

I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT THE JAPS



as told to William F. French

BY JOAN FONTAINE

As winner of this year's Academy Award, Joan Fontaine is Hollywood's No. 1 actress. Somewhat less generally known is the fact that she and her sister, Olivia De Havilland, were born in Japan. As press-time neared for this issue of Liberty, what she says in these pages was being emphasized and dismayingly confirmed by news of Japanese outrages and cruelties against white soldiers and civilians in the Far East.



LAST night the wail of air-raid sirens woke me. Half asleep, I felt myself back on the set of *This Above All* where air raids and blackouts were my daily diet. Then I realized that that picture was finished, that I was home in my bed, and that there were no such sound effects in *The Constant Nymph*.

Then the crash of guns brought me to my feet. I looked out the window. The skies were pierced by searching fingers of light from American anti-aircraft batteries, and brilliant with bursting shells.

From our hill we could see the flash of distant cannon. We heard air-raid wardens ordering "lights out," and people outside calling that enemy planes were overhead. But I wondered. Could that be—in America?

This morning, as I drove to the studio, it just didn't seem it could. The green Hollywood hills, with their peaceful homes glistening in the sunlight, made the newspapers' blazing headlines about the air raid seem unreal. I almost expected to hear a camera grinding behind me, and to discover the paper-waving newsboys were part of a picture.

I stopped for a traffic light. Almost within arm's reach a man was working among the flowers that bordered the lawn of a beautiful California home. He looked up and grinned.

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A wide-mouthed Japanese grin—a grin that had meant kindness and friendship to me as far back as I could remember.

I started to smile back. Then—

If I were the fainting kind, perhaps that Japanese face would have dissolved into a montage of something distorted and evil. But I'm too practical for that. The Jap's grin didn't change as my car moved on. But it had whipped into my mind vivid flashes of an all too familiar nightmare.

For some time I've been bothered with nightmares. Nightmares of marching Japanese, of flying Japanese, of Japanese in tanks and on ships. In those nightmares I see their sinister grinning faces draw closer and closer. I hear them threatening terrible things.

Their words are not strange to me. Japanese was the first language I ever understood. I was born in Japan, and as an infant I was cared for by a Japanese amah—or assistant mother. She was more than my nurse. I clung to her. A Japanese amah takes the child from its mother and nurses it. And she would unhesitatingly give her life to protect her charge.

When we first came to America I was a little over three. We lived in the little town of Saratoga, California, overlooking the Santa Clara Valley. American ways and American children were more or less strange to my sister and me. So I turned to the friendly Japanese.

I used to follow the Japanese gardeners around all the time. They understood us and gave us presents. If only string beans, they would bring them in little flower-covered baskets and give them to us. They always had a smile and a kind word for Olivia and me.

So my nightmares don't have their roots in my childhood. The Japanese of my childhood were the most obedient and most kind people.

The Japan I was born in was a land whose people were devoted to service. They were dominated by a desire to please those they served, to revere their ancestors, and serve their masters.

I sowed the seeds of my black dreams when I visited Japan in 1934-5. The year I then spent there was disastrous to my peace of mind. For I found not a land of flowers and kindness—but a nest of intrigue, a hotbed of hate. Sneers had replaced friendly smiles and eyes that had twinkled now blazed or smoldered with resentment. At first I couldn't read what those eyes were saying—"Wait, you white people, we'll show you."

Then I heard things said in Japanese that I wasn't supposed to understand—and I understood. Even tiny youngsters glared venom at me and at every other white person.

Cruel militarists had embittered babies' souls and soured the very amahs' milk. Japanese children were no longer brightly kimonoed little butterflies flitting among the flowers and cherry blossoms. They were bitter, uniformed little automatons,

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born to hate and reared to kill.

From their first day in school every boy and every girl wore a uniform. The boys wore black uniforms and black caps and the girls wore middies and navy blue skirts. Every uniform was identical except for the buttons, which designated the school its wearer attended.

Fast disappearing, too, was the picturesque native dress of the Japanese women. Already the now compulsory *mompei* were appearing. The *mompei*—little divided skirts that look like unbelievably baggy breeches and accentuate the stubbiness of Japanese legs—are a nightmare to any woman. But, strange as it may seem, it isn't a vision of them that awakens me one night in a cold sweat and another night in a fever.

It's the memory of those hate-branded children—and of the cruel boy soldiers who are little more than children—that haunts my nights. I can't forget how like crouching animals they were—and how deadly. There was always that "we'll show you" look in their eye, and when you caught them unawares you could see the hatred in their faces.

As we passed them on the street even the children would remark about what they would some day do to the white people—thinking I couldn't understand them.

And those who did know I spoke Japanese would pretend they couldn't understand me—just as a means of giving vent to their hatred. For they have been born and taught to hate the white race—especially the Americans. Only the Germans, they were told, were not trying to prevent their young and vigorous people from gaining their proper place in the world. The selfish imperialistic nations of Britain, America, and France were determined to hold them slaves on their islands.

While I was in the new Japan I was subject to abuse not only by the young Japanese but also by some of the older ones. Apparently the new doctrines and ideals of patriotism as interpreted by the militarists and their German advisers had converted some of the milder souls of Nippon to the philosophy of hate. Japanese officials found it difficult to use their usual glib alibi—that it was the work of the *gorotsuki* (gangsters)—to explain these indignities. I remember being chased down the street by an old Jap with a cane who was calling me the vilest names he could say in Japanese.

The Germans were everywhere—and German policies and practices were rapidly becoming Jap policies and practices. When I was in Japan in 1934 the nearest people to the Japanese were the Germans.


But, contrary to general belief, the Germans did not introduce their youth movement and their young Hitler organizations. The Japanese were already in possession of a 100-per-cent efficient method of turning children to the state and to the sword. The Nazi child fanatic could teach them nothing. Beginning with their first year in school, the army controlled their physical education and year after year

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took over more and more of their education and control. Then they were conscripted into the army or navy.

It was in 1934 that I saw my first group of *Kibei* boys (American-born Japanese sent to Japan for their education and proper training in the spirit of emperor worship), and I'm afraid the same light burned in their eyes as did in the eyes of any Japanese-born sword lover.

 HERE in America we are beginning to recognize the *Kibei* as the most deadly menace to our national safety. He is the brains of espionage and sabotage. He is the organizer of the *Issei* (Japan-born Japanese in America), who are still loyal to the emperor for activity against the United States, and he is also the teacher in many of the Japanese schools on the West Coast.

Even those misguided lovers of democracy who are today circulating petitions asking that no discrimination be made against Japanese in America merely because they are Japanese, warn that the *Kibei*, imbued with the spirit of modern Japan, must be hunted out and interned: that there is no safety for us as long as he is free.

American-born, with American citizenship and often with almost American manners, this passionate militarist is a more deadly peril than any Nazi spy or killer ever spawned.

Unswerving in his loyalty to his god-emperor, he is, generally, returned here by the Japanese government for a purpose—a sinister and difficult-to-frustrate purpose.

I, who was born in Japan, cannot tell him from the college-student Jap who loves America and American ideas and who hates militaristic Japan with a fear-inspired intensity. And, which is more important, neither can the American-born and loyal American Japanese. Even he cannot put his finger on the blood-dominated *Kibei*. So American Japanese dread him as double poison to them. But hundreds of *Kibei* circulate among them unknown and undetected.

I'm sure I know several *Nisei* (American-born Japanese with American citizenship) who are truly Americans, with an intense love for our country. But they and their parents, the *Issei*, are harboring and sheltering thousands of enemies of the United States; thousands of potential spies, saboteurs, and even soldiers to fight in unison with any Japanese troops that might land here.

Yet in spite of all that, we remain apathetic out here, in the very heart of the danger. And, naturally, the rest of America says, "If California doesn't worry, why should we?"

Possibly it is because the average Westerner has seen so much of Japs that he can't reconcile them with the blood-lusting youth I saw in Japan. Possibly because he says, "How could anybody with any brains want to get back under the Japanese heel after they have had such liberty and comfort here?"

Maybe they haven't my nightmares to wake them up in a cold sweat and put the fear of military fanatics in

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their soul.

Today's paper tells of the supplies of water and rice found in Japanese homes—supplies against the time the Los Angeles aqueducts are blown up and the city is without water, even to drink.

The Dies Committee has just issued another report on Jap spying on the West Coast and on Japanese plans for the invasion of California—with fifth-column support.

A headline this morning says, "Allegiance to Hirohito Stressed in Japanese Language Schools Here," with a following article explaining how Japanese language and loyalty to Hirohito are stressed over all else; how two sets of textbooks were used by the schools, one to show curious Occidentals and the other containing rabidly pro-Japanese teachings.

And still my star friends and acquaintances regard our local Orientals as harmless—at least, the individual ones they know. We know that they are organized, that they have radio stations, and that their fishing boats have been equipped to turn into naval units. But of course that doesn't apply to Bill's gardener or Ellen's maid or house girl—so *Bill and Ellen think*.



SO we in Hollywood still get a kick out of the naïve things the Japs do. One of my friends enjoys telling this story: When he went out into his grounds a few mornings after the Pearl Harbor episode, he saw what appeared to be a new Mexican gardener at work.

As the man didn't look up at his approach, he called, "Good morning." The enormous sombrero turned, and Kaya, his Jap flower man, said to him, "*Buenos dias, señor.*"

In telling this story, my friend always gleefully explains that "that smart little egg wasn't going to run chances of being taken for a Japanese."

And then, of course, there is that oft-told Hollywood classic of the kind-hearted star who, when she realized that Japanese help would have to be evacuated from the zone where her home was, said to her gardener, "Togo, I'm afraid you'll have to leave us. I hope that when the war is over you can come back and work for me again." To which Togo replied, "Oh, no, missy—that day come, you work for me."

Of course the Japanese settlement on Terminal Island, within a stone's throw of our most important docks and tremendous reserves of oil, has finally been cleaned out. And Japanese families are being ordered away from important military zones. But there is still a complete lack of knowledge of the deadliness of the modern Jap—and the extent of his fifth-column activities in this country.

We on the West Coast are so used to seeing them pushing our lawn mowers, raising our vegetables, and peddling our fruits that we can't picture what lies behind them—a different code of honor, a deadly fanatical loyalty to a god-emperor, and a race born to hate.

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And because we are apathetic, the rest of the country is the same. We look at the apparently happy Japanese around us, a people with infinitely more than they could possibly have under their own rulers, and it is hard to think they could fail to appreciate how well off they are.



WHICH brings to mind the experience a friend of mine had not long ago. As his car stopped at a signal, newsboys rushed about displaying papers with the headline, "Singapore Falls." While he was mulling over this bit of bad news, his wife suddenly clutched his arm.

"Look at this!" she demanded. "Those two Japs in that car. Listen!"

In the next lane a classy convertible coupé of late vintage with its top down held two young Japanese. They were smartly dressed and, in American manner, the girl was snuggled close to her companion. A college sticker was on their windshield.

They were laughing happily when my friend saw them.

"Seem mighty happy," he said to his wife. "But they're young and full of spirits. Maybe they didn't see those headlines."

"Didn't see them!" his wife returned. "The boy said loudly enough for me to hear distinctly, 'Singapore Falls. Ha! They haven't seen anything fall yet! Just wait.'"

There was no doubt about my friend's wife having heard—for she was furious. And more furious because she had failed to get the car's license number before it turned and was lost in the traffic.

How, you ask, could any one in a position to own and enjoy a car like that want to see the privileges and liberties of America crushed underfoot?

You'll probably have to ask a fifth-columnist to find out. Because I don't know, even after seeing them on their home grounds in Japan. But I do know that there are thousands of Japanese in this country, just as there are thousands of Germans and Italians, who want to see the Axis Powers win the war. And I think the Japanese are infinitely more fanatical and dangerous.

Yet I am far from being a Japanese-hater. I have been loved by and have loved Japanese. One of the first Christmas gifts I acknowledged receipt of this past Christmas was from an old Japanese nurse of mine—sent *after* December 7. But the Japanese I have loved are not the Japanese of modern Japan. We must defend ourselves against those or perish.

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