating these colonial possessions, concurred that Japan needed Manchuria more than any of the others needed the territories that they held.[18]

Du Bois told his readers that one reason for Japan's move was because

Manchuria's government had been close to anarchy and most vulnerable to European aggression. He blamed the Chinese for allowing their bitterness toward Japanese aggression to become a leading motivation in their drive for unity and strength and forgetting about "the worse and longer aggressions of white Europe." Du Bois took his message directly to the Chinese during his trip to Asia in 1936. Thus, this critic of imperialism was willing to concede to Japan certain liberties in China and tried to persuade the Chinese that they should as well. As he explained, "It is not that I sympathize with China less but that I hate European and American propaganda, theft, and insult more." Dating at least from the time he wrote his "African Roots of War" article, Du Bois saw the struggle in China as a competition for "spheres of economic influence."[19]

A Visit to Shanghai

Hostility between China and Japan, the two leading Asian countries, seemed to befuddle Du Bois. "The most disconcerting thing about Asia," he wrote, "is the burning hatred of China and Japan."[20] He tended, however, to be more critical of the Chinese and tolerant of the Japanese because he saw Japan as able and willing to resist and even block white power moves. He saw the problem as a product of China's submission to white aggression and Japanese resistance. This was consistent with his often stated view that Japan was the stalwart defender of the idea that Asia should be the province of Asians. He criticized what he called the "extraordinary attitude" of the Chinese: "They boycott refusing . . . to allow [the Japanese] the same economic freedom that China almost eagerly gave to the white man." According to his analysis, China had moved with "exasperating indecision" and yielded at fatal points, bits of sovereignty until it became quite clear that England, France, and Germany would rule. Efforts at reform, he wrote, encounter "almost impenetrable walls of custom, religion and industry" and "a rock wall of opposition and misunderstanding."

Shanghai epitomized for Du Bois all that was wrong with Chinese society—the racial strife, economic struggle, the human paradox of modern life. In the greatest city of the largest nation on earth, foreign white nations owned, governed, and policed the larger part of it. Europeans largely controlled its capital, commerce, mines, rivers, and manufactures. Perhaps, most disconcerting during his visit to Shanghai, Du Bois witnessed "a little white boy of perhaps four years order three Chinese out of his imperial way on the sidewalk . . . and they meekly obeyed." This replication of Mississippi-style etiquette revealed to him much about the spirit of the Chinese.[21]

While in Shanghai, Du Bois at the invitation of the president of the University of Shanghai attended a luncheon at the Chinese Bankers' Club. In attendence was an editor of the *China Press*, the secretary-general of the Bank

of China, the general-manager of the China Publishing Company, the director of the Chinese schools for Shanghai, and the executive secretary of the China Institute of International Relations. The meeting was in response to Du Bois' request for a frank discussion of race and social matters. In a three-hour session, Du Bois, as he described the encounter, "plunged in recklessly." After telling the assemblage of his slave antecedents, his travels, and his educational attainments, Du Bois asked his hosts a series of questions: How far did they think Europe would continue to dominate the world; how far did they envisage a world whose spiritual center is Asia or the colored races; how did they propose to escape from domination by European capital; and how were the working classes progressing? With respect to Sino-Japanese realtions, he asked, "Why is it that you hate Japan more than Europe when you have suffered more from England, France, and Germany, than from Japan?[22]

Du Bois saw Japan's mission in East Asia as two-fold; Japan had to defend itself from a subtle world attack and, likewise, protect China against itself. Europe, he explained, proceeded to make it difficult for the "impudent little brown nation" to buy raw materials, such as cotton, iron, and a hundred things which the Japanese manufacturers needed, making it necessary to annex North China. In 1937, Du Bois wrote, "It is to escape annihilation and subjection and the nameless slavery of Western Europe that Japan has gone into a horrible and bloody carnage with her own cousin." In 1940, he presented a similar argument: the underlying reasons for the present war between Japan and China were the economic encirclement of Japan by British and American capital and the psychology of the color line long threatened Japan with industrial starvation and white domination.

From China to Japan

After Shanghai, Du Bois arrived in Kobe where he was met by a delegation, processed through customs, interviewed by reporters, and escorted to his hotel. After settling in, he was whisked away to Osaka, "the industrial center of Japan" and "entertained at a 'Sukiaki' party in Japanese style." The following morning he was officially welcomed by the vice-governor of the province and the mayor of Kobe. His first lecture was delivered to seven hundred girls at Kobe College. He lunched with the faculty there, and then moved on to lecture and attend a tea at Kansai Gakuin. That night, forty principals and officials of the prefectural board of education had a dinner for him. He noted that there were four ladies among the guests.

The next morning the governor sent his secretary and automobile to take Du Bois sightseeing. The exclusion ended with a ride about the harbor on the municipal launch. That night, Du Bois gave his "Message to Japan" in the hall of the *Nichi Nichi*, a newspaper with a circulation of five million. He also

mentioned that his arrival in Japan was announced twice in nationwide radio hookups.[23]

Du Bois arrived in Osaka as the guest of the *Osaka Mainichi* and *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* newspapers. Beneath the headline, "Du Bois Speaks to Japanese at Osaka Mainichi Hall," was a photograph with the caption indicating that he was speaking to business and civic leaders as the guest of the largest newspaper in Japan. His theme addressed the possibilities of Japanese youth. According to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he painted a vivid picture of Japanese development and of the national charcter and discipline as factors in Japan's assuming a position of world leadership. The *Courier* bragged that their columnist, an Atlanta University professor, was received as a "world-famed scholar and benevolent educator" at a banquet in his honor, and that the superintendent of education had welcomed him on behalf of the governor of the prefecture.

After Kobe and Osaka, Du Bois spent the next two days sightseeing in Nara and Kyoto, ancient capitals of Japan. In Kyoto, he again delivered lectures at the Buddhist University and Doshisha University. Du Bois was obviously quite impressed by the images that he saw in Japan and tried to share some of those imbibed as he rode the train from Kobe to Tokyo:

> I went through a land cultivated by the square yard, toiled over on hand and knee; drained and protected by hedge and ditch, bush and tree; there were white and grey homes, nestling low, clean and busy; here is neatly piled rice straw, narrow roads and paths, railways and sudden factories, warehouses, rivers and canals. Always there are trees, bamboos, pines and maples; shrines and stone laterns appear, hills and lakes and everywhere workers with bent backs. Lake Biwa flies by on the left and a great mountain, grey with snow.[24]

Upon his arrival at Tokyo station, Du Bois was met by photographers, reporters, and friends. The next morning he visited the grounds of the imperial palace and Meiji Shrine. He reported that his biography ran in installments for three days in the *Mainichi Shimbun*.[25] During a luncheon at the Pan-Pacific Club where he shared the stage with the ambassador to Turkey and Japan's member of the Olympic Games Committee, Du Bois reminded the audience that "Negro prejudice in the United States was one cause of anti-Japanese feeling" and "the defeat of the anti-lynching bill in 1924 was brought from the West by the South at the price of Japanese exclusion." At night, officials of the Foreign Office hosted a party complete with geisha. "The girls," he reported, "gave old Japanese dances WITH MUSIC, and then we danced modern music with them." He described them as "modest and beautiful in their kimonos of silk and high-piled raven hair." "One lovely girl with charming manners spoke [English] quite well and especially waited on me," he confided. Her name, he learned, meant Happy Spring.[26]

Du Bois admitted that he had never before received such attention and evidences of welcome as he did in Japan. He found it more astonishing since he had no official status and "came only as a private citizen, none too welcome in his native land." From the time of his temporary landing at Nagasaki until two weeks later when he left Yokohama, he was not allowed to forget that he was the guest of a great country ready to do whatever necessary to make his visit a pleasant experience. Thus, for a person used to "being received on suffrance or with embarrassed efforts at cordiality," Du Bois pronounced his visit "an experience never to be forgotten." The government of Japan did not allow him to pay a cent for railway fare; the Foreign Ministry provided banquets and extended every facility; the colleges, from the Imperial University of Tokyo down, were especially gracious. He was received at the best hotels as an honored guest, with proprietors personally taking pains to look after his comfort and often allowing him special rates. He was provided with willing escorts and interpreters, and given courtesy and consideration wherever he went. "Even in the presence of whites from America and England there was not the slightest apology or hesitation," he noted. He shared one such experience:

> On the last day, as I was paying my bill at the Imperial Hotel of Tokyo, a typical loud-mouthed American white woman barged in and demanded service. In America the clerk would have immediately turned to her, if not to wait on her at least to apologize or explain. But not in Tokyo. The clerk did not wink an eye or turn his head; he carefully finished waiting on me and took time to bow with Japanese politeness and then turned to America.[27]

The Meaning of Japan

Admitting that he had reported about the hospitality accorded him in "perhaps tiresome detail and certainly with no restraint of modesty, Du Bois claimed that he did so because of his realization that the stupendous welcome he received was "in no sense a personal tribute." "It was meant for the Negro people of America whose unappointed representative I was taken to be." Japan, entirely unofficially, yet with full official knowledge and sanction, according to Du Bois, undertook to say through him to twelve million black people that the Japanese recognized a common brotherhood, a common suffering, and a common destiny. "This was voiced silently in all this hospitality, and openly and articulately by dozens of individuals," Du Bois reported.[28]

Du Bois wrote four columns for the *Pittsburgh Courier* that dealt in great detail with his two-week sojourn in Japan. His most profound impression after that visit was that Japan was "above all a country of colored people run by colored people for colored people." Without exception, he stated, Japanese with whom he spoke classed themselves with the Chinese, Indians, and Negroes as folk standing over against the white world. For the first time in his life, he felt

that he stood in a land where white people did not control directly or indirectly. "The Japanese run Japan, and that even English and Americans recognize and act accordingly," he enthused. In Japan, he reported, there was an absence of what he called the "English overbearance" and "American impudence" that could be seen daily in China, India, Africa, the West Indies, and the United States." "No, sir! Japan rules here without a by-your-leave or prayer. And yet looking about me on the street and in cars, in the theatre and hotel, I might easily be mistake the people for American mulattoes," he exclaimed.[29]

In his message to the youth of Asia, Du Bois promised that black Americans were "stretching out hands of fellowship to the world but especially toward Asia." He told Asians that in the United States they could expect from whites prejudice and discriminatory laws. On the other hand, he told them, among blacks there was "sympathy and deep appreciation for all that Asia has given to the world, and hope for what she may give in the future."[30]

Return to The West

Upon his return to the United States, Du Bois took his message about the meaning of Japan to students at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and Dillard University in New Orleans, Lousiana. He had left Japan impressed that Japanese were courteous, neat, prompt, marvelously efficient, punctual people who lived in houses "where no dust of dirty feet ever penetrates." He understood the secret of Japan's military policy to be aimed at preventing European aggression in China or other parts of Asia. Yet, he also expressed concern that Japan was forgetting the danger of capitalism. He warned against unbriddled production and the exploitation of cheap labor. The Europe which Japan copied was not ideal, he explained: "The technique of industry which Japan mastered, the capitalisitic regime which she adopted so successfully, has . . . threatening, if not, fatal tendencies." If Japan could overcome these obstacles, he predicted the Japanese would be able to compete with the world and develop a mass of workers who would be the most intelligent and gifted the world has ever seen. "In the Nineteenth century Japan saved the world from slavery to Europe. In the Twentieth century she is called to save the world from the slavery to capital," he announced. In East Asia, he told the Morehouse and Dillard students, Japan "demanded practically a Monroe Doctrine for China, that is the right of Japan to lead in the future development of the East to the exclusion of white Europe." Already in 1937, Du Bois saw, world commerce was beginning to depend on Japanese goods. His hope was that Japanese leadership of the world would make for industrial democracy and human understanding across the color line on a far larger scale than the world had ever seen. Not industrial education coming back in a new guise, he cautioned, but industrial organization led by higher training for the uplift of the masses.[31]

Yasuichi Hikida, Du Bois' Japanese Contact

If Du Bois' trip to Japan was an event to remember, the person who probably did the most to smooth his way was Yasuichi Hikida, an employee of the Japanese consulate in New York. A native of Fukuoka prefecture on the island of Kyushu, Hikida arrived in the United States in 1920 and enrolled in Columbia University's Department of Sociology. Although he first went to Michigan where he studied English for a year, Hikida, in all probability, had already decided to concentrate his study on what was then broadly referred to as "the Negro problem."[32] It is unclear how Hikida came to devote his life to the study of the black experience. He and an older brother, Seiichi, who was head of family, had a business that took them to Taiwan for two years. Upon his return to Japan, the younger Hikida went to Osaka and attended a school affiliated with the YMCA and taught for a year at Kansai Gakuin University. Whether it was the experience in Taiwan or Osaka that stimulated his interest in black Americans we may never know for certain. He was certainly very active in the United States, joining and participating in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, getting to know the *crème de la crème* of African American society, visiting black colleges and universities, and other places he thought historically important.

Hikida was the person who suggested that Du Bois obtain credentials of a newspaper correspondent in order to travel at discount fares within Japan. He also suggested that several copies of the *Pittsburgh Courier* be forwarded to Japan and gave Du Bois a list of people to contact.

The Axis Alliance

When Japan joined the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, many blacks were perplexed that the estwhile colored champion would align itself with the likes of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. Hitler's racist dogma of Teutonic superiority was repugnant to all of black America. Du Bois tried to explain how and why such an alignment had come to exist. He reminded black Americans that Japan had sought to ally with the United States and England and only reluctantly became an Axis partner after being rebuffed; thus, Japan's diplomatic posture was a realistic adjustment to circumstances. From his perspective, it was a matter of self-defense. It was primarily a fear of a predatory England, Du Bois believed, that compelled Japan to side with Germany and Italy. "But for the grace of God and the vigilance of the Japanese, [England] would own Japan," he concluded. In his view, there seemed to be nothing that Japan could do but seek alliance with the Axis powers, despite the fact that Germany despised yellow races, and Italy's hands were "red with the blood of Africa." Claiming blacks were particularly opposed to the kind of race hate expounded by Adolf Hitler, Du Bois ended this particular column with the

lament: "Nothing has given us greater pain than to see the colored Japanese cast in their lot with Hitler." Yet, he believed that the racist attitudes of Americans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen had "driven Japan . . . into the arms of Hitler."[33]

Du Bois' understanding of Japan's position may well have resulted from his conversations with Yosuke Matsuoka, the man who led the Japanese delegation out of the League of Nations and who held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of Japan's joining the Tripartite Pact. Describing Matsuoka as a quiet man, slow and low of speech, Du Bois characterized him as a man responsible for proving to the world that "colonial enterprise by a colored nation need not imply the caste, exploitation and subjection which it has always implied in the case of white Europe." In a half-hour conversation, they talked of industry, capitalism and communism. Matsuoka told Du Bois that Japan, in some ways, was the most communistic of modern states. Lacking a strong sense of individual ownership, the Japanese believed in common ownership of all wealth, and had a willingness to give to others and sacrifice for the common good.[34]

Perhaps Du Bois' most passionate and unequivocal expression of support for Japan occurred in response to a letter dated February 13, 1939 from Waldo McNutt, an officer in the Consumer-Farmer Milk Cooperative. McNutt, professing concern about rumors that Du Bois was receiving funds from the Japanese government for propaganda work in the United States, asked the Atlanta University professor to issue a denial. While denying that he had accepted money from the Japanese government or any Japanese individual, Du Bois declared, "I believe in Japan." Furthermore, he said that he believed in "Asia for the Asiatics" and saw Japan as the best agent for bringing this goal to realization.[35]

Despite the denial, Du Bois, at Hikida's suggestion, had voyaged to Japan with a press pass allowing him to to travel on trains at reduced rates; his trip from Kobe to Tokyo was provided free of charge by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to his leaving for Japan, Du Bois had written Hikida informing him that, if possible, he would travel to Japan at his own expense, but admitted that it would be helpful once he arrived in Japan if he could add something to his income. The small gratuities that he received were no secret; Du Bois had boasted of them in columns detailing his trip.[36] Whatever the size of the gratuity, it did not set the tenor of his remarks; the Japanese victory over Russia had accomplished that. Du Bois genuinely believed what he wrote to the publishers of the Japanese translation of *The Souls of Black Folk:*

> [Negroes in America] feel ourselves a part of the colored world . . . a part of that determined fight for recognition and equality across the color line which is the greatest endeavor of the twentieth century. We black men of America . . . greet your land which is now leading the culture and

> development of the East; and we hope for closer knowledge and cooperation between our group and your nation.[37]

In a letter dated October 7, 1937, addressed to Harry F. Ward, a professor at the Union Theological Seminary and chairman of the American League Against War and Fascism, Du Bois stated unequivocally that he was "bitterly opposed to the present effort of American and English capital to drive this nation into war against Japan." Such a war, he charged, would be based on race prejudice.[38] He wanted American Negroes to understand that Europe was set to dominate Asia until frustrated by Japan and asked them not to be "unconsciously misled by the propaganda current in America."[39]

He blamed the war not on Japan but on England, France, America, Germany and Italy, "all those white nations which for a hundred years and more had by blood and rapine forced their rule upon colored nations."[40] Du Bois claimed that Japan was the victim of a suble world attack. Americans and Europeans, he wrote, proceeded to make it difficult if not impossible for Japan to buy raw materials, raising the prices of items such as cotton and iron until Japan was forced to annex North China.[41]

The Pacific War

In 1941 Du Bois, of course, was as cognizant of the signs of approaching war between Japan and the United States as any informed citizen, and had been for some years. But this did not cause him to deviate from seemingly pro-Japanese themes that he had pursued consistently when analyzing international relations affecting East Asia. Two months before Pearl Harbor, in his "As the Crow Flies" column for the New York *Amsterdam Star-News*, Du Bois denied that the control of Asia by Asians could have more frightful results than exploitation by Europe already had. He suggested that England and America get out of Asia and clean up their own mess in the Western World.[42]

In an article appearing in the Atlanta University journal, *Phylon*, Du Bois reiterated the issues that brought Japan to the brink: U.S. opposition to Japanese immigration based partly on labor competition and partly on a growing fear of Japan because of its victory over Russia; anti-Japanese laws in California, especially; abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance under pressure from the United States and the British Dominions; and failure of the League of Nations to adopt racial equality as a principle in large measure due to the influence of Woodrow Wilson.[43]

Perhaps Du Bois' most impassioned column in support of Japan appeared in the *Courier* on October 23, 1937. Here he anticipated the backdoor theory of America's eventual entry into World War II with the remark, "Woodrow Wilson 'kept us out of war' and FDR has his technique down pat." Countering criticism of Japanese aerial attacks, Du Bois exclaimed, "It is awful

business, this killing the unarmed and innocent in order to reach the guilty; but America would have you believe that the method began with Japan. Oh, no!" He managed to excoriate the Chinese as possessing the "same spirit that animates the 'white folks' nigger' in the United States." For China preferred to be a coolie for England rather than acknowledge the only world leadership that did not mean color caste." He asked black Americans to understand that not love for China but hatred for Japan motivated Secretary Henry Stimson and the United States.[44]

With the Federal Bureau of Investigation preparing to round up blacks suspected of having pro-Japanese sympathies, with government officials contemplating whether or not to censure the agitational black press, Du Bois practically thumbed his nose at them and reiterated stances he had taken earlier and continued to believe them valid. He quoted Pearl S. Buck to support his contention that Japan stood shoulder to shoulder with India, China, and Russia for racial equality while Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and Italy were against it. Noting that statements citing racial equality as the fundamental cause of the war came from different sources, Du Bois cited an editorial of the *Atlanta Constitution* as well as statements by such dignitaries as Sumner Welles, Under-Secretary of State; Wendell Willkie; and an article in the *New Republic* magazine written by Eleanor Roosevelt. He also ran an item written by Carlos P. Romulo for the *New York Times Magazine.* Romulo hit upon themes Du Bois had made his own: The Japanese were destroying white influence in conquered Asia; they stressed a word long empty to natives under white rule . . . that of freedom; Asians are rid of white rule and are not being crushed; conditions in Japanese conquered lands have not been made worse. Romulo told of Japanese encouraging nationalism in the Philippines with the introduction of Tagalog, the national language, in the public schools. "We must face the fact," he wrote, "that Japan has kept her word to her fellow-Orientals, as long as it has been to her advantage, and lived up to the promises made by the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."[45]

Unlike President Roosevelt Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Du Bois did not see Pearl Harbor as a day of infamy but as a day of revolutionary occurrence. From his perspective, Japan's attack put a new face on the war. "Race and race relations," he wrote, "moved to a foremost place in the reasons for the conflict." He contended that, although the British would have liked to have tabled the issue until the end of the war, Japan's actions had forced to the forefront the question as to what was to be done with India.[46]

Du Bois certainly agreed with the views of Pearl S. Buck, the noted novelist and Sinophile, who predicted the end of colonialism, claiming that the white man was a century behind the colored man. "The colored man knows that colonies and colonial-mindedness are anachronisms," she argued. All that remained was for them to "kick of the shell of the chrysalis. . . . The man of Asia

today," Buck announced, is not a colonial and he has made up his mind he will never be a colonial again."[47] She pointed out what she perceived to be evidence of cooperation among Asians and Japan, reporting that "the natives offered no noticeable opposition to Japanese aims in the Malay Peninsula or in the Indian Archipelago. They evidently cooperated with the Japanese in Thailand and Burma . . . ," she accurately surmised.[48] While willing to defer to Pearl Buck's greater knowledge of Asian frustrations, Du Bois certainly knew the depth of resentment festering within black communities of the United States and tried to convey the cynicism of a great many blacks when he reprinted a popular aphorism that circulated among them: "Just carve on my tombstone, 'Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of a white man'."[49]

In conclusion, although W. E. B. Du Bois is easily identifiable with the notion of Pan-Africanism, few people associate him with Pan-Asianism. As progenitor of the Talented Tenth and as an advocate of a new, more militant Negro, however, Du Bois was infatuated with the idea of a colored Japan demonstrating military and political prowess as ably as any white nation. He tended to see Japan's status among the powers as analogous to that of blacks in America. Both were consistently denied equality of opportunity and respect despite proven ability.

Du Bois offered analyses of the state of international politics from a perspective that gave Japanese policies equal consideration with those of white nations. In his view, a Japanese Monroe Doctrine that recognized Japan's having a sphere of influence that included Korea, Manchuria, and China made about as much sense as the original doctrine that claimed American hegemony over Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Central and South America. Rather than a cabal of conservative white men, blind to their own bigotry, had Du Bois and his views of the meaning of Japan in the international political arena carried any influence in the higher councils of American decision making, it is conceivable that at critical junctures strategic compromises might have been obtained to avoid a war that thoughtful Japanese did not want. Due to the respect and prestige that he enjoyed among fellow black Americans, Du Bois must be given considerable credit or blame for the pervasive and enduring pro-Japanese sentiments found within black communities of the United States before and during the Second World War.

NOTES

1 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Close Ranks," *Crisis* 16 (July 1918): 111; *Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Towards an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 255; Du Bois, "The Meaning of Japan," speech, March 12, 1937, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia; also delivered June 2, 1937, Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers [hereafter referred to as WEBDP] (microfilm, W. E. B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst), reel 80/ frame 654.

2 *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 3 vols., ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973-1978), 2:272.

3 Du Bois, "Atlanta University," in *From Servitude to Service: Being the Old South Lectures on the History and Work of Southern Institutions for the Education of the Negro* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1905), 197.

4 David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race* (New York: H. Holt, 1993), 503-504; Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," *Atlantic Monthly* 115 (May 1915): 710; Du Bois, "Evolution of the Race Problem," in *Proceedings of the National Negro Conference, 1909* (rpt. New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), 155.

5 August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 3rd ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 241.

6 Du Bois, "What the Negro Will Do," MS, February 4, 1889, Francis Broderick Papers, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library.

7 See, for example, Du Bois, "A Chronicle of Race Relations," *Phylon* 1 (2d Quarter, 1940): 179-80.

8 *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 1:451.

9 *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 22, 1931.

10 Ibid., November 19, 1931.

11 See, for example, Du Bois, "Japan and Ethiopia," Crisis 40 (December 1933): 293.

12 *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 13, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, 2 vols. (White Plains, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1986), 1:167-68.

13 Ibid., February 6, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, incorrectly reproduces an earlier column under that date.

14 Ibid., February 13, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:167.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:166-67.

17 Ibid.

18 *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 13, 1937.

19 Du Bois to Waldo McNutt, in *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 2:185; Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," 710.

20 *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 27, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1: 174

21 Ibid., February 27, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:172.

22 Ibid.; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:174.

23 Ibid., March 13, 1937.

24 Ibid.

25 Du Bois reported that, at the time, the *Mainichi Shimbun* (which means "Daily Newspaper" in Japanese) had a circulation of one million. Reports of his trip were carried in the *Osaka Mainichi* and the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* newspapers.

26 *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 13, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:180.

27 Ibid., March 13, 1937; Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, 1:179.

28 Ibid., March 20, 1937.

29 Ibid.

30 Du Bois, "A Message To The Youth of Asia," WEBDP, 87/28.

31 Du Bois, "The Meaning of Japan," WEBDP, 80/654.

32 Reginald Kearney, *Afro-American Views of the Japanese* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 83-84; Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming* (1943; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1968), 329-30, 336; David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 137, 302. Information on Hikida is not easy to come by. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives [MFFA] there is evidently a personnel file on Hikida, but in Japan free access to information considered personal is proscribed. One may ask questions, and a bureaucrat will go look at the folder and bring back an answer. On the American side, I requested FBI files on Hikida under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act in 1993. Although I have received assurances that I shall receive the requested information in due course, and that everything is being done to facilitate processing of thousands of such requests, I'm still waiting. . . .

33 *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 27, 1937; Du Bois, "A Chronicle of Race Relations," *Phylon* 1 (4th Quarter, 1940): 378; *Phylon* 2 (2d Quarter, 1941): 183; *Chicago Defender*, September 26, 1942.

34 *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 13, 1937.

35 Du Bois to Waldo McNutt, in *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois,* 2:185. Du Bois' treatment in Japan might have been the source for a rumor that the NAACP was receiving money from the Japanese government. Grant K. Goodman, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Kansas, told me that he had once seen a reference in the MFAA to payments by the government of Japan to black organizations. Unfortunately, he could not remember where he saw it and I have yet to find it. During World War II, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reported in his diary that "a good many" black leaders had received funds through the Japanese ambassador in Mexico. Such information was apparently obtained from decoded Japanese intelligence files (MAGIC), but specifics remain elusive. See John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Peace and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 175.

36 Du Bois to Hikida, April 1, 1936, WEBDP, 45/1041; Du Bois to Robert L. Vann, May 25, 1936, WEBDP, 46/540; Vann to Du Bois, May 27, 1936, WEBDP, 46/541; C. J. Tagashira to Du Bois, November 21, 1936, WEBDP, 46/729.

37 Du Bois to Japanese publishers, [n.d., 1940], WEBDP, 77/747.

38 Telegram to Harry F. Ward, October 7, 1937, WEBDP, 46/1162.

39 *Pittsburgh Courier* (September 25, 1937).

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 *Amsterdam Star-News* [New York], October 11, 1941.

43 Du Bois, "A Chronicle of Race Relations," *Phylon* 2 (2d Quarter, 1941): 181-83.

44 *Pittsburgh Courier* (October 23, 1937).

45 Du Bois, "A Chronicle of Race Relations," *Phylon* 3 (3rd Quarter, 1942): 320-25; Romulo, cited in ibid., 4 (4th Quarter,1943): 385-87. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity sphere, proclaimed in 1940, ostensibly aimed to bring all of East Asia, including Australia and New Zealand, together for "coexistence and coprosperity" under Japan's leadership. Ultimately, the Japanese sought to end Anglo-American hegemony and "establish the superiority of East Asia in a new global economy." Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 262-90.

46 *Phylon* 3 (2d Quarter, 1942): 206-207.

47 Ibid. (3rd Quarter, 1942): 321.

48 Ibid. (2d Quarter, 1942): 207.

49 Ibid. (4th Quarter, 1942): 419.