In his alternate history novel, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Philip K. Dick’s inverted prescience has the *Nippon Times* emerging from the Pacific War as top media dog in Japan’s most coveted Anglophone conquest and a prestigious media outlet for the undisputed ruler of the Pacific, the ‘China District’ and more. In a defeated America, divided between the Reich and Japan, the natural location for Tagomi, a senior trade official representing Japan in the ‘Co-prosperity Pacific Alliance’, is a suite of offices on the twentieth floor of the Nippon Times Building on Taylor Street overlooking San Francisco Bay.1 Adapting Philip Dick’s projection to the conventional truth, how did Japan’s fortunes in the Pacific War and its aftermath affect the Foreign Ministry network and its flagship?

On 7 December 1941, Japan’s pre-emptive attack on the US Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor launched an astonishing series of military and naval upsets that would cut down the institutions and standard bearers of Western influence in Asia. Within six months of Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces had overrun American, British and Dutch forces throughout South-east Asia and occupied the Philippines, Borneo, the Celebes, the Malayan peninsula, Singapore, Indonesia and Rangoon – cutting supplies to China along the Burma Road. On 10 December, Henry Ching, editor of the *South China Morning Post*, noted in his ‘Bird’s-Eye View’ column, ‘Trouble about fighting the Japanese is that the blighters don’t seem to have tiffin.’2 Hongkong surrendered on Christmas Day.

The Foreign Ministry network had run English-language and vernacular media in Japan and East Asia until its gradual supersession by military-dominated Cabinet propaganda bureaux and the Information Board of 1940. In the wake of Pearl Harbor what should be more accurately described as the Japan network neutralized all pro-British and most US-backed challenges to its media programmes in East Asia and dramatically advanced its remit and purpose in Greater East Asia.

The end came for *Japan News-Week* on the morning of 8 December 1941, when ‘the entire editorial staff’ including journalist Phyllis Argall and her editor W.R. Wills was arrested3 alongside forty-three other Americans and a number of Britons. Among those rounded up were Vere Redman, who was also an ex-*Japan News-Week* staff writer, now running

Even such veterans of semi-official journalism as Russell Kennedy’s old Kokusai protégé Percy Whiteing, who had succeeded James Young at the International News Service following Young’s arrest in January 1940, and George Gorman, one of the Foreign Ministry network’s most faithful operatives, were incarcerated. Vere Redman was also vulnerable, for all his credentials in semi-official journalism (Japan Times, Contemporary Japan, and contributions to a well-circulated propaganda pamphlet in 1938). On 8 December, Japanese police dragged him from the hall of the British embassy despite Robert Craigie’s attempt to stand in their way.

Over the winter of 1940–41, Redman had used the Tokyo embassy’s diplomatic pouch to get Phyllis Argall’s Time magazine reports on Japan to the Shanghai legation, which then posted them on to the US. By the same means, Argall had supplied H.G.W. Woodhead’s Oriental Affairs with weekly reports on Japan. In such arrangements, which came out during Argall’s interrogation at Sugamo prison, the lines of some species of network, whether of espionage or professional affiliation was never entirely clear, probably emerged in the eyes of her questioners.

The links between journalism and espionage were very much in the official mind at the time. On 18 October 1941, the Japanese police had picked up the Soviet spy and journalist (Frankfurter Zeitung, Börsen Zeitung, Tägliche Rundschau) Richard Sorge in Tokyo. Sorge’s connections with Agnes Smedley, the Frankfurter Zeitung correspondent in Shanghai, and with Ozaki Hotsumi of the Asahi Shinbun were noted and extensively investigated. Other connections would be drawn from the interrogation of J.B. Powell in Shanghai over that winter. The following summer even Toshi Gō would be arrested and held briefly on an unspecified charge. In 1944, Sheba Kimpei was arrested when he was on the editorial staff of the Nippon Times. In New York, Randall Gould speculated that any Japanese newspaperman consorting with foreigners was in danger. As one of Otto Tolischus’s police interrogators put it, ‘All newspaper men are spies because they try to find out the truth. Japanese correspondents abroad are spies; so are Japanese newspaper men at home. We could arrest all of them.’

Eighteen months earlier the arrests of July 1940 had caused outrage in Tokyo and in London and led in August to the retaliatory arrest of ten Japanese in Britain, India and the South-east Asian colonies. In September 1941, two Britons, J.G. Martyr and one Mason, had been arrested in Tokyo, and in early November Britain had responded by arresting two Japanese, Suzuki and Matsunaga, in Karachi and Rangoon.