



# The Imperial Cruise by Bradley

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## **The Imperial Cruise by Bradley Bradley**

In 1905 President Teddy Roosevelt dispatched Secretary of War William Howard Taft on the largest U.S. diplomatic mission in history to Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, China, and Korea. Roosevelt's glamorous twenty-one year old daughter Alice served as mistress of the cruise, which included senators and congressmen. On this trip, Taft concluded secret agreements in Roosevelt's name. In 2005, a century later, James Bradley traveled in the wake of Roosevelt's mission and discovered what had transpired in Honolulu, Tokyo, Manila, Beijing and Seoul. In 1905, Roosevelt was bully-confident and made secret agreements that he thought would secure America's westward push into the Pacific. Instead, he lit the long fuse on the Asian firecrackers that would singe America's hands for a century. Bradley's first books, *Flags of Our Fathers* (2000) and *Flyboys* (2003), were sensationally popular World War II combat stories. His new one, about U.S.-Japanese diplomacy in 1905, represents a departure. Asserting a causal connection between diplomatic understandings reached then and war 36 years later, Bradley dramatizes his case with a delegation Theodore Roosevelt dispatched to Japan in the summer of 1905. Led by Secretary of War William Taft and ornamented by the president's quotable daughter Alice, it sailed while TR hosted the peace conference between victorious Japan and defeated Russia. As he recounts the itinerary of Taft's cruise, Bradley discusses attitudes of social Darwinism and white superiority that were then prevalent and expressed by TR and Taft. They modified their instincts, Bradley argues, in dealing with nonwhite Japan, and secretly conceded it possession of Korea. This is what Bradley asserts was a prerequisite to Pearl Harbor in 1941, a dubious thesis when the tensions of the 1930s stemmed from general Japanese aggressiveness, not its control of Korea per se. Bradley does fine on 1905 but falters when predicting the future. --Gilbert Taylor

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