

## PEARL HARBOR

moet men dan niet toch aannemen dat het de Amerikanen, opgezweept door de hun toegebrachte slag, dank zij hun productievermogen, organisatorisch talent en vindingrijkheid gelukt zou zijn, binnen een afzienbaar aantal jaren de krachtsverhoudingen in de Stille Oceaan weer beslissend in hun voordeel te wijzigen? De historicus van de Amerikaanse marine, Samuel E. Morison, heeft in die zin gelijk wanneer hij de overval op Pearl Harbor 'a strategic imbecility' noemt:

*'One can search military history in vain for an operation more fatal to the aggressor. On the tactical level, the Pearl Harbor attack was wrongly concentrated on ships rather than permanent installations and oil tanks. On the strategic level it was idiotic. On the high political level it was disastrous.'*<sup>1</sup>

Dat is allemaal juist, althans: juist gebleken. Gaat men evenwel van de normen uit die in de chauvinistische milieus golden waar Japans koers bepaald werd, dan komt men tot een andere benadering en beoordeling. Om een tweede Amerikaanse historicus, Louis Morton, te citeren:

*'Considering the alternatives, the international situation in the fall of 1941, and the risks, the Japanese plan was not altogether as unrealistic as it has appeared to many. The seizure of Southeast Asia in the time allotted did not seem too difficult, and with the resources of this area the Japanese believed they could wage a defensive war along their outer perimeter for a long time. Certainly this course even with its risks was preferable from their point of view to submission.'*

*In the view of the leaders of Japan, there was no honorable choice but war. The United States and Great Britain, they were convinced, were bent on destroying Japan or reducing it to a minor power. Submission was unthinkable and Japan had no alternative, 'but to resolutely plunge into war', while it still had the power to do so. The nation entered the war, wrote a prince of the Imperial Family, 'with a tragic determination and in desperate self-abandonment.' If it lost, 'there will be nothing to regret because she is doomed to collapse even without war.'*<sup>2</sup>

Ook dat is allemaal juist, maar, gelijk gezegd (Morton geeft het al aan): alleen wanneer men uitgaat van de normen die in de milieus golden waar Japans koers bepaald werd. Juist die koers was tien jaar lang, sinds de inval in Mandsjoerije, met name door de Amerikanen met bezorgdheid

<sup>1</sup> S. E. Morison: *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, dl. III (1948), p. 132 (verder aan te halen als: Morison, dl. III). <sup>2</sup> (*United States Army in World War II*) Louis Morton: *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: the First Two Years* (1962), p. 127.