

A reporter's dilemma : Nogami Yaeko in Heidiland followed by a translation from Ô-Bei no tabi

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A REPORTER'S DILEMMA:
NOGAMI YAEKO IN HEIDILAND
Followed by a Translation from *Ô-Bei no tabi*

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Abstract

Nogami Yaeko's travelogue *Ô-Bei no tabi* is the result of her journey to the West in the years 1938 and 1939. It was published in 1942 and 1943, at a time when foreign politics was a dangerous topic. As her reputation today is that of an outspoken left-wing feminist writer, her travelogue is interesting as a document which, upon close reading, reveals a gradual development of the author's political outlook. With the passing of time, the accumulated misgivings about Japan's foreign policies make her writing an increasingly arduous task. This paper analyses Yaeko's brief chapter "Switzerland", where her coded language and her mimicry of official discourse, her difficult negotiations between cautious conformism and impatience, are very much in evidence. The apparently fortuitous word or mention of a name falls into the category of the telling unsaid and the heavily meaningful non-comments typical of writing in difficult times.

NOGAMI Yaeko 野上弥生子 (1885–1985)

Orig. name Kotegawa Yae. B. in Usuki, Ôita Prefecture, Kyûshû. 1900: moves to Tôkyô and enters Women's High School Meiji Jogakkô. 1907: graduation, marriage to Nogami Toyochirô; meets Natsume Sôseki, who helps her to publish the short story *En* ("Family") in *Hototogisu*. 1911: adheres to feminist group *Seitôsha* ("Bluestockings") as external correspondent. Continues publishing short stories and essays in *Seitô*, *Hototogisu*, *Chû Kôron*, *Ôsaka Mainichi*, *Fujin Gahô* and other leading magazines. 1920: translation of *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri in vol. 8 of children's encyclopaedia *Sekai shônen bungaku meisakushû*. 1934: *Heidi* appears in book-form under the title *Arupusu no Yama no Musume* ("A Girl from the Alps"), Iwanami Shoten. 1935: brief journey to Taiwan. 1938–9: journey to Europe and USA. 1942–3: publication of travelogue *Ô-Bei no tabi*, Iwanami Shoten. 1957: travels to China. 1958: receives the Yomiuri Prize. Major novels: *Kaijin Maru* (1922), *Ôishi Yoshio* (1926), *Meiro* ("The Labyrinth", 1956) and *Hideyoshi to Rikyû* (1963).

The travelogue is a genre with indefinite frontiers, embracing geography, history, archaeology, art history and a wide variety of other fields. It is a difficult genre where much depends on the author's capacity to navigate between personal feelings and sheer information. But as a source of information, it is constantly challenged by the guide-book or the history; and as biographical writing

it tends to merge into the Bildungsroman, where one expects to find the account of a slow intellectual growth through a continuous challenge of unfamiliar situations, people and customs. Bland generalizations, avoidance of personal opinions and excessive discretion run the risk of flatness, but they may also signal a need to steer clear of controversial topics in difficult times. And that evasion leaves traces, aporia, which the reader remains free to interrogate. This is certainly the case with the travelogue *Ô-Bei no Tabi* (“A Journey to Europe and the USA”) by Nogami Yaeko, published by Iwanami Shoten during the war-years 1942 and 1943 – hence, one of the most difficult times for a Japanese writer to tackle political themes.

Nogami Yaeko (original name Kotegawa Yae) was born in Usuki, Oita Prefecture, Kyûshû, in 1885. The family was in the sake-brewing business and counted among the wealthiest in the region. Yae was given the best available education; at the early age of fifteen she was sent to Tôkyô to pursue higher studies at the Meiji Jogakkô, a girls’ high-school styled after the British colleges for women in Oxford and Cambridge and known for its excellent coaching in English and its pro-Christian ideology. It was this Western and Christian-oriented atmosphere which awoke in her a keen interest for the cultural origins of Europe: the ancient world of Greece and Rome. This interest would produce, in 1927, her *Kirô-Roma Shinwa* (“Graeco-Roman myths”), a collection specially written for children which would become a sort of schoolbook and be frequently reprinted. Much earlier, probably while still a student, she had begun studying ancient Greek – a hobby she seems to have pursued for the rest of her life.¹

In 1906 she married Nogami Toyochirô, a man from her home town Usuki. Then still a student of English literature at Tôkyô university, he would soon become a distinguished Noh scholar. They were a thoroughly westernized family: of their three sons, two went to study abroad: Shiroichi, the eldest, in Rome and Terumi, the youngest, in the United States. At the end of the Second World War in 1945, Shiroichi came back from Rome with a Hungarian wife. By the time her husband died from a stroke in 1950, Yaeko had long been famous as the author of about a hundred short stories, innumerable essays, four major novels and the travelogue which will occupy us in this paper. Her earliest work dates from 1907 when she published her first short story *En* in the *Hototogisu* maga-

1 See *Tanabe Hajime-Nogami Yaeko ôfuku shokan*, Iwanami, Tôkyô 2002:21–22 (letter dated 14 December 1952): “My old hobby of studying Greek is a constant subject of jokes in my family. Once our mama is eighty, my sons say, she may finally realize her dream of reading Homer in the original.”

zine. The writer who had launched her was no less than Natsume Sôseki, who had first read the *En* story and liked it. Known as Sôseki's special protégée, she had sailed effortlessly into the publishing world, with no leading magazine ever refusing her manuscripts, no critic to attack her – and indeed, no trouble with censorship when the hard times of Shôwa came about.²

This happened mainly because she had carefully cultivated her image during those difficult years: always avoiding publicity and striving to be known merely as a writer of domestic scenes with humble wives and mothers as protagonists. Unlike her famous friend Miyamoto Yuriko, a member of the Communist Party who had been imprisoned several times, she had shunned political themes. She gave the reasons of this in *Aru Asama-san no Fumoto Kara* (“From the Foot of Mount Asama”), an essay in letter-form written in 1931. It is addressed to a young woman who had recently rejected her mother's order to abandon the Communist Party and had moved out of home to share the life of the poor in a popular suburb. Prompted obviously by the fresh news of Miyamoto Yuriko's arrest and torture, the letter is an exhortation to the girl to make peace with her mother and follow her advice. She depicts the girl's mother as the real source of wisdom in this controversy, not a seeker of martyrdom for the sake of a fashionable ideology, but a woman armed with common sense and genuine feelings. “Living as a proletarian does not make one a proletarian”, she writes, “and especially not a pampered bourgeois girl like yourself [...] Courage is not enough, a sane bodily constitution is paramount: this is why I can only fear for you, mindless as you are of your frail body.”³

In other words, a woman should not imitate men in their belligerent instincts – a genetically-deterministic outlook that sounds surprising in a woman who would eventually join the Communist party herself. This, however, happened much later in 1946, when it was safe to do so. In 1950, she wrote an open letter to President Truman, in which she describes her journey to Europe and America as one which had finally enabled her to see her native Japan from a distance: “a nation ruled by warlords whose nationalistic pride had driven them to ally themselves with other warmongers like themselves”. And she goes on to describe herself as a typical “Japanese woman, turned into a coward by a rigidly feudalistic upbringing, taught to shun politics and fear prison”.⁴ She may have

2 See SUKEGAWA Noriyoshi, *Nogami Yaeko to Taishô-ki kyôyôha*, Ôfûsha 1984:28–57.

3 See *Nogami Yaeko zuihitsu* (ed. Takenishi Hiroko), Iwanami Shoten 1999:125–6.

4 *Truman daitôryô e no kôkaijô* (“An Open Letter to President Truman”), *ibid.*:226–7 and 233.

been a bit too harsh with herself there, but it is true that she had always done everything in order to avoid what she feared more than prison or torture: being forbidden to write and, above all, publish. Only after the war could she finally say what she had bottled up for years. This was the time when photographs of this wiry old lady marching under banners began appearing in the press, as she took part in rallies demanding the abolition of the monarchy, the end of the Allied occupation, the revision of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and increased cooperation with Communist China and the Soviet Union. After seventy years of constant writing, her fairly uneventful life ended in her Karuizawa villa at the age of a hundred.

Still, despite all her prudence, the publication of her travelogue in 1943 incurred some criticism. In her postscript, she had to apologize for not removing the chapters dedicated to Britain and America – countries which had become Japan’s enemies – and for writing about them in over-sympathetic terms. The oppressive atmosphere of the war years, when censorship was omnipresent and every word had to be carefully weighed, would become the main theme of her postwar novel *Meiro* (“The Labyrinth”, 1948).⁵ In this paper I shall examine the way in which Yaeko’s concerns can be discerned beneath the cautious and apparently innocuous surface of what should have been the least controversial episode of her European journey: her visit to Switzerland.

The brief stay in Switzerland (no more than five days) needs, in fact, a somewhat closer look: not only because it reflects more clearly than anywhere else Yaeko’s bewilderment when faced with Europe and its complicated history, but also because it clearly caused a change in Yaeko’s views. This was probably the first time when, as she wrote in her open letter to Truman, she began to see Japan “from a distance”, objectively, and when her faith in Japan’s foreign politics began to crumble.

Nogami Yaeko had been sent to Europe in 1938 with the task of writing a travelogue on her return. Her commissioner was the publisher Iwanami who paid all travel expenses. With his commercial flair, Iwanami had felt that a travelogue about Europe would sell well now that the Japanese went abroad so rarely. He also knew that her husband Toyoichirô was, right then, being sent to England as a cultural envoy of the *Monbushô*, the Japanese ministry of culture. As an eminent scholar on Noh theatre and music, Toyoichirô had been sent to deliver a series of lectures on his subject at the universities of Leeds, Durham, Oxford and

5 Yaeko’s journey was to play a part in *Meiro* as well, and I shall discuss the links between the travelogue and this novel in a forthcoming article.

Cambridge. It was, therefore, the right moment for Iwanami to persuade a fifty-two year old lady who was not much of a traveller to accompany her husband on a journey.

The visit of the Nogami couple to Switzerland came in mid-May 1939, after a six-month stay in England. Toyochirô's lectures there had been a success, with masses of students thronging his lecture-halls and distinguished scholars entertaining the couple in their homes. What Yaeko had appreciated most was the gentlemanly spirit of the English and their stubborn faith in normality. "Despite the number of refugees and the news of violent incidents, the Parliament and the people seem unconcerned about war" – she wrote in January 1939.⁶ Thanks to this typically English outlook on Europe as a faraway continent which had little or nothing in common with the British Isles, the Nogamis, too, had begun to think that the English might be right and that the war might be avoided altogether.

When, in April 1939, they made ready to cross the Channel for "the continent", their English friends had tried to dissuade them. The news was not good: Hitler had occupied Czechoslovakia only a month before and there were already rumours of his intention to move on to Poland. But Yaeko had still to make notes for the travelogue, and besides, there was yet another thing they looked forward to: a return to Rome and a second reunion with their son Shiroichi: a *ryûgaku* student of classics at Rome University, who was just about to defend his thesis on the Graeco-Roman theatre. Rome had been the first European stop on their itinerary in winter 1938: Toyochirô had left for England almost immediately, but Yaeko had spent the whole month of December there together with her son, and had thoroughly enjoyed it. So on the whole, Switzerland must have been anticipated as a rather calm and not too exciting interval between England which they had left with regret and Italy which awaited them.

At this point, it should be remembered that the Nogamis were not common tourists. As semi-official cultural ambassadors, at every station or port, they were often welcomed by Japanese representatives. In fact, if the Nogamis saw so much in such a short time, this was because they could so often rely on the help of embassies, consulates and their staffs to book hotels and provide them with guides and interpreters. Thus it is that in Bern they are welcomed by the Japanese ambassador, who leaves them in the care of a Mr. F. from the Japanese consulate in Geneva. This F. will be their guide throughout their Swiss stay. One

6 This and all the following citations are from *Ô-Bei no tabi* (see Bibliography). Hereafter: *Tabi*. The numerals refer respectively to volume and page number. Here: *Tabi* 2:20.

night in Bern, then Interlaken by train. At first, Yaeko is enchanted by everything and can hardly find words to praise the view of the Alps and the lake. But just then Mr. F. intervenes and spoils her pleasure for good:

Alarmed by the present situation, the government has apparently increased the Swiss army from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand men. The Swiss are famous for their handiwork, he went on, and not only because of their clocks and watches; in fact, their war industry is going through a real boom right now, and their firearms are of such precision that they've put even the Germans to shame. Their watchmaking is a family business actually, he said, for the smallest parts are made at home and then delivered to the factories. The same goes for the firearms, with farmhouses transformed into real workshops. Switzerland is today a major producer of arms and ammunitions, striving to satisfy the demands of countries all round the globe. Only last year, Japan bought weapons from Switzerland for two million yen, and China did the same for three million yen. This is what we learned from Mr. F., and it changed our view of Switzerland completely. So that's how it is: while we tourists gaze in wonder at this land of peace, this utopia so far away from the bustle of this world, its inhabitants are secretly digging trenches, assembling machine-guns, building cannons and bombs! It left us stunned, incapable of reconciling these two extremes.⁷

Mr. F. was right. Faced with hostile régimes at its borders, the Confederation was rapidly modernizing its constitution, revising its monetary system and strengthening its army – drastic measures which had begun in 1936 and were not without great risks. They proved, however, effective beyond all expectations. The devaluation of the Swiss franc by 30% encouraged investments and boosted the economy; in autumn 1937 a nationwide subscription of funds for the army had resulted in 335 million francs (100 million more than was expected), with the money coming from all sections of the public, including soldiers and school-children. The question of rearmament had ceased to be a matter of division between left and right: the danger of war had engendered a truce between all political parties and an almost unprecedented collaboration between the cantons. The government was preparing for a “war economy”, essentially self-sufficient, by importing dry goods in great quantities, and soon after the Nogami visit, food rationing would be introduced. The country had begun to resemble “a buzzing beehive”, as some historians have termed it, with a strong spirit of isolationism – this spirit, one may guess, being what Mr. F. liked least of all.⁸

7 *Tabi* 2:246–7.

8 See Roland RUFFIEUX, *La Suisse de l'entre-deux-guerres*, Payot Lausanne 1974, ch. 5. (‘Le redressement national 1936–1939’):280–370.

Mr. F. is described as 'loquacious' and in the habit of dotting his sentences with 'many grunts'. The grunts suggest a dissatisfaction with Swiss politics that must have reflected the general feeling in Japanese diplomatic circles. As Hitler's ally, Japan would have far preferred a weak Switzerland that could, in time, be annexed to Germany as easily as Austria. But while F.'s speech may echo the official standpoint of the Japanese government, Yaeko's reaction is rather more difficult to understand. 'It changed our view of Switzerland completely' – what does this really mean? How could she not know that Switzerland had good reasons for turning into a fortress, and that selling arms to the whole world, Germany included, was the Swiss way of assuring its own neutrality?

That Yaeko had come to Switzerland with preconceived opinions is evident. Even today, many people tend to confuse neutrality with pacifism, and she was hardly the first to commit this error. What she fails to mention, however, is that in 1933, she had translated Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* and published it under the title *Arupusu no Yama no Musume* ("A Girl from the Alps").⁹ One suspects that part of her disenchantment with Switzerland came from her growing realisation that "Heidiland" had never existed except in the imagination of Johanna Spyri.

Interlaken and Thun still look fairly normal, and the countryside seems as idyllic as on the first day; but it has somehow lost its innocence. There is always something to spoil the picture—a factory chimney here, a group of soldiers there. And there are fleeting visions of poignant sadness and solitude:

We peeped into a hotel garden and saw one single lady being served supper under the light of high chandeliers. Seated as she was in a row of immaculate tables decorated with flowers, she looked like a solitary spinster-protagonist from some novel.¹⁰

Always in search of plots, Yaeko the novelist must have thought of Turgeniev or Henry James and their melancholy women drifting through the Swiss Alps. Though not directly connected with the war-theme, the solitary lady is nonetheless suggestive of Yaeko's sensitivity to whatever lurks behind the appearance of normality, or, as she puts it, to 'the frown behind the smile'. She now sees deception everywhere, even in the souvenir-shops of Interlaken:

Narrowly squeezed between one hotel and another, there are souvenir-shops with carved bears, carved trays with edelweiss patterns, broaches, musical boxes, cuckoo clocks – all kitsch really, counterfeit art (*mayakashi geijutsu*) [...] Like so many idle tourists before us,

9 Iwanami Bunko, 1933.

10 *Tabi* 2:249.

we bought a few picture-postcards from a bearded man vaguely resembling William Tell (another piece of counterfeit art there?)¹¹

The next day, they travel to the summit of the Jungfrau in appalling weather: ten degrees below zero and with a blizzard raging, the Jungfrau itself hidden from view. Here again we see Yaeko the writer, someone who has just abandoned a novel at home and is now on the lookout for other themes, other plots.¹² The cabin of the funicular is filled with a hilarious bunch of fellow-travellers who might easily have been developed into fully-fledged characters: the diminutive Brazilian writer who becomes the Nogamis' inseparable companion for the rest of the journey, and whose habit of jotting down everything he hears causes them endless mirth (an interesting mirror-image of Yaeko herself, who must also have had a notebook at hand wherever she went); the stolid, uncommunicative pair of overfed Germans, probably on their honeymoon; the noisy group of young British skiers; and on the way down, a single Swiss citizen, a real-estate manager endlessly complaining about the Swiss authorities who will not let him build his hotels in protected zones. At the summit, no rustic hut where the girl Heidi could have lived, but a hotel so luxurious that Yaeko can only compare it to the golden palaces on Mount Olympus, "a place for gods, not men". They eat an overexpensive lunch, but their restless Brazilian companion goes on brightening their day. It's the first time he has seen snow, he declares, so he soon has to be rescued from freezing to death on the sightseeing terrace. He has never gone skating before, so he tries that sport as well – and again, with disastrous results. Back at Interlaken the sun comes out again, but the Nogamis are already in the train heading for Geneva.

It is in Geneva that we get a glimpse into the private life of Mr. F. The Nogamis are welcomed in his comfortable home. Here we learn that he had previously worked at the French consulate and married a French lady – beautiful, cultured and especially interested in Japanese literature. The next morning at breakfast, she praises the war novel *Barley and Soldiers* by her favourite writer Hino Ashi-

11 *Tabi* 2:249–50.

12 The abandoned novel was the future *Meiro*, then unpublishable because of its political content. The writing was eventually resumed in 1946, with its integral version published by Iwanami in 1956.

hei.¹³ No comment on this by Yaeko herself, but the name is a signal to her readers: Ashihei was known as a Communist sympathizer who had later redeemed himself by committing *tenko*, a public recantation of his beliefs. A *tenko* mark was considered as something infamous in governmental circles, so that the sole mention of Hino's name in Mr. F.'s home is a surprise. So, we gather, there is a hidden side to Mr. F.'s character. Perhaps he is not such a political hardliner after all; perhaps he is not unlike Yaeko who must mask her true sympathies.

In the company of Mr. F., Yaeko finds Geneva beautiful at first; but, just as in Interlaken, disappointments soon follow. The first comes at the Parc des Bastions, when the Nogamis realise that they cannot view the Monument to the Reformation in its entirety. The statues of Calvin and John Knox are covered in scaffolding; and it is again Mr. F. who offers the explanation:

Because of their hostility towards these four Reformers, the members of the Swiss Communist Party had smeared their statues with coal-tar, so that they were now being thoroughly cleaned. How lucky the Genevans hadn't ordered an oil-painting to honour their memory, Mr. F. added laughing: statues could be cleaned, but a painting would hardly have survived such a vandalous act.¹⁴

So here again, the spectre of Communism glides across the scene. Again, no comment from Yaeko herself, and they walk down to the Rue du Rhone:

We stopped to peep into the window of 'Patek Philippe', the most expensive watchsellers of Geneva, but when we heard that the Manchû Emperor had recently bought a Patek Philippe watch for 1.800 francs, we reverently passed by without stepping in. Patek Philippe is in a row of similar glamorous stores in a street not too far from the lakeshore; we, however, took a back-lane, climbed a hill and found ourselves in the Old Town, a maze of narrow streets filled with clothes-shops, embroidery ateliers and milk-vendors scooping their ware from huge vessels placed on the pavement. This is the other face of Geneva, the one without make-up, hidden behind its showy cosmopolitan façade.¹⁵

Another anti-Heidi impression: Switzerland is not only rearming, it also reeks of money. Just as she had disliked the luxurious hotel at the top of the Jungfrau, so

13 Original name *Mugi to Heitai*, first published in 1938 and translated into English a year later. Its author, the war novelist Hino Ashihei (1907–1960) may have later become a model for Kanno Shôzô, the protagonist of Yaeko's novel *Meiro*.

14 *Tabi* 2:261.

15 *Tabi* 2:261–2.

she now finds fault with the glitzy (literally: *pika-pika*) Rue du Rhone. The theme of money surfaces again during her visit to the League of Nations:

I remembered that both the Palace of Nations and the Peace Conference Centre in the Hague were financed by American donations from the Rockefeller and the Carnegie funds. There's a proverb saying: "Rich men don't fight". How true. Today the greatest war-haters may well be those millionaires who after coming into money in one war, fear that they may not be so lucky in the next. But if peace is so important to them, one can only wonder why they have founded only two buildings for that purpose instead of ten or a hundred, but this may still come. On the other hand, no amount of buildings, organizations or treaties can intimidate the god Ares – a lesson that both the Europeans and we Japanese are learning these days.¹⁶

A sarcastic tone, unusual for her, and a rather strong anti-Western attitude. True, her resentment is mainly focused on American capitalism. That she considers this as a new form of Western colonialism, infinitely more subtle and subversive than the armed conquests of the past, is not surprising in a Japanese in 1939, and not entirely unjustified. Behind, unmentioned, is the suggestion that Japan has done well to leave the League of Nations in 1933. The tone is, in any case, vague: talks can't solve anything, belief in talks is a dream. Not that dreams are wrong in themselves, she adds hesitantly – and with a last salute to the statue of Rousseau and the hope that, at least, some of Rousseau's dreams may come true ("may he soon foster a generation of Emiles!") Yaeko leaves Switzerland.

The constant remembrance of this unfortunate visit to the Society of Nations may well have paved her way into the Communist party later, at a time when she must have seen Communism as the only integrative, multinational, multiracial force capable of avoiding yet another world conflict.

It is, in any case, clear that from Switzerland onward, Yaeko is no longer in doubt that the war is an inescapable reality, that it is likely to be long and bloody. Though she could not allow herself to put it in so many words, she may well have felt that the war would end with the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini, a defeat that could only leave Japan entangled in its endless war with China, left alone to face a coalition of the most powerful States on earth.

Switzerland, therefore, represents a landmark in Yaeko's changing outlook. At the beginning of her journey she had kept in constant contact with Japanese papers, where the first extracts from her diary kept appearing in print. From Shanghai, Hong-Kong, Colombo, Port-Said, all such stops on her sea-route, she had endeavoured to stick to the required political orthodoxy by sending reassur-

16 *Tabi* 2:262–3.

ing news. This attitude had begun to loosen up in England when the Japanese papers must have begun wondering why her reports had stopped arriving. She needed time to think. But if England had caused such radical rethinking, her pessimism about the future began to intensify after the visit to Switzerland. In Milan, five days after their departure from Geneva, she already imagines the city destroyed by bombs, with the beautiful spires of the Duomo lying shattered on the ground. This second stay in Italy is mainly spent in Rome, with short sight-seeing tours to Assisi, Florence, Venice and Sicily. Wherever they go, the Nogamis notice a cooler outlook towards Mussolini, with far less talk about swift victories.

From their very first days in Europe, the Nogamis seem constantly tempted by the idea of staying on indefinitely, war or not. This impression is given by Yaeko's somewhat laborious justifications for the fact that they keep putting off their departure. These, we feel, are addressed less to the common reader than to some potentially disapproving authority. There are, for example, mentions of a second and possibly longer stay in England and a sightseeing trip to Scotland, a plan truncated by the war. After the war, however, Yaeko will no longer make a secret of their recurrent thought of opting for political exile. One example is found in Yaeko's letter to Truman where she says: "The news [of the outbreak of the war] left us dumbfounded; if we hadn't left all our luggage in Paris, we would have crossed over to Dover on the same day". The Nogamis were in Spain at the time. If they had really crossed the Channel on September 1, 1939, this would have meant treason, a definite break with Japan. So what about this thought coming to them a little earlier? They might have thought of Switzerland as a possible land of refuge, which could explain their shock at not finding it the Heidiland of their expectations.

But the Nogamis were, perhaps, too old for courage in any case. Predictably enough, they did what so many other Japanese did after September 1: signed the list of repatriates and returned to Japan in due time.

Yaeko's heroes are people who do not excel in courage. In *Ôishi Yoshio* (1926), the homonymous leader of the forty-seven *ronin* is not the traditional Japanese hero but a weak man too eager to please everybody, and therefore easily manipulated by fanatics. In *Meiro* (1956), her protagonist Kanno Shôzô recants his Marxist convictions and (not unlike Hino Ashihei mentioned earlier) tries to rehabilitate himself in the militarist regime of the thirties. Finally, in *Hideyoshi to Rikyû* (1963), the famous teamaster Sen no Rikyû is certainly a genius but also a lover of money and remarkably lax in terms of personal honesty: all three

of these protagonists are pushed into heroic deaths much against their will. Of these three novels, only *Ôishi Yoshio* was written long before the war. The other two postwar novels, *Meiro* and *Hideyoshi to Rikyû*, seem to constitute Yaeko's covert apology for writing and publishing her travelogue at a time when silence would have been so much nobler.

From *Ô-Bei no tabi*: "Switzerland" by Nogami Yaeko

(Translator: Maya Mortimer)

Pasture and forest, forest and pasture – before entering Bern, you don't come across any Swiss-looking peak, and yet you know that you are in Switzerland. The Swiss countryside is like a superbly kept public garden, not unlike the green lawns of England, the only difference being the mountains on the horizon. The farmhouses are square boxes topped by slanted roofs, and the steep stone steps before each door speak of heavy snowfalls in winter.

Headed by Mr. A. the Ambassador, the Japanese Embassy crew gave us a warm welcome and led us to the Bellevue, a luxurious, typically Swiss hotel, where we spent the first night. The next morning we took the train for Interlaken and, once again, passed through a groomed countryside looking like a park. What we had seen on our arrival in Bern was an incredibly clear river. To tell the Swiss that their waters are the purest in the world would be like telling Cleopatra that she was beautiful. But really, the view from the hotel room, with the rose-glow of the snowy mountains, the flowing stream of the Aar before us, the blue sky – all this just leaves you speechless. We Japanese call our mountains "Alps" as a tribute to Switzerland, and indeed we have no lack of clean waters either; but this river here is far more sparkling, its waters of a strange dark-green hue. We took a walk and saw meadows everywhere, of a green so fresh that I've never seen the like in England. On the mown fields, hay is gathered in neat rows of stooks. Cattle-raising is the main source of income round here, but wheat and barley are grown no less than in Japan. The loquacious Mr. F. from the Embassy told us about the Swiss habit of picnicking, with entire families sitting on the lush grass eating and drinking merrily; and with many intermittent grunts, he went on to say that in Switzerland four million people inhabit an area smaller than Kyushu. Alarmed by the present situation, the government has apparently increased the Swiss army from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand. The Swiss

are famous for their precision work, he went on, and not only because of their clocks and watches; in fact, their arms industry is going through a real boom right now, and their firearms are of such a precision that they've put even the Germans to shame. Their watchmaking is actually a family business, he said, for the smallest parts are made at home and then delivered to the factories. The same goes for the firearms, with farmhouses transformed into real workshops. Today Switzerland is a major manufacturer of arms and ammunitions, striving to satisfy the demands of countries all around the globe. Only last year, Japan bought weapons from Switzerland for two million yen, and China did the same for three million yen. Because of the tensions in Europe, the tourist trade has suffered a severe blow, so that most hotels open only for the summer and dismiss their personnel at the approach of winter, when they go home to make gun-parts – this is what we learned from Mr. F., and it changed our view of Switzerland completely. So that's how it is: while we tourists gaze in wonder at this land of peace, this utopia so far away from the bustle of this world, its inhabitants are secretly digging trenches, assembling machine-guns, building cannons and bombs! It left us stunned, incapable of reconciling these two extremes.

Every time the train arrives at a station, a bell rings three times. Every now and then, clusters of red-roofed villas appear between the hills, their gardens all in bloom. When we passed Utzigen, a town looking much like Karuizawa, the Alps which we saw from afar the day before came nearer, rising up in all their majesty under a terse blue sky, snow as white as sugar on every summit. We were now running along the Thun lakeshore, flanked by pine-groves, poplars and cherry-trees blossoming in the late Alpine spring. Then a factory chimney emerges and we are reminded of Mr. F.'s words and of what is concealed behind the smiling faces.

Finally, a pyramid-shaped mountain appears before us. Ah, the Niesen! Next to it, the Männliflüh, its rugged, ash-purple mass topped with snow like the crown on a king's head, and I felt as if I were a trespasser in a hallowed region forbidden to humans. "All this is real, I'm not dreaming", I said to myself and felt really emotional. But such is the nature of Switzerland that one is always torn between what to admire: mountain or lake. I turn to the lake for a change, and I see it so close to the tracks that you get worried about the train swinging about at full speed; but just when you think you'll end in the water, you run into a tunnel and out again. The houses by the lake and on the slopes are flanked by barns packed with wheat, and many of them have long stairs along the wall, leading directly to the upper floor. These are apartment buildings, we are told: the ground floor is usually occupied by the owners and the upper one by the

tenants, who climb directly up to their apartment which opens under a covered veranda running all around the house, not unlike our own kind of roofed corridors. The lake is a flat expanse of water without a ripple, looking so solid you might think of it as a shiny floor one could walk on. Across the lake, a long, narrow strip of land and a range of mountains rising almost vertically from it, with houses balancing precariously on the steep slopes. What a strange lake, I thought, following us about like this, so cosy and beautiful; and as I look at the villages so perilously perched on the slopes over there, I think of the steep paths leading to them and what makes it worth living there. Do they all raise sheep, or do they make their living by something else that can't be done on the plain? Ever since I came to Europe, I've been wondering about what makes people want to live on a hill, as in Assisi or the nearby Trevi in Italy. I may be wrong of course, but isn't a city on a hill the most ancient form of European communal living? How different this is from Japan, where most cities and villages are close to the sea; or if they are in the mountains, they choose deep valleys instead of mountain slopes. Does the striking racial difference between us come from the fact that we islanders feed mainly on fish and that here they eat meat?

Interlaken is a famous tourist resort, especially beautiful before the tourist season begins. That evening we found its parks and gardens wrapped in quiet and saw no-one on our way. Just once, after passing a bridge over the narrow stream, we peeped into a hotel garden and saw one single lady being served supper under the light of high chandeliers. Seated as she was in a row of immaculate tables decorated with flowers, she looked like a solitary spinster-protagonist from some novel. Narrowly squeezed between one hotel and another, there are souvenir-shops with carved bears, carved trays with edelweiss patterns, broaches, small musical boxes, cuckoo clocks – all kitsch really, counterfeit art (*mayakashi geijutsu*), another source of income for the local peasants. Like so many other idle tourists before us, we bought a few picture-postcards from a bearded man vaguely resembling William Tell (another piece of counterfeit art there?) and then, shivering in the evening chill, we began to stroll back to our hotel. Suddenly, we heard raucous singing and saw five or six soldiers, the real Tells of today, coming our way. If small Switzerland, with barely four million people, can field a hundred-thousand strong army, then a new Tell era is bound to return.

After a whole day on a train, we lazed in bed till late in the morning. Then, thinking of a new trip the next day, we moved into a hotel near the station. The one we chose was very different from the Bellevue in Bern: far less luxurious, more in the style of a village inn. The room was much smaller as well, yet clean

and with a view of the Jungfrau that left nothing to desire. The food was excellent too: the homemade butter a real delicacy and the roast tender. A pair of children, boy and girl, came into the breakfast room and wished us good morning in a charming way. When we passed into the small lobby and opened our newspapers, the lady owner, wrapped in a black shawl, came in from the kitchen to welcome us. We were delighted, of course. T. asked her what kind of weather was in store for tomorrow. "Very nice", she replied, and rushed up the wooden stairs, ton-ton, ton-ton.

Well, she was wrong: the next day was cold and rainy, rain soon turning into sleet. But we were told that it was likely to be sunny higher up, so we did take the train after all. Once we got to the lake's end – a narrow fringe covered in reeds – we began to climb beside a white foamy torrent on our right.

Lashed by the rain, the dense pine forest seemed endless, only intermittently broken by clearings where naked logs were piled up and dragged away: a sign that we had reached the very centre of the country's forestry. As we left the torrent, the mountain turned into grassland. Dark-purple violets, bell-shaped gentian and bluebells grow there, together with some light-pink blossoms I remembered seeing in Canterbury a month before.

At Lauterbrunnen, there is only the cable railway to take us any higher. In summer, the place is one of the most thriving shopping centres in Europe, but on that day it looked deserted and sad, no more than a heap of barracks. We walked along the platform to enquire about the weather forecast. "No chance of it getting any better today", said the stationmaster. We were disappointed but still determined to match the most exorbitant railway fare in the world with the highest possible altitude. So we took the cable and it started spiralling up like a corkscrew along a path hardly wider than the cabin itself. Small waterfalls rushed noisily on the grey slopes around us. The deciduous trees had disappeared altogether and when we looked down, Lauterbrunnen looked like a cluster of pebbles thrown down from above. The slopes were now scattered with yellow crocuses and violets, just as in early spring everywhere else. Then suddenly, we saw a spouting water-pipe and a shingled house – a barn really, the kind we had seen the day before from the lakeshore when we wondered who could possibly live up there – and we heard bells ringing. Today was Sunday. Wherever you go in Europe, you soon get used to hearing bells on Sunday, sometimes from some unseen church buried in a valley or so distant that you keep wondering where it comes from.

At half-past nine we arrived at Wengen and the rain turned into snow. What with the wind as well, it soon became a blizzard chafing against our carriage like

a gigantic brush. We passed through a forest of huge fir trees sagging under the snow, rising from what was surely a meadow, but was now covered in an immaculate blanket.

At Scheidegg, we changed trains once again. A group of young skiers came in, chatting noisily in English, five men and a woman. The men were superbly bronzed and the woman, obviously afraid for her skin, was wrapped in a scarf up to her ears. They must have come over for the Easter holidays. We were joined by our fellow-travellers from Lauterbrunnen: a dark, bony-faced young writer from Brazil and a German couple: he a fat red-faced giant with a nose as large as a fist, she a little woman half his size. A conversation began: who was going up to stay, who was going back straightaway? Most of them agreed that with nothing to see but the snow, the best thing was to take the next train back down: with weather like this the lake was so much more enjoyable, wasn't it? – and so on. But the Brazilian writer said that this was the first snow of his life and that he was simply mad with joy at the prospect of getting to the top. In fact, the first to leave us were the skiers, who got off pell-mell at the next station to ski all the way down. We left them rubbing their skis with wax – a device to slide down faster – and while the train resumed its sluggish ascent, they lined up under foot-long icicles to wave us goodbye. Not that they had developed a particular liking for us; it is much rather the proximity of heaven, the pure air and the sanctity of the mountain that wakes in us such feelings of intimacy and love.

On and on we climbed, and as we passed a first tunnel, we found ourselves in a windowed corridor dug in the slope of the Eiger. Another tunnel, this time through the belly of the Mönch, then another three in a row and we finally reach our last stop: the Jungfrauoch! Just a few steps from the brightly-lit station, there is the gate of the Berghaus Jungfrau; and once you step inside, you may just as well forget that you are eleven thousand three hundred and forty feet above sea level. The inn is open just to one side, with huge, thickly glassed windows facing the Bergvogel valley. Instead of the sun, it is the brilliant white of the snow that lights up the dining room, and it's like being carried about in a car: an optical illusion common here during snowfalls. The outside thermometer shows ten degrees below zero, but inside it is warm, with all the waitresses running about in light clothing. There are about ten tables decked in immaculate white on a wooden floor painted bright orange and polished to a gloss. The only touch of colour is the flowers – not certainly roses or jonquils, too awkward to be transported from so far below, but silver-coloured catkins. The cooking is a delight too, and a three-course meal – soup, roast, dessert or coffee – costs you

ten francs, which makes about eight yen. Counting the cost of the fare, it was the most expensive meal we'd ever eaten in our lives.

In good weather one could have had a bird's view of the glacier and the valley: but that day we could just perceive a deep hollow flanked by thick white walls. At midday, not very far above our heads, we finally saw a bit of sunshine: nothing much actually, just a luminous patch that turned the snowflakes into a million sparkling dots. From time to time, big dark blots were seen darting to and fro in that shiny cloud: they were the eagles who nested above the glacier.

The rest of the building was just as splendid as the dining-room, with countless rooms of all sizes, some of them huge with beds lined up in two rows. The beds were, of course, top-quality, like those in the best hotels. Faithful to its name 'Berghaus', the inn could sleep a hundred people: not us unfortunately, or anyone with a modest purse. A palace like this must have resembled the ones Hephaistos built on Mount Olympus for his numerous family – but they were gods and not common mortals.

The slate-coloured lobby opened up to a wide platform for a broad view of the valley. T. and the Brazilian writer stepped out for a stroll, but soon came to their senses and began to tap the window-panes to be let in again. The blizzard was terrifying, they said, it had nearly swept them off.

The lower end of the glacier had been excavated to build an Ice Palace equipped with electric lights to make the icy walls glow in silvery-blue sparkles. For those good at skating, smaller rooms were dug in the ice for the storage of skates, with shelves, small tables and even flowers entirely made of ice, and I guess we'd have turned into ice as well if we had stood still. Stop for a little while and you'll feel your legs and hands getting numb and your temples hurting. But our Brazilian companion who had never seen snow before could not miss the chance to try himself at skating, though he had never done that before either. So he had skates put on him, but the results were so awful that he soon gave up and ran off with us – just in time, or we would have frozen to death all three.

We made straight for the station to wait for the next cable.

Goodbye, Jungfrau! Pity you didn't welcome us with a smile, but you taught us many things just the same. You taught us how the Greek gods lived once upon a time, in cold, austere splendour, and you reminded us of our Oriental proverb: "Climb on top of a mountain and you won't see it". We intruded upon your hallowed ground, we crawled under your armpit and thus lost the sight of you. Had we stayed at the lake to view you from afar, you might perhaps have graced us with sunny weather and a kinder farewell.

At a certain stop we were joined by one of the locals, a real-estate agent by the look of him, who began to explain that the Jungfrau was the watershed for rivers flowing north and south, either to end in the North Sea or the Mediterranean. The opposite side of the Eiger faces the Grindelwald, he went on, where crowds of skiers gather in winter. Despite that, Switzerland is the only state that refuses access to car-traffic on its Alpine territory – the result, according to him, of the proverbial backwardness and stubbornness of the Swiss peasants who keep grumbling about the slightest bit of noise around their villages.

At the station called Eigergletcher a single ray of sunshine burst out of the clouds, so blinding that it made the snow look dark and the sparse snowflakes refract all the colours of the spectrum. A beautiful sight, but it was soon over and the station sank back into its cold greyness. Out of a small post-office half buried in snow came two sharp-eared husky dogs in rich silver fur trailing a post-sledge. So that was how the mail is distributed round there.

The Brazilian writer was quick to put this into his notebook. We had long guessed that he intended to produce a book on Switzerland, for we always saw him making notes of whatever he found strange or amusing. His notebook also appeared whenever someone began to talk, and then he would ask questions and inquire about this and that. That he wouldn't miss the husky dogs was predictable, but soon something else attracted his attention: a tiny insect on the layer of snow clinging to the window. He promptly caught the beast and showed it to everybody in the compartment asking for its name. "Gletcherfloh" (glacier flea), said the fat German, who had never said anything to us so far. This surprised us since, unlike the Brazilian whom we had come to like, we had found the German couple rather distant. Perhaps they are on their honeymoon, we thought, so we'd better leave them alone. Even the Brazilian looked at the reserved German in surprise, then wrote the name down.

There was a sort of knightly grandeur in the sharp peaks rising up like shiny swordtips above the blackish-yellow Mehnrichen range, striking you as something young and defiant, with a gallant beauty about it. At Wengen, the snow turned into rain. After Wengen, groups of soldiers boarded our train, all in heavy black boots but with different uniforms. One group was made of elderly men, probably from some auxiliary agricultural unit. Little Switzerland obviously needs all its men, old and young, who will, if need arises, flock in with all

their horses and cattle and their home-made weapons. They made me think of our Sano no Tsuneyo¹⁷ and their own hero William Tell.

At the Interlaken station, the luggage we had left at the hotel was handed back to us, and we gave back the umbrellas we had borrowed from them in the morning.

You too, Interlaken, goodbye!

At Thun, the sun came out: after a whole day of incessant rain and snow, we could hardly believe it. As I stared in wonder at the clear sky, I saw the Jungfrau, all white and shiny between the Eiger and the Mönch. So she has come to our rendez-vous after all, I thought, and I gazed at the Maiden till she disappeared from sight. Farewell, farewell forever, O Jungfrau!

During our one-night stay in Geneva, the two of us became once again our old selves, family people in a private home. Before joining the Japanese Consulate in Geneva, our host Mr. F. had worked for many years as a secretary of the French consul, who happened to be an old friend of his brother. Mr. F.'s wife was French too, and they have two sons, aged fifteen and ten. They welcomed us into their flat with the warmth reserved for compatriots. We had already heard that Mrs. F. was beautiful and hard-working, and we found her not in the least inferior to her reputation: intelligent, pleasant, and, as one would expect from a Frenchwoman, a good cook into the bargain. "I like Japanese cooking too", she told us and in fact, there was nothing wrong with her *miso* soup. During the meal, she talked about Jules Romain and Hino Ashihei's "Barley and Soldiers", which she had read in English translation. We tasted her homemade "bricellets", a French version of our Japanese *osenbei*; but our greatest delight was the butter we got at breakfast. Poured into elaborately carved moulds, her butter came out in the form of roses and birds, which, like naughty children, we enjoyed dismembering little by little. It was the first time I'd seen butter served in such a decorative way, and the fresh taste was excellent too.

Not a lake but a sea compared to the lake of Thun, the Lake of Geneva, also called Lemman, is actually a huge riverbed, with the Rhone passing it from end to end. At Geneva, it narrows down into a bay which, again, makes you think of a seaside resort and a walk along its flowery banks takes you hours. The mansion where Byron used to stay is propped on a hillock on the so-called Rive Droite, and there is a bust of him in the park nearby. The statues of Calvin, Farel, Bèze

17 Full name Sano no Genzaemonjô Tsuneyo: a legendary warrior appearing in many Nô, Kabuki and Jôruri plays.

and Knox are in yet another park, a horse-chestnut grove (*maronnier*) with crimson flowers along its paths. But unfortunately, all four statues were covered in scaffolding and screened from view. The explanation came, once again, from Mr. F. Because of their hostility towards these four Reformers, the members of the Swiss Communist Party had smeared their statues with coal-tar, so that they were now being thoroughly cleaned. How lucky the Genevans hadn't ordered an oil-painting to honour their memory, Mr. F. added laughing: statues could be cleaned, but a painting would hardly have survived such a vandalous act.

We stopped to peep into the window of 'Patek Philippe', the most expensive watchsellers of Geneva, but when we heard that the Manchû Emperor had recently bought a Patek Philippe watch for 1.800 francs, we reverently passed by without stepping in. Patek Philippe is in a row of similar glamorous stores in a street not too far from the lakeshore; we, however, took a back-lane, climbed a hill and found ourselves in the Old Town, a place which reminded us of Nagasaki with its narrow streets and rows of small clothes-shops, embroidery ateliers and milk vendors scooping their ware from huge vessels placed on the pavement. This is the other face of Geneva, the one without make-up, hidden behind its showy cosmopolitan façade.

Afternoon came and it started raining. Mrs. F. put on a striped raincoat and invited us all, the two boys included, on a visit to the League of Nations. The tram leading to the wide Nations' Square was filled with tourists, mostly American. While we listened to their cheerful American accents, I remembered that both the Palace of Nations and the Peace Conference Centre in the Hague were financed by American donations from the Rockefeller and the Carnegie funds. There's a proverb saying: "Rich men don't fight". How true. Today the greatest war-haters may well be those millionaires who after coming into money in one war, fear that they may not be so lucky in the next. But if peace is so important to them, one can only wonder why they have founded only two buildings for that purpose instead of ten or a hundred, but this may still come. On the other hand, no amount of buildings, organizations or treaties can intimidate the god Ares – a lesson that both the Europeans and we Japanese are learning these days.

The Palace of Nations is an unadorned piece of architecture, its greatest attraction a picturesque view of the left bank and the city. In its austerity, it is quite unlike the Hague Peace Conference Centre, which is notoriously an imitation of a Greek temple. The sculptures in the two courtyards differ as well: in the Hague, a statue of Christ and here, the nine Muses. What a sign of the times! The Hague building was made when religion still counted for something, but today a set of pagan goddesses is all our lost faith can afford. Through a corridor

of grey marble, deliberately padded to avoid echoes, we were led into the Main Hall that can seat two hundred people. Yet there's no need to be there in order to listen to the speaker: just press a button in whichever room you are and you'll hear every word. The Hague Peace Conference building, much older, doesn't have such gadgets. But technology is making huge progress, so we may soon be able to listen to the Genevan speaker from the most faraway places: from the North Pole and the South, perhaps even from Mars. We also saw a number of much smaller conference rooms (I don't remember how many), and a carpet being unrolled for someone very important, though I can't remember who it was.

The International Labour Organization is in yet another building, with a lawn gently sloping down towards the lake. On the front lawn, there is a monument to the workers, a group of sculpted figures on a pedestal. A fine building placed on such a beautiful site is bound to inspire the trade-union representatives with the best intentions, so that the workers' future can only be rosy – provided, of course, that the workers themselves have a voice in the decisions taken inside. I felt sceptical about that, but my mood began to improve as we walked along the lake towards the Villa Barton. I thought of Mrs. Barton who had willed her whole estate, villa and pier included, to the ILO, and I felt tenderness for that good lady. The belief that sheer talks can improve the world is a dream, the fruit of human hubris, but even if this is so, it isn't always wrong to indulge in dreams. The dreams of Alexander, Cesar and Napoleon have all died with them, but Icarus's dream of flying with waxen wings has given us the airplane – yes, we have made some progress after all. I looked at the squirrels cavorting in the branches of the giant cedars and remembered the retreat-residence of Marie Louise, now a hotel, buried in lilac-trees in full bloom. At the point where the Rhone leaves the Lemman and resumes its progress into France, there is Rousseau's Island; and I saw the thinker's bronze statue, looking absentmindedly at the green current, deep in thoughts about something else. You have turned into bronze, O thinker, but may the future bring us a generation of Emiles!

Nogami Yaeko's Itinerary

The Itinerary

1938

October 2: Departure from Kobe. First stop Yokohama, then over to Shanghai, Hong-Kong, Singapore, Penang, Colombo, Aden, Port-Said. Two weeks in Egypt for a trip on the Nile to Cairo and the Aswan Dam.

November 16: from Alexandria to Naples.

November 17–December 26: Y.'s first stay in Rome.

1939

January 1: reunion with Toyochirô in London.

January-April: England. Toyochirô lectures on Nô theatre at universities of Leeds, Durham, Oxford and Cambridge.

April 30: departure for the European mainland.

May 1–6: Hook of Holland, The Hague; brief stop in Paris.

May 7: Germany: boat trip on the Rhine.

Mid-may: Switzerland. Return to Italy via Venice and Milan.

May 30–June 12: second stay in Rome. Visits to Assisi, Florence and Sicily.

June 12–July 18: Paris.

July 18–August 7: second visit to Germany. Sightseeing tour to Austria and Hungary, with stops at Heidelberg, Munich, Salzburg,

Historical Events

1925: publication of *Mein Kampf*.

30.1.1933: Hitler is elected Chancellor.

1936: Germany occupies the Rhineland.

25.11.1936: German-Japanese Anticomintern Pact.

1937: Italy joins the Anticomintern Pact.

7.7.1937: Marco-Polo Bridge Incident (Rokôkyô Jiken). Sino-Japanese war begins.

13.3.1938: German annexation of Austria.

Summer 1938: Munich Agreement signed by Hitler, Chamberlain and Daladier.

9.10.1938: annexation of Sudetenland. Poland refuses Hitler's demand of the cession of Danzig (the Polish Crisis).

9–10.11.1938: The Night of Broken Glass (Kristallnacht).

15.3.1939: German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Mobilisation in Britain.

Vienna and Nurenberg. Last stop: Berlin (7 days).

August 7–16: Paris.

August 16–31: tour of Spain.

August 22–30: from Bilbao to Madrid.

September 1: Madrid. WW2 breaks out.

Precipitous return to Paris.

September 16: Bordeaux.

September 29: Liverpool.

October 1: London. Nogamis obtain special permit for visit to Lake District.

October 5: Nogamis leave for USA from Liverpool.

October 17: arrival in New York.

October 17–November 4: visits to Boston and Harvard, then across continent by train to California.

November 4: departure for home from San Francisco. Brief stop in Hawaii.

November 11: return to Japan.

August 23, 1939: German-Soviet non-aggression pact.

September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland and WW2 begins.

7.12.1941: Pearl Harbour. USA declares war.

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