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A Policeman at My Door

It did not seem possible that tiny Japan and the powerful United States of America could be on a collision course in 1941. But dark war clouds were hanging over Japan and I knew that I was under surveillance, for there was always a policeman stationed outside the door of my little missionary home in Matsuyama.

All Americans were suspects in Japan in those days prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the actual beginning of the war with America. It was a very hard time for missionaries. We couldn't do very much, we didn't have free access to travel and, worst of all, the Japanese people themselves were afraid to come to us, afraid to be seen talking with us. When the relations between the United States and Japan began deteriorating so rapidly in 1941, I had already been living in Japan for 32 years. The board of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in New York had altered its policy in 1909 to allow me, as a single woman, to sail for Japan to join the small missionary forces in these islands.

My brother, the Rev. Thomas Francis, had left an Alliance pastorate in New Jersey to come to Japan in 1913. He had enjoyed a very successful missionary career which emphasized the launching of new Mission churches. In 1941 however, he was home on furlough.

My sister, Anne, who had joined me in Japan in 1922 after the death of her husband, was located in the strategic city of Fujuyama on the large island of Honshu. I was on the other side of the Inland Sea, in the city of Matsuyama on the island of Shikoku.

Our missionary work had brought us very close to the hearts of many of the Japanese people and we knew that, as a whole, the people themselves did not want war. If it had been left to the people, war with all of its horror and death and destruction would not have been their will.

I had a number of Japanese friends living with me at that time and they felt worse about it than I did. But if any of them dared to say a word against the prospect of war, they would pay for it.

We must remember that, at that point in history, the Japanese government and military figures were very proud, having gained a great victory over China and over Russia before that. The leaders had come to the place where they thought they could fight the whole world and win. They had carefully prepared for this and they thought they would emerge victorious.

Now I don't think my American loyalty will come into question if I say a word about the American-Japanese relations in those years preceding World War II.

Living as I did in Japan during that time, I believe that we, as a great American nation, had become very coarse in our dealing with these Orientals who are of such a deeply sensitive nature. This doesn't excuse Japan, by any means, but we have something to think about as we look back on it.

I think the troubles began with the immigration problems. The United States originally had a covenant with Japan—a gentleman's agreement—in which Japan promised to send only "suitable" people to America. The Japanese government felt that it had kept the agreement and could not understand the reason for sudden restrictive quotas being announced by the American government.

The restrictive quotas apparently were announced by the United States without any consultation with the Japanese. They were terribly upset and felt they had lost face and had been affronted by the Americans.

From that time on we began to hear them say, "We've just got to fight with America! We've just got to show them that we are not as dumb as they think we are!" This became a deep conviction in their hearts.

It was not the American people, either, who had taken the action, but it was the government. We missionaries in Japan felt very sad about it, for it gave opportunity for the Japanese people to think undue ill thoughts about us.

And then, of course, it was one thing after another. You know how it is when feelings get hurt—it's like having a sensitive toe out there and everything strikes it. So one thing added to another

to further strain the relations.

No one had to come and tell me personally that the government was upset with Americans. The policeman posted outside my door was message enough.

One day he told me that war with the United States would break out very soon.

"Oh, no!" I said to him. "Don't let them do it! You have no idea how large and strong America is."

"I know," he answered, "but I think we can do it."

I kept it to myself, for he would have suffered if it had become known that he had told an American even that much. And, for a policeman, he had actually been very kind to me.