

## General Stanley D. Embick: Military Dissenter\*\*

IN the shadow of America's highly publicized generals and admirals there have long stood senior officers whose importance far exceeded their fame. Such a man was Stanley Dunbar Embick. Almost unknown outside the military establishment, General Embick was a formulator of grand strategy during the 1920s and 1930s and the foremost military advocate, in those years, of a limited defense perimeter. Before Pearl Harbor, when critical strategic questions were discussed at the highest levels of the defense establishment, Embick frequently found himself in the position of dissenter. After the Japanese attack and in succeeding decades, the United States decisively rejected the kind of military policy that Embick favored. Yet, the general's views, the man who presented them, and the treatment his superiors accorded this dissenting officer are, if anything, worthier of examination now than they were before America adopted a "forward" strategy.

It is the purpose of this essay to describe General Embick's ideas, to relate them to his actions during the pre-Pearl Harbor decade, and particularly, to explain his significance as a military dissenter in the recent history of the United States.

Stanley D. Embick, of Scottish and German lineage, was born 22 January 1877, in a rural area near Greencastle, Pennsylvania. Appointed to the United States Military Academy in 1895, he graduated in 1899 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Artillery. After helping to police liberated Cuba and performing some routine duties in the United States, he entered the Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia. His superiors regarded him as a man of significant potential. They made him an instructor at the Artillery School, then ordered him to Washington in 1905 as Assistant to the Chief of Artillery. There, he planned fortifications for the newly acquired empire—in the Philippines and at the Panama Canal. For a number of years he moved back and forth between Washington and Fort Monroe, serving with the General Staff and in other positions within the War Department. In January 1918

he went to France on the staff of General Tasker H. Bliss, who was the United States delegate to the Supreme War Council, the agency that coordinated American and Allied military activities during World War I. Bliss made Embick his chief of staff, and after the armistice, when the general became an American commissioner at the Peace Conference, he kept Embick with him.

Embick served chiefly in two kinds of positions during the 1920s and 1930s: as a commander of Far Pacific outposts and as a participant in agencies that prepared plans for possible future wars—the General Staff War Plans Division and the Army War College. In August 1920, following a few months of service with the WPD, he entered the War College as a student. After graduating in 1921, he was appointed as an instructor, directing the College's intelligence course. He sailed to the Philippines in 1923 to take command of an artillery unit, then returned to Washington to become first the acting assistant chief of staff of the War Plans Division in 1926 and subsequently its executive officer. When the Japanese Army began to occupy Manchuria during the late summer of 1931, taking a long step toward what would ultimately become a confrontation with the United States, Embick was in command of the Coast Artillery School and of the Third Coast Artillery District. The following June he began a tour of duty as commander of the Harbor defenses of Manila and Subic Bays.<sup>1</sup>

Now 54 and a brigadier general, Embick had a distinguished record, extensive formal education, and wide experience. He had been involved in defense planning since 1905 and had become over the years an expert in grand strategy. Service in Europe had enabled him to observe at first hand the highest political and military leaders of major powers. Assignments in the United States and its distant possessions developed his understanding of America's military strengths and weaknesses, and while he did not have the prestige of commanding troops in battle nor the aggressive decisiveness or the charisma of a heroic military

leader, he was widely respected in the Army and carefully listened to.<sup>2</sup>

Embick regarded himself as a soldier-statesman, a modern counterpart of the guardians of Plato's *Republic*. The role he conceived for himself was that of an austere-detached officer, a man of unquestioned loyalty and integrity who, without public notice, analyzed the strategic situation of the United States and recommended to his superiors ways of defending his country against potential enemies. This role required him to subject all areas of international life to meticulous investigation, examining the past and a continually changing present for potential sources of conflict that might affect America. It meant employing both military and nonmilitary methods of analysis including history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics, and required the ability to look at issues from any number of perspectives including the perspectives of the peoples of other nations. It meant understanding the American military system thoroughly and designing ways to deal with threats to national security. Embick understood the complex relationship of war and politics. He felt that war plans must be in harmony with national policies because the object of military action was to attain political goals. But he distrusted those civilian leaders who in the pursuit of secondary political objectives, jeopardized military actions on which the nation's primary interests depended.<sup>3</sup>

General Embick gave considerable thought to what the primary interests of his country actually were. While he felt that the United States had a stake in the Far East, in Latin America, and in every region of the world where American economic concerns extended, he viewed the nation's interests in a hierarchical manner. The American economy, he was sure, could easily survive if foreign commerce stopped. Asia and the Western Pacific were far less important than an area within a strategic triangle extending from Alaska to Oahu to the Panama Canal. Under certain conditions, even Oahu could be abandoned and its garrison and naval forces withdrawn to the West Coast, because the most important place to defend was the continental United States. There, in the heartland, America's truly vital interests lay.<sup>4</sup>

To defend this hierarchy of interests, Embick favored a small balanced military system, expandable when war threatened. In an article for the *Journal of the United States Artillery* published in 1916, he explained what an effective defense system would be like.



The United States, he observed, was essentially an island, separated by geography from potential invaders. The first line of defense for this continental island was the Navy, which must operate away from American shores, intercepting and destroying an enemy fleet long before it reached North America. But the Navy could not perform this task by itself. If it were the sole defense, it would have to protect its own bases and shield numerous American cities against raiders and this would require it to divide into several forces, each of which could be defeated by a concentrated enemy fleet. Additional defenses were therefore necessary, including fixed fortifications at bases and harbors and a mobile land force to protect areas unguarded by coast artillery. With these protections, the Navy could delay fighting until it could be built up to the war strength that the country's huge latent resources allowed. Otherwise, the American fleet might be defeated, laying the homeland open to invasion.<sup>5</sup>

In later years, Embick modified these ideas somewhat, taking into account the strategic bomber, which he regarded chiefly as a defensive weapon. Still, throughout his career, he retained the outlook of a coast artillery officer, conceiving of the continental United States as a citadel and its overseas possessions as outposts of the main fortress.<sup>6</sup>

WHILE General Embick spent much of his career preparing for war, he was reluctant, for several reasons, to see the United States become involved in a major conflict and believed America should arm solely for defense. To his students at the War College he explained that the United States had a material interest in maintaining international peace because it was a creditor nation. No one was better able to see how feeble America had become, militarily, after World War I and this weakness troubled Embick when he contemplated what might happen should the United States engage a first-class military power. Still, until shortly before World War II, he did not believe in building up the nation's armed forces. He felt that arms races sapped the economies of nations. They diverted labor from "productive" employment. They created tensions that could lead to war. Embick's view was very similar to that of pre-World War I businessmen who thought that armaments and war were bad for society.

Experiences with the Supreme War Council and the Peace Commission

strongly influenced Embick's feelings about peace and war. Daily he had observed Allied politicians jockeying for advantage, trying to use American troops to buttress their own faltering armies, seeking political gains on secondary fronts like Mesopotamia and Palestine, while the crucial Western Front was far from secure, sending American troops to fight in theaters of less than first importance—for instance, in the struggle against the Russian Bolsheviks. Embick concluded that the United States had been taken in by the Allies, and he thought other nations would try to push America into the next war if they felt it served their interests.<sup>7</sup>

Embick was not the only American officer who distrusted the British and French, found inter-Allied politics appalling, or was profoundly disturbed by the prospect of another Great War. His mentor, Bliss, had objected strenuously to Allied schemes. Over drinks at the Hotel Crillon and during the sessions of the Supreme War Council and the Peace Conference, Bliss had discussed with the younger members of his staff (including Embick) the disastrous consequences of all-out struggles between whole populations. He had predicted that the next world war would finish civilization. For several years after the end of World War I, he and Embick, knowing how difficult it was for even allies to cooperate, wanted the United States to help maintain peace by joining the League of Nations.<sup>8</sup>

From 1919 to 1931 the likelihood of another great conflict involving the United States seemed small, even to men like Embick whose job it was to prepare contingency plans for future wars. The Manchurian crisis placed those plans in a new light—as programs that might actually have to be used, and very soon, to send American men and ships into combat. High-ranking officers asked themselves if American Far Eastern interests were really worth defending and whether the plan for protecting them against Japan, War Plan ORANGE as it was called, would actually work. These questions were made even more urgent by a growing movement in the United States to grant independence to the Philippines; for the Philippines contained naval installations vital to carrying out that plan.

War Plan ORANGE had originated a quarter of a century earlier, shortly after the Japanese had proved themselves a great Far Eastern military power in their war with the Russian Empire. The ORANGE plan required that, in the event of hostilities between Japan and the United States, Ameri-

can and Filipino forces in the Philippines would deploy to defend the islands against attack. Meanwhile the United States fleet would proceed as rapidly as possible across the Pacific from Hawaii. Securing its Philippine base, the fleet would launch air and naval offensives against the Japanese navy, gain control over sea communications vital to Japan, and force the Japanese to capitulate.

During the early 1930s a committee of Army and Navy planners re-examined the ORANGE plan in the light of changing conditions in the Orient and concluded that the Philippine bases must be retained even after independence. These bases, the planners contended, were a major military asset, vital to preserving America's Far Eastern interests.<sup>9</sup> General Embick completely disagreed. He was sure the Philippines could not be held and regarded American bases there as a military liability. He thought that an attempt to carry out the ORANGE plan could end in catastrophic defeat for the United States, and he believed that American Far Eastern interests were simply not worth defending against Japan. In 1933, from his post in the Philippines, he explained his reasons in a memorandum to the Commanding General of the Philippine Department.

Embick described how the elements of a balanced military system, on which the success of the ORANGE plan depended, had deteriorated since the plan's inception. Land defenses which he had helped prepare in 1907 to secure the Luzon naval installations from attack had degenerated badly, and the bases were now vulnerable to an overland assault. Facilities at these bases could no longer adequately service the fleet. The Navy itself had declined since the World War, and because the Japanese had gained control, after the war, of islands commanding the route to the Philippines from Pearl Harbor, Japan would probably launch air attacks against the American armada as it moved across the Pacific. Embick doubted that when the American vessels arrived in Far Eastern waters they would be a match for the Japanese Navy. Even this might not be ruinous if other nations supported the Americans—a possibility that had seemed reasonable 25 years before, when other great powers had sought to keep Japan from dominating East Asia. But international conditions had changed. Now America would have to fight alone.

In these altered circumstances, General Embick declared, it would be "literally an act of madness" for the United States to attempt to carry out



the ORANGE plan. If the Navy moved into the far Western Pacific, it might be destroyed. Embick hoped that if hostilities did occur, the American people would acquiesce in the loss of the Philippines rather than demand that the Navy immediately come to their rescue; for it would take two or possibly three years to build up the Navy to the point where it could match the Japanese fleet in the Asian waters.

The general described two alternate ways of dealing with America's precarious Far Eastern situation. One, which he obviously opposed, was to retain War Plan ORANGE and provide the forces needed to carry it out. This meant expanding the peacetime Navy and constructing a new Philippine base at a less vulnerable location. These steps would cost hundreds of millions of dollars which he felt the government should not spend in the midst of a depression. They would violate treaties signed in 1922 which restricted new naval base construction and limited the strength of the American fleet relative to the Japanese navy. They would be highly provocative to the Japanese, doubtless setting off a naval building race. If war began, the United States would have to rely on its peacetime fleet to win a victory in Japanese waters, something he doubted it could do.

The second method was to scrap the ORANGE plan and pull out of the Far East, withdrawing American garrisons from both China and the Philippines and moving the peacetime defense perimeter of the United States back to a line from Alaska to Oahu to Panama. This course, Embick claimed, would conform to the repeated assurances of American governments that American military policy was non-aggressive. It would eliminate the motive for creating and maintaining a vast peacetime naval establishment. Without provoking Japan, it would remove a severe weakness in America's Far Eastern situation while easing the drain on the national budget. In the event of war, the United States could expand its forces behind the new defense perimeter and take the offensive when properly prepared.<sup>10</sup>

Though Embick's memorandum was forwarded to the War Department, Army planners were neither convinced of the imminence of war with Japan nor ready to accept the drastic shift in policy that Embick's arguments entailed. However, after Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, which promised the Philippines complete indepen-

dence in a little over ten years, they began to accept his position.

EARLY in 1935 General Douglas MacArthur, the Chief of Staff, called Embick to Washington to head the War Plans Division. There, in early December, Embick submitted an even more strongly worded proposal for drawing back America's defense perimeter. He argued that an attempt to maintain a base in the Philippines after they became independent would invite war with the Japanese, for European nations, whose Far Eastern interests were far greater than America's, would likely maneuver the United States into a situation where "we would bear the first, perhaps the full brunt of armed resistance to Japan." If the ORANGE plan were followed, an American armada and expeditionary force would have to travel 5,000 miles from the nearest base across the front of the enemy and through a network of enemy bases, laying the American West Coast open to attack. The probable result would be "national disaster." Embick recommended that the United States arrange to have the Philippines neutralized by treaty and urged again that America remove its military frontier to the Alaska-Oahu-Panama line.<sup>11</sup>

Seven other generals, including the Chief of Staff, concurred with this conclusion. So, at least in principle, did President Roosevelt, to whom Embick gave a copy of his analysis. In a letter to the Secretary of the Navy on 9 December 1935, Roosevelt remarked that if the Philippines became independent in the next ten years, the United States must not keep a naval base there. "From the point of view of Naval strategy alone," Roosevelt remarked, "I would consider such a base in an independent territory a military-naval liability instead of an asset."<sup>12</sup>

Navy war planners felt quite differently about the Philippine question and they strenuously opposed Embick's suggested change in the ORANGE plan, a change that would have confined the Navy to a largely defensive role for months or even years. The Navy planners argued that if the United States relinquished its position in the Western Pacific it would yield its geographic barrier against "usurpation by the yellow race of the rights of the white race in the Far East." Moving the American defense perimeter eastward, they declared, would leave Great Britain to play a lone hand against rising Japanese ambition, encourage Japan to extend its empire, abandon China to her

fate and the Philippines to "their self-governing experiment." It would at the same time sacrifice the international prestige of the United States and deny support to American commercial interests in Asia and the Western Pacific.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of pressing for a decision to keep American forces in the Philippines after independence, the Navy merely asked that no decision be made for the time being; and this is what happened. Despite his qualms over the indefensibility of the islands, Roosevelt failed to decide—with the result that the old policy remained. The planners had to continue assuming that the United States would fight for its Far Eastern interests and that it would defend the Philippines and would use them as a base of naval operations in the event of war. The Army planners obviously were not pleased, but in the light of Roosevelt's nondecision, the best they were able to secure for more than two years were some modifications of the ORANGE plan intended to make it less hazardous. Not until a few months before the outbreak of World War II were they able to supplement War Plan ORANGE with programs for other contingencies.<sup>14</sup>

To military men who examined what was happening in Europe, it was clear from 1933 onward that new plans were needed. Embick was particularly concerned about European events and his anxiety was based, in part, on first-hand information. During the summer of 1937 he visited his daughter and his son-in-law, Capt. Albert C. Wedemeyer, who had enrolled as a foreign student in the Berlin *Kriegsakademie*. At Unter den Linden he laid a wreath on a German war memorial, reviewed the honor company of a guard regiment, and spoke with leaders of the German armed forces: Col. General Werner von Fritsch, the army commander-in-chief; General Ludwig Beck, army chief of staff; and Lt. General Hans-Juergen Stumpf, chief of staff of the *Luftwaffe*. When he returned to America, Embick, now Deputy Chief of Staff, re-entered the controversy over the ORANGE plan, a dispute made even more urgent by the outbreak of a new Sino-Japanese War. He found President Roosevelt hardening the American stand in the Far East and even talking publicly about the need to "quarantine" aggressor nations.<sup>15</sup> Aware of the threats to peace in Europe, certain that the United States was far too deeply committed in Asia, Embick believed the Republic to be in very grave danger. To protect it, he now decided to go outside channels and



work with civilians whose views of national defense paralleled his own.

In early October the former Inspector General of the Army, William C. Rivers, paid Embick a call. Rivers had long felt as Embick did about the danger of holding a base in the Philippines and had spoken out repeatedly against American Far Eastern policy. He was now a military advisor to one of the country's most active peace organizations, the National Council for Prevention of War, which since the early 1920s had been trying to strengthen public feelings against war and to transform those feelings into lasting national policies. The Council often used opinions of military men like Rivers in its presentations to congressional committees and in the literature it disseminated to the American people. Opposing naval rearmament, it quoted remarks of Admiral William S. Sims about the weaknesses of battleships and publicized the views of General William Mitchell, who had demonstrated the vulnerability of warships to air attack. Attempting to reduce the nation's armed forces, it cited arguments of military efficiency experts like General Johnson Hagood, wartime chief of staff of the Services of Supply. These citations were sometimes the product of judicious quotation out of context—but not always, for, as we have seen, anti-war feelings had penetrated the armed forces. During the 1930s, while the War Department's Military Intelligence Division tried to discredit peace groups and the Army Chief of Staff was assailing "unabashed and unsound propaganda" of "peace cranks," high ranking officers sympathized with arguments of the organized peace movement.<sup>16</sup>

At River's suggestion, General Embick made contact with Frederick Libby, executive secretary of the National Council for Prevention of War. In early June 1938, Embick agreed to distribute a speech by Libby which warned against joining in anti-fascist measures, such as economic boycotts, that could lead to war. Instead, Libby proposed that America work for a new league of nations separate from the Treaty of Versailles, strengthen neutrality legislation, and pass a constitutional amendment requiring a plebiscite before the nation entered a war. He also praised Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain for lessening European tension, proposed steps toward disarmament, and urged that a line be established in the mid-Pacific beyond which the American navy would have no responsibility, "its recognized business being the defense of our soil from invasion."<sup>17</sup>

Embick gave one copy to a War Department press relations officer who, he told the NCPW secretary, would "use it to good advantage, as he shares our point of view." He asked for a half dozen additional copies of this "sound and comprehensive" address, adding that he hoped it would reach a large audience. Thus the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army attempted to promote the ideas of a prominent anti-war and anti-military organization.

Shortly afterward, General Embick lent his name to a fund drive for the financially-precarious National Council for Prevention of War. He allowed Mr. Libby to send out a letter, aimed at wealthy businessmen, in which Embick characterized the NCPW as a realistic and wholly patriotic organization which was working to keep America from being drawn into war. The Council was entirely opposed to subversive interests, fascist and communist alike, Embick declared. It recognized the need to maintain sufficient armaments to protect the country's truly vital interests but opposed dissipating the national heritage in overseas conflicts. No other organization was more worthy of support.<sup>18</sup>

This letter aroused little excitement among its recipients and the fund drive failed. Unfortunately for General Embick, the organization he chose to assist, in his efforts to prevent an untimely war, turned out to be rather feeble and grew even weaker as World War II approached. Unable to change policies from within the military establishment or by alliance with civilians, Embick felt angry and powerless as Europe moved toward another great war and the United States took steps he felt would make it a belligerent.

He approved when the West European democracies attempted to forestall war by appeasing Hitler; when they reversed themselves in the early spring of 1939, he feared disaster—a virtual reenactment of 1914-18. Shortly after the British and French governments pledged to come to Poland's aid in the event of a German attack, he told George C. Marshall, who had succeeded him as Deputy Chief of Staff, that Prime Minister Chamberlain had "embarked upon a course of incalculable danger." If Chamberlain's new policy led to a general war the result would be "a colossal European catastrophe." Germany and Italy would quickly overrun Poland and the Balkans, and neither Britain, France, nor Russia would offer effective opposition. The Western Front would be stabilized early in the fighting. Military activity would be confined largely

to indecisive air and submarine combat with the war dragging on under siegelike conditions. Though he could not foresee the outcome, he thought it possible that military commanders would replace the political heads of many or all the belligerents and end the war with a negotiated peace.

Even more disturbing to Embick was the attitude of interventionist politicians and newspapers. The interventionists showed "less historical sense," he complained, "than the average European peasant" and were repeating "fallacies" that "led to our being duped twenty years ago and . . . set the stage for the present situation." He was particularly incensed at former Secretary of State Henry Stimson, who favored a hard line against Japan when war was impending in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

THE outbreak of World War II strengthened Embick's concern that the United States avoid a clash in Asia. After the Germans had swept across most of Western Europe, the head of the Army War Plans Division asked his views on a newly prepared plan for safeguarding the Western Hemisphere. He replied that the plan could not be carried out if the United States intervened in the Far East. It was "a military essential of the first importance in the new world situation," he added, that State Department officials and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reverse their provocative attitudes toward the Japanese. Embick wanted a rapprochement with Japan so that the United States could concentrate on Western Hemisphere defense.<sup>20</sup> Instead, the country became increasingly involved in both the European and the Asian conflicts, intertwining its activities with those of Great Britain, a nation which Embick believed had duped his country two decades before. Embick was one of the officers assigned to coordinating American and British military actions.

After completing his last regular assignment, as commander of the Fourth Corps Area and the Third Army, General Embick was named the American Army representative to the Permanent Joint Board on Defense of Canada and the United States. He helped prepare a combined war plan for those countries. Then, a few weeks before he was scheduled to retire, General Marshall, now Chief of Staff, appointed him to head the Army's delegation to a secret conference in Washington. This was the meeting of American and British military representatives held between 27

January and 29 March 1941, to prepare joint plans for a possible Anglo-American war against the Axis.<sup>21</sup>

Embick made no secret of the fact that he detested a principal formulator of British strategy, Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He remembered Churchill from World War I as a man who had subordinated military to political considerations when it had been dangerous to do so, as the amateur strategist who could never concentrate on the main issue but had always been ready to dispatch troops (including American troops) to secondary theaters. "A somewhat close-up observation of Churchill during the War and the Peace Conference," he told Frederick Libby, "left me with no respect whatever for his character."<sup>22</sup>

Participants in the secret conversations had little trouble agreeing on two major points: the primacy of the European theater, and, as a corollary, the need to defeat Germany and Italy before dealing with Japan. They could not agree on a third proposal which the British considered highly important, a plan requiring the United States to underwrite the defense of Singapore. The British argued that Singapore symbolized their prestige in the Pacific, providing moral support for the Empire. It had to be held if they were to regain their position in the Far East after the defeat of Germany and Italy.

This proposal sounded quite familiar to General Embick for it was another British scheme to commit Americans to a secondary theater, a plan which would limit Allied strength in a militarily-vital sector in order to preserve the British Empire. Embick rejected it and so did the other Americans. The Army delegates argued that if they accepted the Singapore proposal they would violate their instructions and agree to "a strategic error of incalculable magnitude." American Navy representatives would not accept a plan that required them to divide the fleet in the face of the enemy. Admitting that Singapore had great symbolic value and that its loss would be a severe blow, the Americans coolly informed the British representatives that many serious blows had been absorbed by nations with interests in the Pacific and others could be absorbed without final disaster. The war would be fought most effectively, the Americans insisted, if their country exerted its chief military effort in the Atlantic region or its chief naval effort in the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup>

This controversy ended with the conferees agreeing that the United States would not defend Singapore.

Still, the basic division that underlay the conflict over Singapore's defense, the division between a peripheral strategy aimed at protecting British interests and the strategy of concentration of force, was to emerge time and again during the ensuing years.

During these secret discussions, Embick and the other American military representatives were weighing what might be done *if* the United States joined Great Britain in fighting the Axis. While the conversations were going on, the world situation was changing so rapidly that almost immediately after the conference ended it became necessary to consider *whether* America should enter the war on Britain's side. Once again, General Embick was involved in the decision.

The war had gone badly for Hitler's enemies in the early spring of 1941. German forces pushed the British toward the Suez Canal and descended in early April on Greece and Yugoslavia. German U-boats, sinking ominous numbers of British ships, threatened the supply line between the United States and England. The British Isles appeared to be in danger of invasion. In view of these alarming developments, President Roosevelt proposed to send direct aid to the British in Egypt and weighed recommendations to have American warships convoy British vessels to Iceland or even to England. Since armed convoys were likely to lead to shooting on the high seas, Roosevelt was really considering whether to risk immediate war. At the suggestion of Harry Hopkins, Embick and Marshall were summoned to tell the President where the United States stood militarily at that point. As Marshall put it, he and Embick were to begin the "education of the President as to the true strategic situation."

The Chief of Staff arranged for General Embick, who had gone on leave after the Washington meeting, to fly back to Washington and join him in conferring with Roosevelt. Then, on the morning of 16 April, Marshall consulted with the War Plans Division, telling its members to examine what he might say to the President later in the day at the first briefing. Should he recommend that the country go to war? Was it necessary for the President to make a decision immediately? What did the President have to work with?

During the next few hours the planners prepared a memorandum outlining arguments for and against immediate entry into the war and indicating briefly what the Army could do at the beginning of hostilities. As a reason for staying out they noted that the Army was not yet prepared to con-

tribute much to the war effort. But they also felt that entry would awaken the nation to the gravity of the situation, that it would produce a cohesive effort, speed lagging military preparations, weaken the Axis, and strengthen the Churchill government. If the United States were going to become a belligerent, the WPD contended, it should do so before the British Isles were lost or before the British government changed its attitude toward appeasement.

General Marshall asked the planners for their individual opinions. All agreed that the United States should act quickly. Air Corps Col. Joseph T. McNarney argued that anything which tended to cause the fall of the British Isles tended to shift the whole load to the United States. During the discussion General Embick entered the room. Marshall read him the memorandum, summarized what had been said, and asked his opinion. Embick was adamantly opposed to entering the war.

Conceding that the United States could not allow Germany to conquer the British Isles, he agreed that it was vital to reduce the loss of Allied shipping and admitted that American belligerency would help keep the supply line intact. Yet he did not think England's situation was as precarious as his colleagues believed. Recent British setbacks in the Near East might actually simplify the defense of the British Isles, and if the current crisis led to the fall of the Churchill government, so much the better for the British. He would not advise that America enter the war, because that would be "wrong in a military and naval sense" and "unjust to the American people." Marshall, who was generally reluctant at this stage about expressing his own opinion, asked Embick, "Is that all you have to say for the American people?"<sup>24</sup>

Although the War Plans Division and the Secretaries of War, the Navy, and the Treasury favored strong action in the Atlantic, Roosevelt appeared to adopt a position similar to Embick's. Instead of authorizing armed escorts, he limited the Navy to increased patrolling and sent Churchill a telegram at the beginning of May which not only minimized the results of British setbacks in the Mediterranean but argued that British withdrawal from the Western Mediterranean would be helpful in some ways to England. However, even naval patrols involved a severe risk of war, and in the long run the path the President took turned out to be quite different from the one Embick prescribed.



Over the next months General Embick's view on the question of immediate war gained adherents in the General Staff;<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt, however, was moving in the opposite direction. The President authorized American warships to accompany convoys and to sink Axis vessels on sight, although, for all anyone knew, one encounter might provoke open war with Germany. Instead of pursuing the rapprochement with Japan which men like Embick wanted, he hardened the American position in the Far East, responding to Japanese expansion by tightening trade restraints that threatened the Japanese economy. The eventual result, as Embick had feared for so many years, was a disaster in the Pacific, though not at the place nor according to the scenario that he had imagined.

Still, if the government adopted policies that the general opposed, it continued to call on him for important duties. During the fall of 1941 he was sent to England where he inspected defenses, reporting to both the British and American governments. Churchill found him a capable critic and a "good friend to Britain" though "unduly alarmist." In fact, Embick was extremely pessimistic about English chances of keeping the Germans off their island. After Pearl Harbor, Embick unsuccessfully opposed British pleas for an early landing in North Africa, insisting that political reasons more than sound strategic considerations were behind the arguments of the British military chiefs. He disapproved of Allied offensives in the Eastern Mediterranean, preferring, now that the United States was actually fighting Japan, to send additional forces to the Pacific. In words reminiscent of his 1916 essay for the *Journal of the United States Artillery* and of his criticism of the ORANGE plan, he urged the Allies to regard the security of the "home citadel" as the "first essential" and to proceed as rapidly as possible to develop the war machinery that each country's potential allowed. In the meantime, they must not dissipate their limited resources on projects like an invasion of Africa that did not assure adequate return.<sup>26</sup>

Through the war Embick served in positions requiring diplomatic experience, strategic expertise, or both. He became a member of the Joint United States-Mexican Defense Commission and of the Inter-American Defense Board while continuing to serve on the Joint Defense Board for the United States and Canada. In the fall of 1942 he was appointed to the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, a group

of three elder statesmen—one each from the Army, Navy, and Air Corps who examined basic strategic decisions, weighed long-range implications of decisions and events, and reported their views directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When representatives of the Allies met at Dunbarton Oaks in 1944 to consider plans for a postwar international organization, Embick spoke for the U.S. Army.

Soon after the victory over Japan, Embick's service came to an end. In 1946, after 47 years in the Army, he retired as a lieutenant general. Eleven years later he died at Walter Reed Hospital and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. There were the usual obituary notices, but in his death as during his career Embick remained all but unknown to the nation he served.

At one time or another during his long career, General Embick expressed disagreement with the Army War Plans Division, the Army Chief of Staff, the Navy War planners, the joint planning staff of the Army and Navy, the secretaries of State, War, the Navy, and the Treasury, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the British military chiefs, the British Prime Minister, and the President of the United States. He thereby carried on an important tradition of American military leaders—the tradition of military dissenter, also exemplified by such well-known officers as Generals William Mitchell, Douglas MacArthur, James Gavin, and David Shoup.

IT is instructive to note what the consequences of dissenting were for General Embick. After his 1933 disagreement with Army planners over the ORANGE plan, the War Department did not shunt him off to some obscure post. It made him director of war planning, then elevated him to the second highest position in his service. When he later argued against policies that the President or the Secretary of War favored, he was not induced to retire, although his retirement date had passed. Instead he was placed on the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, where he could develop his views without hindrance and present them formally or informally to the military chiefs and administration leaders. His dissenting views were not only tolerated; they were encouraged.

There were a number of reasons for this fact. When Embick disagreed with one party, he usually served as the advocate of another. Opposing British officials over the defense of Singapore and the North African invasion, he represented the opinion of

other top American military leaders. In the middle 1930s, when he dissented from the Navy in the ORANGE plan dispute, the Army general staff stood behind him, for it had come to share his conception of global strategy.

The manner in which he dissented made Embick extremely valuable to his superiors. He was blunt and analytical. When he presented a memo disagreeing with someone higher up he did not attempt to paper over disagreements. Rather, he presented the objections to his views, rebutted the objections, and sought to substantiate his own conclusions in paragraph after paragraph of detailed analysis. His papers clarified issues, giving the Chief of Staff and the Commander in Chief a real choice of alternatives. Chief of Staff Marshall wanted advice from men with conflicting viewpoints, and the same was true of President Roosevelt, who made the incitement of conflict between subordinates a high principle of administration.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Embick was particularly useful to American political and military leaders because, as a veteran of council-table battles against his country's allies, he could be depended on during collaborative efforts to disagree with proposals that threatened American interests. A memorandum drawn up by War Department planners and approved by the President warned Army delegates to the secret military conversations of early 1941 that post-war commercial and military interests were never absent from British minds. "We should likewise safeguard our own eventual interests . . . we cannot afford nor do we need to entrust our nation's future to British direction."<sup>28</sup> No one had to give Embick this warning.

One might perhaps fault General Embick for being excessively pessimistic and cautious. Still, there is much to be said for having cautious, pessimistic persons in the highest military ranks. Events might have turned out more favorably for the United States if, throughout the 1960s, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had included in their ranks a general or admiral searchingly skeptical about proposals to use military power—a man, that is, like Stanley Embick.

General Embick, however, was a product of a kind of Army that has long ceased to exist, a service that, except in wartime, had been kept small and weak and which allowed officers aware of the limitations of warfare to rise to high levels. Whether the education and promotion systems of the American armed forces continue to produce dissenting officers of



Embick's type, along with more optimistic leaders, may prove a fateful question for the United States.

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