

# THE CASE FOR PEARL HARBOR REVISIONISM

STEVE SNIEGOSKI

---

The prevalent view of World War II is that of the “good war”—a Manichaeian conflict between good and evil. And a fundamental part of the “good war” thesis has to do with the entrance of the United States into the war as a result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. According to this view, the cause of the war stemmed from the malign effort by Japan, run by aggressive militarists, to conquer the Far East and the Western Pacific, which was part of the overall Axis goal of global conquest. Japan’s imperialistic quest was clearly immoral and severely threatened vital American interests, requiring American opposition. Since American territory stood in the way of Japanese territorial designs, the Japanese launched their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. Although the Roosevelt administration had been aware of Japanese aggressive goals, the attack on Pearl Harbor caught it completely by surprise. To the extent that any Americans were responsible for the debacle at Pearl Harbor, establishment historians, echoing the Roosevelt administration, blamed the military commanders in Hawaii for being unprepared. A basic assumption of the mainstream position is that given the Japanese bent to conquest, war with the United States was inevitable. As mainstream historians Gordon W. Prange, Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon put it: “nothing in the available evidence... indicates that they [the Japanese] ever planned to move one inch out of their appointed path, whatever the United States did about it.”<sup>1</sup> There was nothing the United States could do to avert war short of sacrificing vital security interests and the essence of international morality.

A small group of revisionist investigators have disputed this orthodox interpretation at almost every turn. Revisionists argue that, instead of following an aggressive plan of conquest, Japanese moves were fundamentally defensive efforts to protect vital Japanese interests. And instead of seeing the United States simply reacting to Japanese aggression, as the orthodox version would have it, the revisionists see the United States goading the Japanese—by aiding China (with whom Japan was at war), military expansion, quasi-secret alliances, and economic warfare—to take belligerent actions. Finally, some

revisionists go so far as to claim that Roosevelt had foreknowledge of the attack on Pearl Harbor but refused to alert the military commanders in order to have a *casus belli* to galvanize the American people for war. These revisionists see the effort as part of Roosevelt's effort to bring the United States into war with Germany—the so-called “back-door-to-war” thesis.

Revisionism began before the end of World War II and reflected the views of the non-interventionists who had opposed American entry into the war. Prominent figures in the revisionist camp include: Charles Beard, Harry Elmer Barnes, George Morgenstern and Charles C. Tansill in the 1940s and 1950s; James J. Martin and Percy Greaves in the 1960s and 1970s; and more recently John Toland and Robert B. Stinnett. And some writers have accepted parts of the revisionist position but rejected others. The idea that American foreign policy provoked the Japanese into more belligerent actions, for example, has gained more adherents than the view that President Roosevelt intentionally allowed the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor. This essay, however, will not present a historiographical discussion of the revisionist literature bringing out the similarities and differences of the various revisionist authors' writings. This has been done elsewhere, most notably by Frank Paul Mintz in his *Revisionism and the Origins of Pearl Harbor*.<sup>2</sup> This essay will try to elucidate the major revisionist themes and to show their validity. In short, this essay hopes to provide what its title proclaims: “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

### THE CAUSES OF JAPANESE EXPANSIONISM

Revisionists have focused on the underlying causes of Japanese expansionism in an effort to counter the mainstream view of the nefarious nature of Japanese policy. As Frank Paul Mintz writes:

The revisionists demonstrated—and quite compellingly in some cases—that it makes for a poor historical interpretation to condemn Japan without coming to grips with the strategic, demographic, and economic problems which were at the root of Japan's—not to mention any nation's—imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

Revisionists emphasize that the Japanese had vital economic and security interests in China. Lacking in natural resources, Japan had especially depended upon foreign markets. Thus, access to China became absolutely essential to Japan's economic well-being when, with the onset of the Great Depression, most industrialized countries established nearly insurmountable trade barriers.<sup>4</sup> Instead of being an aggressor, Japan had been essentially satisfied with the status quo in China at the start of the 1930s, but as the decade progressed, the forces of Chinese communism and nationalism threatened Japanese interests

in China. "It seemed to Tokyo," Charles C. Tansill wrote, "that Japanese interests in North China were about to be crushed between the millstones of Chinese nationalism and Russian Bolshevism."<sup>5</sup>

The revisionists portray the Japanese interests in China as similar to American interests in Latin America. As Anthony Kubek writes:

The United States had its danger zone in the Caribbean and since the era of Thomas Jefferson, every effort had been to strengthen the American position and to keep foreign nations from establishing naval and military bases which would threaten American security. So Japan regarded Manchuria. Japan followed this natural policy and attempted to practice it with reference to the lands that bordered upon the China Sea. Korea, Manchuria, and Inner Mongolia were essential pillars of her defense structure.<sup>6</sup>

While the establishment interpretation emphasizes that the Japanese incursion into China was a violation of Chinese territorial integrity, the revisionists point out that the United States was highly selective in applying this standard. During the inter-war period, the Soviet Union had converted Outer Mongolia into a satellite and secured de facto control over Sinkiang, yet the State Department never protested Moscow's violations of Chinese sovereignty. And Japanese actions in China were, in part, taken as defensive measures against the growing threat of Soviet Communism. Looking beyond the moral and legal aspects, revisionists maintain that Japanese interests in China did not portend further aggression into Southeast Asia or threaten vital American interests. Rather, American actions—aid to China, military expansion, and economic sanctions—purportedly intended to deter Japanese aggression actually served to induce such aggression into Southeast Asia and ultimately led to the Japanese attack on American territory. This is not to say that there were not extremist, militarist elements in Japan who sought military conquest. But in the immediate pre-Pearl Harbor period, the Japanese government was run by more moderate elements who sought to maintain peace with the United States and who were undermined by American intransigence. As Bruce Russett writes:

This analysis is meant to establish an important proposition: that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and for that matter on Southeast Asia, is not evidence of any unlimited expansionist policy or capability by the Japanese government. It was the consequence only of a much less ambitious goal, centering on an unwillingness to surrender the position that the Japanese had fought for years to establish in China. When that refusal met an equal American determination that Japan should give up many of

her gains in China, the result was war. Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia originated less in strength than in weakness; it was predominantly instrumental to the China campaign, not a reach for another slice of global salami. Of course, there were Japanese political and military leaders with wider ambitions, but they were not predominant in policy-making.<sup>7</sup>

### ANTI-JAPANESE PROVOCATIONS

In the two years prior to Pearl Harbor, the United States took a number of hostile actions against the Japanese. While the orthodox version portrays this as an effort to deter Japanese aggression, revisionists see this as a deliberate means of provoking war. Robert B. Stinnett, a recent revisionist, goes so far as to claim that the ways to goad the Japanese into war were explicitly spelled out in an “eight action memo” by Lt. Commander Arthur H. McCollum, head of the Far East Section at the Office of Naval Intelligence, which was dated October 7, 1940. President Roosevelt adopted McCollum’s proposals. “Throughout 1941...,” Stinnett writes, “provoking Japan into an overt act of war was the principal policy that guided FDR’s actions toward Japan.”<sup>8</sup> These anti-Japanese provocative actions would fall into three categories: aid to China; military aggressiveness that included military agreements with the British and Dutch; and economic sanctions against the Japan.

### AID TO CHINA

It should be pointed out that the United States had, since the turn of the century, provided vocal support for the territorial integrity of China, with emphasis on the “Open Door” that rejected economic spheres of interest by foreign countries. And American military strategists had long envisioned a future war with Japan. However, it was not until the Roosevelt administration that vocal support turned into action. By 1940, the U.S. was providing substantial support for China, which had been at war with Japan since 1937. During that year, the U.S. loaned China \$125 million.<sup>9</sup> In 1941, the U.S. extended Lend-Lease to China, which enabled China to receive American war materials without involving payment. The U.S. government covertly sponsored an American-manned air force for China—General Claire Chennault’s American Volunteer Group or the “Flying Tigers.” Although officially “volunteers,” they were actually closely connected to the American military.<sup>10</sup> Under the law of neutrality as traditionally understood, a neutral state is obliged to treat the belligerents with strict impartiality, which means abstaining from providing any of them military support. Obviously, the U.S. was not acting as a “neutral” in the Japanese-Chinese conflict and, by the current “harboring terrorists” standard invoked by the U.S. in Afghanistan, provided justification for the Japanese to make war on it.

The effect of American aid to China was to stiffen Chinese resistance, thus precluding any type of peaceful settlement favorable to the Japanese. The Japanese actually looked to the U.S. to mediate the war in China and thus help to extricate them from an exhausting stalemate. As non-revisionist historian Jonathan G. Utley observes:

They [U.S. government officials] could have ended the fighting by fashioning a compromise settlement, but they saw no future in that. It was better to let the fighting continue to its inevitable conclusion, a military debacle that would drag down the Japanese militarists.<sup>11</sup>

It was Japan's inability to terminate the war with China successfully that motivated its military expansion elsewhere.

### SECRET COMMITMENTS

In the first part of 1941, joint military staff conferences took place between the Americans, British, Canadians, and the Dutch to develop plans for global war against the Axis, although the United States was not yet a belligerent. Of greatest importance for the Pacific theater was a meeting in Singapore in April 1941 between the Americans, British, and Dutch. Out of this meeting came the ADB (sometimes called ABCD because of the Canadian involvement in the other meetings) agreement, which committed the conferees to joint action to fight Japan if Japanese forces crossed a geographic line that approximated the northerly extremity of the Dutch East Indies. War would result if Japan invaded British or Dutch territories in Southern Asia or moved into neutral Thailand. In essence, Roosevelt had committed the U.S. to war even if American territory were not attacked. And he had committed the U.S. to war even if the Japanese did not fire the first shot. Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon try to argue that the ADB agreement did not actually commit the United States to make war but only "outlined the military strategy to be followed if the U.S. joined the conflict."<sup>12</sup> This interpretation, however, ignores the fact that central to the ADB agreement was the criterion for joining the conflict—the Japanese crossing of a particular geographical line. Even one of the early defenders of the Roosevelt administration, Herbert Feis, acknowledged this significance in his history: "Had not the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, this line would have become the boundary between war and peace."<sup>13</sup>

Though America's commitment to the ADB agreement was only verbal, the British and Dutch took it as a solid commitment, and the U.S. armed forces drew up a war plan in harmony with it, which became known as WPL forty-six. When the Japanese actually crossed the critical geographic line in December 1941, the Dutch invoked the ADB and were

expecting help from the U.S. Navy in repelling the Japanese. Obviously, the Dutch believed the U.S. would back them up, since they would hardly dare to face the mighty Japanese military by themselves.<sup>14</sup>

That the U.S. was preparing military opposition to an armed Japanese advance southward is illustrated by actions as well as words. For this was the whole purpose of American buildup of air power in the Philippines, discussed in the next section. Certainly, the message conveyed to the British and Dutch as well as the Japanese was that the United States would go to war even if its territory were not attacked.

According to the United States Constitution, of course, the U.S. could not just make war because of the President's military commitment. Only Congress has the power to declare war. Roosevelt needed an armed incident with Japan so as to have the public support to comply with his commitment to war. (Roosevelt did promise "armed support" to the British prior to a declaration of war.<sup>15</sup>) Without such an incident, a declaration of war to counter a Japanese armed advance southward would have been politically difficult, if not impossible. That is why Pearl Harbor was a godsend from Roosevelt's standpoint.

Historian Robert Smith Thompson shows that the military action planned by the Americans, British, and Dutch went beyond simply a defensive effort to stop a Japanese aggressive move southward. They actually planned to go on the offensive. Thompson writes:

First, the ABD powers intended to confine Japan 'as nearly as possible to the defense of her main islands. Second, they proposed to 'cut Japan off from all sea communications with China and the outside world by intensive action in the air and waters around Japan, and to destroy by air attack her war industries. Two months before the Pearl Harbor attack, that is, the United States of America was party to a secret international agreement to firebomb Japan.<sup>16</sup>

### MILITARY BUILD-UP AND PROVOCATIONS

In order to carry out its anti-Japanese policy, the United States was building up its military strength in the Far East. In 1940, President Roosevelt had ordered the move of the Pacific Fleet from its permanent base in San Diego, California to Pearl Harbor. By the fall of 1941, however, the development of a B-17 bomber force in the Philippines had been given precedence over the fleet as the key means of combating Japan. Its purpose could be construed as offensive as well as a deterrent since the United States was planning to bomb Japanese cities. A secret memo General MacArthur received in September 1941 underscored the offensive purposes that American forces would undertake. It read:

[C]ommence operation as soon as possible, concentrating on

propaganda, terrorism, and sabotage of Japanese communications and military installations.. Assassination of individual Japanese should also be considered. Prepare to defeat Japan without suffering grievous loss ourselves... We must base mobile forces as near to Japan as is practicable... To the west there is China where air bases are already being prepared and stocked... To the south there is Luzon in the Philippine Islands, within easy air range of Hainan, Formosa, and Canton, and extreme range of southern Japan... Development of further air bases is proceeding.<sup>17</sup> Earlier, Roosevelt had gone so far as to deploy American warships within or adjacent to Japanese territorial waters. Roosevelt called these “pop-up” cruises, saying, “I just want them to keep popping up here and there and keep the Japs guessing. I don’t mind losing one or two cruisers, but do not take a chance on losing five or six.” Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, commander of the Pacific Fleet, opposed this provocation, saying: “It is ill-advised and will result in war if we make this move.” Between March and July 1941, Roosevelt sent naval task groups into Japanese waters on three different occasions. Japan protested but fired no shots.<sup>18</sup>

### ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

America took a number of measures to punish Japan economically. In July 1939, the United States announced that it would end its trade treaty with Japan in January 1940. In October 1940, the U.S. banned the export of scrap iron thus impeding the Japanese production of weapons-grade steel. In July 1941, when Japanese forces moved into southern French Indo-China (having already occupied the northern part in 1940), Roosevelt announced his most drastic measure: the freezing of all Japanese assets in the U.S. This deprived the Japanese of the means to purchase American goods, the most critical of which was oil.<sup>19</sup> The British and Dutch governments followed suit. Japan had to import all of its oil from foreign countries--most coming from the U.S.--because neither Japan nor Japanese-controlled territory in China produced oil. Without oil, the life-blood of the mechanized Japanese army, Japan would be unable to continue its war in China. The U.S. (and the British and Dutch) made it clear to the Japanese that the oil embargo would be relaxed only in exchange for an end to Japanese involvement in China. The *New York Times* referred to Roosevelt’s action in its July 27 issue as “the most drastic blow short of war.”<sup>20</sup>

Mainstream historians have interpreted American cooperation with the British and Dutch as well as the military build-up in the Far East as simply deterrents against further Japanese expansion. Nonetheless, it is easy to understand how the Japanese perceived these developments as a threat to their own security. Such a view seemed to be confirmed by the assets freeze, which implied a move beyond a simple defensive

containment of Japan, indicating rather an effort to roll back Japan's existing gains in China.

All factions of the Japanese government—moderates as well as extremists—saw the complete abandonment of China as unacceptable. Japan had expended too much blood and treasure simply to pull out. Abandoning China would destroy Japan's status as a great power and would cause dire economic harm. But without oil, Japan would ultimately be militarily threatened in its own backyard by the Anglo-American alliance. Moreover, it was not the Japanese war machine alone that was affected. For in addition to freezing assets, the United States government had closed the Panama Canal to Japanese shipping. As a result of these economic sanctions, along with the decline in trade stemming from the Russo-German war, Japanese imports fell by 75 percent, and the civilian economy spiraled downward, with serious food shortages.<sup>21</sup> The Japanese Foreign Minister, Shigenori Togo, vigorously protested to American Ambassador Joseph Grew that "Economic pressure of this character is capable of menacing national existence to a greater degree than the direct use of force."<sup>22</sup>

To save the domestic economy and to be able to continue prosecuting the war in China, Japan required oil and other natural resources—tin, rubber, quinine, rice—that could only be obtained by seizing Thailand, British Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. These areas would have to be attacked soon before the Japanese Navy's fuel supplies ran low and before the Anglo-American alliance had developed a powerful military force in the Far East. Of course, Japanese armed movement into these areas would automatically lead to conflict with the ADB powers. "In the last estimate," revisionist George Morgenstern averred, "Japan was confronted with the option of striking out for a rich new empire or abandoning its conquests and resigning itself to the future of a third-rate nation."<sup>23</sup>

Significantly, the United States government had enacted the economic sanctions with a clear realization that this could lead to war. Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Navy chief of war plans, had prepared a report for President Roosevelt on the probable consequences of imposing an oil embargo on Japan, which read:

It is generally believed that shutting off the American supply of petroleum will lead promptly to an invasion of the Netherlands East Indies... An embargo on exports will have an immediate severe psychological reaction in Japan against the United States. It is almost certain to intensify the determination of those now in power to continue their present course. Furthermore, it seems certain that, if Japan should then take military measures against the British and Dutch, she would also include military action

against the Philippines, which would immediately involve us in a Pacific war.<sup>24</sup>

### PROVOKING JAPAN INTO ATTACKING THE UNITED STATES

To think that American forces in the Far East, with their small number of American B-17 bombers and weak British and Dutch allies, could actually stand up to the powerful Japanese war machine in late 1941 was to engage in wishful thinking in the extreme. But when such military developments reached the ears of the security conscious Japanese, they could easily serve as an inducement to launch a preemptive strike on American forces in the Pacific. Japanese leaders had for some time thought that the United States would make war on Japan if it made an armed advance southward toward British and Dutch territory, even if such territories were not actually attacked. For example, on December 3, 1941, the Japanese embassy in Washington cabled Tokyo: "Judging from indications, we feel that some joint military action between Great Britain and the United States, with or without a declaration of war, is a definite certainty in the event of an occupation of Thailand."<sup>25</sup>

Considerable information on the buildup of American air power in the Far East and its threat to Japan could be easily gleaned from the public media. For example, the *U.S. News* of October 31, 1941 carried a two-page relief map of the globe with Japan at the center. Arrows were drawn from American bases to Japan with flying times of American bombers. *Time* magazine of November 21, 1941 carried a story about the builder of the new B-24 bomber, Reuben Harris, and said that these new bombers were already being transported to the Dutch East Indies. The headline of an article by noted columnist Arthur Krock in the November 19, 1941 *New York Times* read: "New Air Power Gives [Philippine] Islands Offensive Strength Changing Strategy in Pacific."<sup>26</sup>

On November 15, 1941, General George Marshall held a secret press briefing for representatives from the major media—the *New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, the Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service. Pledging the group to secrecy, Marshall asserted that "We are preparing an offensive war against Japan." Marshall said that war would probably begin during the first ten days of December and then he went on to delineate a bombing scenario of the Japanese home islands. If this military information were intended to be secret, it is odd that Marshall would mention it to the press at all. Robert Smith Thompson infers that this reflected President Roosevelt's aim to pass this information on to the Japanese indirectly. "Acting as Roosevelt's representative," Thompson opines, "General Marshall spoke to the press, quite likely in the full knowledge that somebody would leak his remarks."<sup>27</sup> This exaggerated depiction of

American air power that could hit Japanese cities certainly would have the effect of inducing the Japanese to gamble on striking the first blow against the United States while there was still time.

### JAPAN'S DECISION FOR WAR

The Japanese viewed the American arms to China, the military build-up, and the apparent military alliance between the ABD powers as constituting the Anglo-American "encirclement" of Japan. As Bruce Russett writes: "The freezing of assets on July 26, 1941, was seen as the final link in their bondage."<sup>28</sup> Japan's aim was to become a powerful, industrial nation that would not be dominated by outside powers as the Far East had been treated by the European colonial powers. But the Japanese saw this goal as being frustrated by the United States, which, in conjunction with European colonial powers, seemed bent on making Japan a weak, third-rate country, like other Asian nations. To the Japanese this was unbearable. There was nothing abnormal about this response. It should be emphasized that since the time of the Monroe Doctrine the United States has sought to have its way in the Western hemisphere, unhindered by the interference of European powers. It would seem to be an empirical fact of world affairs that only weak countries allow themselves to be dictated to by outside powers within their own geographical region.

According to Japanese calculations, the United States would go to war against them if they made a military advance toward British or Dutch territory. In November 1941, the Japanese envoys in the United States were even reporting to Tokyo that the United States might soon militarily occupy the Dutch East Indies as it had earlier occupied Iceland and Dutch Guiana.<sup>29</sup> All of this meant that if Japan wanted to acquire the necessary resources of Southeast Asia and break out of the ever-tightening Anglo-American "encirclement," it would have to strike a blow against American power quickly. As Robert Smith Thompson asserts: "With American economic sanctions in place and with American B-17s en route to the Pacific, Japan had only one choice. Japan had to strike—and strike first."<sup>30</sup> The Japanese saw America's Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor as a significant threat to their military designs in Southeast Asia. "The implication was clear," Thompson concludes, "Japan's only salvation lay in taking out the United States Pacific fleet, wherever it lay."<sup>31</sup>

The Japanese military leadership recognized the much greater military potential of the United States and opted for war only because there seemed to be no other alternative. Its aims against the United States were limited: to destroy existing United States offensive capabilities in the Pacific by tactical surprise. The Japanese military

leadership hoped only to give its forces time to occupy the islands of the Southwest Pacific, to extract the raw materials of those islands, and to turn the region into a virtually impregnable line of defense, which could frustrate an American counteroffensive.<sup>32</sup>

### JAPAN'S WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE

Japanese war planners emphasized that the attack would have to take place soon because oil supplies were running out. Although Japan was preparing for war, however, it still sought a last minute peace with the United States. In short, war would be the instrument of last resort if Japan were unable to restore trade with the United States by diplomatic means. It sent its major diplomats to Washington in an effort to achieve peace. In August 1941, Prime Minister Prince Konoye even offered to come to meet President Roosevelt in Washington for negotiations. As Morgenthau writes: "The American diplomatic representatives in Tokyo noted that, almost until the very end, Konoye and the moderate elements were willing to go to almost any lengths to bring off the meeting and avert war."<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt rejected Konoye's offer. As a result of its failure to achieve a diplomatic solution, Konoye's moderate government fell from power in October and was replaced by a more militant group headed by General Hideki Tojo. Although this indicated a step toward war, Japan still sought to negotiate with the United States. Among its offers, Japan was willing to promise the United States that it would pull out of southern Indo-China and not join Germany in an offensive war. In return, Japan expected the United States to restore trade, to encourage the Chinese government to negotiate with Japan, and to stop backing China militarily once the negotiations had begun. The United States refused to accept the Japanese offer.<sup>34</sup>

### MODUS VIVENDI

Japan was still seeking a diplomatic solution in November while it prepared to attack. American intelligence had broken the Japanese diplomatic code, and thus the American leadership was aware that if no diplomatic solution were reached, Japan would then go to war. However, the only conciliatory move the Roosevelt administration ever considered making was a *modus vivendi*, which would have been a temporary truce, sought by American military leaders, to avoid war until America had built up its military strength in the Far East. The *modus vivendi* would have entailed mutual American and Japanese pledges against aggressive moves in the Pacific. Japan would withdraw from southern Indo-China and limit its troops in the north. In return the U.S. would supply Japan with limited supplies of oil and other materials.

The U.S. government ultimately rejected the *modus vivendi* on November 26 and instead offered Secretary of State Cordell Hull's "10 point proposal." This virtual ultimatum told Japan to withdraw all military and police forces from China and Indo-China and that it must not support any government in China other than the Nationalist government under Chiang. Japan regarded the message as an insult and completely unacceptable. Japan regarded a sphere of influence in China as absolutely essential to its national security, and it had expended much blood and wealth to attain this objective. To accede to the American proposal would be tantamount to surrender. The American proposal essentially cemented Japan's decision to initiate war and strike Pearl Harbor.

A brief aside here regarding the rejection of the "*modus vivendi*." Revisionists, such as Anthony Kubek in *How the Far East Was Lost*, have pointed out that pro-Communists in the United States government, most importantly Harry Dexter White, pushed for the elimination of the "*modus vivendi*" in order to enhance the security interests of the Soviet Union. The Soviet aim was to guarantee war between Japan and the West in order to prevent a Japanese attack on the Soviet Far East. This Communist role has been confirmed by recent revelations from the Venona files by Herb Romerstein and John Earl Haynes.<sup>35</sup> Most revisionists, however, would maintain that Roosevelt did not require the push from Soviet spies to induce his movement toward war. As Harry Elmer Barnes noted,

Despite all this volume of evidence of communist pressure in the Far East for war between the United States and Japan, I remain unconvinced that it exerted any decisive influence upon Roosevelt, who, after all, determined American policy toward Japan. Roosevelt had made up his mind with regard to war with Japan on the basis of his own attitudes and wishes, aided and abetted by Stimson, and he did not need any persuasion or support from the Communists, however much he may have welcomed their aggressive propaganda.<sup>36</sup>

### AMERICAN MOTIVES

On the surface, it would seem that the United States pursued a policy that led to war in order to preserve the territorial integrity of China over which it was unwilling to make any compromise with Japan that could preserve the peace. As historian Basil Rauch wrote in defense of the Roosevelt administration's uncompromising policy:

No one but an absolute pacifist would argue that the danger of war is a greater evil than violation of principle... The isolationist believes that appeasement of Japan without China's consent violated no principle worth a risk of war. The internationalist must believe that the principle did justify a risk of war.<sup>37</sup>

However, the preservation of Chinese territorial integrity, which did not seem to involve American security, appears an odd reason for which to go to war. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the professed American concern for Chinese territorial integrity was highly selective. After entering the war, the United States did very little to help China, focusing instead on fighting Germany. Also, the United States government had never criticized the Soviet Union for its violations of Chinese territorial integrity—detaching Outer Mongolia in the 1920s (making it a satellite) and gaining control of Sinkiang province in the 1930s. And in 1945, Roosevelt explicitly violated Chinese territory in the Far East protocol of the Yalta Accord by giving the Soviet Union rights to the ports of Darien and Port Arthur and control of the railways in Manchuria. As historian Anthony Kubek incisively points out:

The Soviet Union had no more right to hold these ports and railways in Manchuria than did Japan... Roosevelt gave to Stalin at Yalta effective control of the same territory over which the United States had gone to war with Japan.<sup>38</sup>

It should be emphasized that in contrast to Japan, which actually controlled Chinese territory, the Soviet Union did not already occupy these territories. Rather, Roosevelt seemingly held Chinese sovereignty in such low regard that he thought he had the right to dispose of this Chinese territory in order to bribe Stalin into making war on Japan.<sup>39</sup>

### BACK DOOR TO WAR

But if China was not the real issue, what was America's motive for war? Roosevelt, like all interventionists, believed Japan was part of an Axis plot to dominate the world, which would threaten American security and values. But once the war began the Roosevelt administration put most of its effort into fighting Germany, which it had planned to do before Pearl Harbor. Because of this emphasis on Germany, revisionists see Roosevelt's effort to provoke war with Japan as an indirect way of getting the country into war with Germany—the back-door-to-war thesis.

Roosevelt had to take such an indirect approach to war with Germany because a direct approach was not politically feasible. Throughout 1941, Roosevelt believed it was essential for the United States to enter the war against Germany, but he recognized that the majority of the American people opposed such a war even as late as the fall of 1941. Thus, Roosevelt had to rely on deceptive means to edge the country into war. To placate public sentiment, Roosevelt, in his 1940 reelection campaign, had pledged that he would keep the country out of war. Roosevelt publicly preached that his aid-short-of-war policies—such as Lend-Lease, the destroyers-for-bases deal, de facto naval

convoys of British ships—were intended to keep the U.S. out of war. However, such clearly unneutral acts would inevitably lead to incidents with Germany.

Despite America's unneutral provocations, Hitler sought peace with the United States because he wanted to concentrate on the war with the Soviet Union. Thus, he ordered German submarine commanders to avoid incidents with American ships. Incidents, however, were inevitable. In an apparent effort to generate war fever, Roosevelt deliberately distorted two naval incidents in fall of 1941—involving the USS Greer and the USS Kearney—claiming that the Germans had fired on innocent American vessels.<sup>40</sup> In reality, the German submarines were responding to American provocations. Roosevelt also promoted other falsehoods in the hopes of stoking the fires of war, which included the claim that the United States government had come into the possession of a “secret Nazi map” of South and Central America showing how that continent would be organized under Nazi rule. Also, Roosevelt said he had a Nazi German document that detailed a plan to abolish all religions and liquidate all clergy and create an “International Nazi Church.” Needless to say, the alleged map and document were not made public then or since.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of November 1941, an undeclared naval war existed in the Atlantic as American ships were following a “shoot-on-sight” policy. Roosevelt had the power to do almost everything to aid Great Britain and the Soviet Union—including transporting arms and, for the British, convoying troops—except to send in American land and air forces to fight Germany directly. But despite the impact of events and the pro-war propaganda, fully eighty percent of the American public still opposed a declaration of war. And Congress was still staunchly opposed to war. And America's belligerent actions could not provoke Germany into a serious incident that could generate American support for full-scale war. Thus, Roosevelt would have to enter war through the back door. That Roosevelt made use of falsehoods and deception regarding the European War made it understandable that he would rely on the same deceptive tactics to become involved in war with Japan.

Revisionists contend that entrance into war with Japan would facilitate American war with Germany. Although many revisionist critics fail to see the connection because the Axis alliance did not require German entrance into an offensive war initiated by Japan, people at the time saw an inextricable link between war with Japan and war with Germany. As Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes, one of the more strident

and committed interventionists in the Administration, confided to his diary:

For a long time I have believed that our best entrance into the war would be by way of Japan... And, of course, if we go to war against Japan, it will inevitably lead to war against Germany.<sup>42</sup>

In his December 9, 1941 radio address, President Roosevelt accused Germany of being closely involved in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. According to Roosevelt, "We know that Germany and Japan are conducting their military and naval operations with a joint plan." Roosevelt alleged that "Germany has been telling Japan that if Japan would attack the United States Japan would share the spoils when peace came."<sup>43</sup> With the American public outraged about the underhanded "surprise" attack on Pearl Harbor, it would not have been difficult to direct that anger at Germany, especially with the inevitability of additional incidents in the Atlantic. And given the likelihood of all-out war with the United States, Hitler quite reasonably declared war on the United States on December 11, in order to gain the good will of the Japanese government, who, he hoped, might reciprocate by making war on the Soviet Union. As Thomas Fleming writes in his *The New Dealers' War*, Roosevelt was "trying to bait Hitler into declaring war, or, failing that, persuade the American people to support an American declaration of war on the two European fascist powers."<sup>44</sup>

### MOVE TOWARD WAR

It should be emphasized that the United States took a hard-line approach to Japan even though it was aware that such an approach would cause Japan to make war. United States military intelligence had broken the Japanese top diplomatic code and was reading Japanese diplomatic communications. Besides the actual code-breakers, only a few top-level people in the Roosevelt administration had access to this information. Through Japan's diplomatic messages, it was apparent that Japan would take military action to grab the necessary resources, if a favorable diplomatic solution were not achieved. How much more the United States knew about Japanese war plans is debated among historians. Even among revisionists, some would hold that at least as late as the first days of December 1941, Roosevelt was not certain that the Japanese would directly attack American territory.

All of this put Roosevelt in a bind because it of his secret commitment to the British and Dutch that the United States would make war against Japan if it moved southward. The problem was whether the American people would be willing to support a war against the Japanese to preserve British and Dutch colonial possessions or (even

less likely) to help the British prevent the Japanese occupation of Thailand, which was part of the ADB military plan.

Harry Elmer Barnes wrote that the secret military arrangements with the British and the Dutch “hung like a sword of Damocles over Roosevelt’s head” as the Japanese moved toward a war.

It exposed him to the most dangerous dilemma of his political career: to start a war without an attack on American forces or territory, or refusing to follow up the implementation of ABCD and Rainbow 5 [the military plan based on the agreement] by Britain or the Dutch. The latter [decision] would lead to serious controversy and quarrels among the prospective powers, with the disgruntled powers leaking Roosevelt’s complicity in the plan and exposing his mendacity.<sup>45</sup>

In the early days of December, Roosevelt assured the nervous British that the United States would honor its commitment to fight the Japanese if they moved southward. As the British historian John Costello writes, British documents

can leave no doubt that Roosevelt by the eve of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor had given a number of clear, carefully worded assurances of United States ‘armed support’ of Britain in advance of delivering his intended appeal to Congress.<sup>46</sup>

Roosevelt’s monumental problem was how to get Japan to attack the United States in some way in order to solidify the American public behind war. As Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary of November 25, 1941: “The question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves.”<sup>47</sup> The wording here is critical and is usually glossed over by defenders of orthodoxy. Stimson’s writing definitely implies that the United States would not simply passively await a possible attack by Japanese but would actively “manuever” Japanese into attacking United States. Roosevelt thus sought to create an incident in which the U.S. would be attacked by the Japanese. It is here that certain apparent differences among revisionists appear. If, as many revisionists have claimed, Roosevelt had foreknowledge of the impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, why would he see any reason to create an incident, rather than simply await the attack? It would thus seem that as of the beginning of December, Roosevelt either was not certain that the Japanese war plan included an attack on American territory, or else he sought a less destructive incident in order to save the Pacific Fleet.

### THREE SMALL SHIPS

Roosevelt’s planned incident consisted of sending “three small vessels” on an alleged reconnaissance mission. He personally

authorized this mission in a December 1 message to Admiral Thomas Hart, head of the Asiatic Fleet at Manila. Roosevelt specified that each ship was to be manned by Filipino sailors and commanded by an American naval officer. Furthermore, each vessel was to be armed with cannon so as to give it the minimum requirements of an American "man of war." The three little ships were directed to sail into the path of a Japanese naval task force that Washington knew was then steaming southward for an invasion of Southeast Asia.<sup>48</sup>

It was highly unusual for a President to be giving such a detailed order for a lower level military function. Moreover, as Thomas Fleming writes, "such a voyage might have made sense in the eighteenth or nineteenth century," but was rather absurd in an age when airplanes had infinitely greater reconnaissance capability.<sup>49</sup> And the only radio available for one of the ships could only receive messages, not transmit them. Moreover, Admiral Hart was already carrying out the necessary reconnaissance by air and was reporting the results to Washington. From the outset Hart seemed to recognize the real sacrificial "fishbait" purpose of the alleged reconnaissance mission.<sup>50</sup>

Roosevelt's apparent intention of sending the little ships was to have them blown out of the water, thus providing an incident for war.<sup>51</sup> Equipped with cannon, the ships could be presented as far more significant than they actually were. The incident could be reported as American warships destroyed by the Japanese. And the killing of a Filipino crew would engender war fever in the Philippines, where there was strong resistance to getting involved in war with Japan.<sup>52</sup>

However, the attack on the little ships never took place. Only one ship, the *Isabel* could be equipped in short order. Admiral Hart, apparently wanting to preserve the ship, gave it instructions that were far less provocative than Roosevelt had ordered. As a result, the *Isabel* was able to avoid Japanese fire. A second ship, the *Lanakai*, was just about to leave Manila Harbor on December 7 when the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced, and a third ship had not yet been selected. In short, the Pearl Harbor attack precluded the need for Roosevelt to create an incident. However, had the American ships been attacked by the Japanese, Harry Elmer Barnes believed that Pearl Harbor could have been saved.

There can be little doubt that the Cockleship plan of December 1st was designed to get the indispensable attack by a method which would precede the Pearl Harbor attack, avert the latter, and save the Pacific Fleet and American lives.<sup>53</sup>

This, of course, reflects the revisionist belief that Roosevelt knew in advance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

## PEARL HARBOR CONSPIRACY

That Roosevelt had foreknowledge of the Pearl Harbor attack and had deliberately withheld information is the most controversial, and perhaps best known, of the revisionist arguments. The argument runs that Washington intentionally kept the military commanders in Hawaii in the dark about the impending Japanese attack. This would ensure that no countermeasures were undertaken that might cause the Japanese to call it off. It would also preclude the possibility of the American military commanders launching a preemptive attack on the Japanese fleet, which could have muddied the Japanese culpability needed to forge a united American public in favor of war.

### “PURPLE” CODE

There is ample evidence of warnings of an impending Japanese attack being sent to American government authorities. For many years, this argument centered around the American breaking of the top Japanese diplomatic code. It was discussed at the Army and Navy Pearl Harbor hearings in 1944 and the 1945-46 congressional hearings. The United States military had broken the top Japanese diplomatic code, which was called “Purple,” with a specially-constructed code-breaking machine, also called “Purple.” The deciphered texts were referred to as “Magic.” Only a few top-level people in the Roosevelt administration had access to this information. The military commanders at Pearl Harbor were not provided with a “Purple” code-breaking machine. And although they were given some intelligence information based on “Purple,” they were denied the most crucial information that pointed to war. By late November 1941, code intercepts read in Washington indicated that Japan was about to make war and break relations with the United States. The deciphered diplomatic messages did not specify Pearl Harbor as the target, but, given that top Washington officials recognized the imminence of war, it is odd why they did not order a full military alert for Hawaii in order to play it safe. The actual code-breakers such as Captain Laurance F. Safford, head of the Communications Security Section of Naval Communications, assumed that such a warning had been given.

### “WAR WARNING”

Defenders of the administration would claim that Washington had provided adequate warning to the Pearl Harbor commanders of a possible attack and that the latter had failed to take sufficient defensive preparations. This view was embodied in the 1942 Roberts Commission investigation on Pearl Harbor and, in a milder form, in the 1946 Majority Report of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack. Pearl Harbor investigator Henry Clausen, who in

1944-1945 had investigated the background of the attack at the behest of Secretary of War Stimson, goes to great lengths in his *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment* (published in 1992) to try to show that even if the military leaders in Hawaii had simply read the newspapers they should have prepared for a possible Japanese attack.<sup>54</sup> In Henry Stimson's final statement to the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, which was drafted by Clausen, he asserted that even without a warning from Washington, General Walter C. Short, who was responsible for the defense of Hawaii,

[S]hould have been on the alert. If he did not know that the relations between Japan and the United States were strained and broken at any time, he must have been the only man in Hawaii who did not know it, for the radio and newspapers were blazoning these facts daily ... And if he did not know that the Japanese were likely to strike without warning, he could have read his history of Japan or known the lessons taught in the Army schools in respect to such matters.<sup>55</sup>

This defense of the Roosevelt administration is filled with obvious contradictions. If the commanders in Hawaii are to be blamed for failing to anticipate an attack on Pearl Harbor, how can the defenders of the Roosevelt administration likewise claim that there was no reason for Washington to realize that the Japanese would target Pearl Harbor? And if the likelihood of a Japanese attack should have been realized by simply keeping abreast of public news reports, how could Roosevelt make so much of the idea of a "surprise attack"—the major theme of his famous "Day of Infamy" speech?

It is hard to see how the Hawaii commanders were culpable. The most crucial alleged warnings from Washington were those of November 27, in which the phrase "war warning" was actually used. However, these warnings were totally lacking in clarity. The message to General Short was characterized by the Army Pearl Harbor Board (which investigated the Pearl Harbor attack in 1944) as a "Do-or-don't" message because of its ambiguities and contradictions.<sup>56</sup> The message referred to possible Japanese hostile actions with the breaking of diplomatic relations and authorized Short to take any measures he thought necessary as long as those actions did not "alarm" the general populace or "disclose intent." Moreover, Short was required to allow the Japanese to commit the first "overt act." These restrictions essentially ruled out any effective defensive preparations. General Short interpreted this message as a call to counter sabotage, which required doing such things as bunching airplanes wing tip to wing tip, thus making them sitting ducks for a bombing attack. Short informed Washington of the steps he was taking, and no corrections were

forthcoming. In fact, subsequent warnings from Washington regarding subversion and sabotage convinced Short of the appropriateness of his actions.<sup>57</sup>

Admiral Stark's message to Kimmel referred to possible Japanese advances in the Far East but said nothing about any possible attack on Hawaii. As the 1944 Naval Court of Inquiry asserted, the so-called "war warning" message sent to Kimmel "directed attention away from Pearl Harbor rather than toward it."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, in November, Navy officials declared the north Pacific Ocean a "vacant sea" and ordered all United States and allied shipping out of this area. This, of course, was the region over which the Japanese task force would travel. Two weeks before the Pearl Harbor attack, Kimmel actually dispatched a portion of the fleet to the sea north of Hawaii for surveillance purposes but he received an order from Washington to bring his ships back to Oahu. In essence, it would seem that information from Washington served to hinder if not prevent the commanders in Hawaii from taking the proper steps to protect their forces.<sup>59</sup>

To reemphasize, the defenders of the Roosevelt administration want to have it both ways: that Washington had no reason to believe that the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor and that the commanders in Hawaii were derelict for not realizing that Hawaii might be attacked. But having access to the decoded intercepts obviously meant that Washington possessed more information on Japanese intentions than did Hawaii. And if the preparations by the military commanders in Hawaii were deficient, there would seem to be no justifiable reason why Washington did not put Hawaii on a full alert. Washington ordered such a full alert in June 1940 when the likelihood of war had been infinitely less.<sup>60</sup>

### WINDS SIGNALS

Another controversial issue regarding the diplomatic code involved the so-called "winds signals." On November 19, the Japanese announced in their J-19 diplomatic code (a lower level code than "Purple," which United States was able to decode) the setting up of a so-called "Winds System," by which Japanese diplomatic officials and consulates could learn of Tokyo's war intentions in non-coded form (that is, after their code books had been destroyed) in a regular weather forecast broadcast from Tokyo. The key phrase "East Wind Rain" would mean the breaking of diplomatic relations (and probable war) with the United States. The code destruction orders went out on the first and second of December. On December 4, American intelligence picked up the "East Wind Rain" message. This was the so-called "winds execute" message. That American monitors received this message was accepted in the Army and Navy hearings on Pearl Harbor in 1944.

However, at the time of the Congressional hearings of 1945-46 a major cover-up took place. Authorities claimed that no “winds execute” message had ever been received. And it was true that no messages were around—they had been apparently destroyed. And a number of witnesses who had previously claimed to have seen the message were pressured into recanting. Captain Laurance F. Safford, however, despite intense pressure to change his story, continued to maintain that the “winds execute” message had been intercepted, decoded, and widely distributed.<sup>61</sup>

Crucial confirming evidence for the receipt of “Winds” message was a 1977 interview with Ralph T. Briggs, conducted by the Naval Security Group and declassified by the National Security Agency in March 1980. Briggs said in this interview that he was the one who had intercepted the crucial message, while on duty as chief watch supervisor at the Naval Communication Station at Cheltenham, Maryland. Briggs further stated that he was ordered by his superior officer in 1946 not to testify about the matter to the joint Congressional Committee and to cease any contact with Captain Laurance Safford.<sup>62</sup> In addition, both of the Japanese assistant naval attachés posted at the Washington embassy in 1941 have verified that the message was transmitted on December 4, exactly as Safford said.<sup>63</sup> Defenders of the administration claim that even if this message had been intercepted, it did not really tell anything not already known—that diplomatic relations were to be broken.<sup>64</sup> But if the government would go to such great lengths to cover-up this allegedly harmless evidence, one would expect cover-ups and lies about much more important matters.

### THE LAST 24 HOURS

Finally, there is the question as to what leading officials in Washington were doing in the last 24 hours before the Pearl Harbor attack. Early in the morning of December 6 (Washington time), American intelligence intercepted the so-called “pilot” message, which announced that Japan’s response to America’s November 26 ultimatum was forthcoming. It would come in 14 parts. The first 13 parts were intercepted and decoded by the early hours of the evening of December 6th, and copies were passed on to the President and to the military and naval chiefs. The harsh language recounting the alleged wrongs done by the United States to Japan clearly pointed to a break in relations. As soon as Franklin D. Roosevelt read the 13 parts, he reportedly told Harry Hopkins that “This means war.”<sup>65</sup>

On Sunday morning, the final 14<sup>th</sup> part of the message was picked up and decoded. It stated that diplomatic relations with the United States were terminated. Ominously, the time of 1:00 P.M. at which the

Japanese ambassador was instructed to deliver the entire message to Secretary Hull was recognized by the cryptographers as corresponding with a sunrise attack on Pearl Harbor. A number of intelligence officers urged that a warning be sent to Pearl Harbor. But General George Marshall, who had to authorize the warning, could not be found. Allegedly he was out horseback riding. No warning was sent to Pearl Harbor until it was too late.<sup>66</sup>

The various investigations of the Pearl Harbor attack—by the Army, the Navy, and the Congress—brought out numerous discrepancies in the testimony regarding these last hours, which revisionists have focused upon. Leading figures could not recall where they were at the time. Lesser military figures altered their testimonies to make them fit in with what their superiors wanted. Revisionists see this as part of a conspiracy purposively to withhold critical information from the Pearl Harbor commanders and later to cover-up this operation. As John Toland writes:

What novelist could persuade a reader to accept the incredible activity during those two days by America's military and civilian leaders? Was it to be believed that the heads of the Army and Navy could not be located on the night before Pearl Harbor? Or that they would later testify over and over that they couldn't remember where they were? Was it plausible that the Chief of Naval Operations, after finally being reminded that he talked to Roosevelt on the telephone that night, could not recall if they had discussed the thirteen-part message. Was it possible to imagine a President who remarked, 'This means war,' after reading the message, not instantly summoning to the White House his Army and Navy commanders as well as his Secretaries of War and Navy? One of Knox's close friends, James G. Stahlman, wrote Admiral Kemp Tolley in 1973 that Knox told him that he, Stimson, Marshall, Stark and Harry Hopkins had spent most of the night of December 6 at the White House with the President: All were waiting for what they knew was coming: an attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>67</sup>

While establishment historians admit that the Purple intercepts provided the evidence that Japan would make war, they make much of the fact that nothing in the deciphered Japanese diplomatic messages explicitly pinpointed Pearl Harbor as the target. But at that time lower echelon people did perceive that possibility. And the Naval Court of Inquiry, which investigated Pearl Harbor in 1944, maintained:

In the early forenoon of December 7, Washington time, the War and Navy Departments had information which appeared to indicate that a break in diplomatic relations was imminent and, by inference and deduction, that an attack in the Hawaiian area could be expected soon.<sup>68</sup>

And what was the rationale for not warning Pearl Harbor even if it were not assumed to be a definite target? Washington had put Hawaii on a full alert in June 1940 with much less justification. It would seem that if Japan were on the verge of war with the United States, a clear warning to Pearl Harbor would have been expected. And the fact of the matter is that there was a considerable amount of additional information beyond the diplomatic messages that pointed to an attack on Pearl Harbor. A convergence of evidence should have been noted.

### **BOMB PLOT MESSAGE**

One very important piece of intelligent information pointing to an attack on Pearl Harbor was the so-called "bomb plot message." This consisted of requests from the Japanese government in Tokyo to the Japanese consul-general in Honolulu, Nagoa Kita. One group of messages, beginning in September 1941, divided Pearl Harbor into a grid and directed the Japanese consul in Hawaii to report to Tokyo the locations and number of ships. The Japanese consul's reports were made throughout the fall of 1941 and decoded in Washington. (Washington was also keeping close surveillance on the leading Japanese spy, cover name Tadashi Morimura, who was engaging in this espionage.) This information was popularly referred to as the "bomb plot" messages since a grid is the classic method of planning a bombing attack. There was no need to know exact ship positions unless the purpose was to attack them. None of this information was passed on to the commanders in Hawaii.<sup>69</sup>

Those who have sought to minimize the significance of these "bomb plot" messages have contended that Japanese spies made inquiries at other leading American naval bases, but no such detailed or comprehensive reports, containing as they did grids and coordinates, were demanded of Japanese officials and spies at any other American base in the world. That alone indicated that Hawaii was a special target.

Military intelligence officials realized the significance of the "bomb plot" messages. They were specially marked so their significance could not be missed. The FBI also was following these espionage activities at Pearl Harbor and sending the information to the White House. Roosevelt would have been aware of these activities both through information from naval intelligence and from the FBI.<sup>70</sup> President Roosevelt's personal involvement in this issue was especially demonstrated in his October 1941 meeting with David Sarnoff, president of RCA. Roosevelt arranged to have Sarnoff provide copies of the cables between Tokyo and the Honolulu consulate, which were sent through RCA's Honolulu office, to the Office to Naval Intelligence.<sup>71</sup>

The most crucial message from the Honolulu consulate was sent to Tokyo on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. It informed Tokyo that the Japanese spies had set up a system of codes confirming the movement of various American warships through the use of signals in windows at Lanikai Beach, which could be spotted by off-shore Japanese “fishing” boats and submarines. This vital information could then be passed on to the Japanese carrier task force. The signal system would operate through December 6th. Thus, the messages revealed the time of the planned attack.<sup>72</sup>

None of the information of the bomb plot messages was provided to the Hawaii military commanders. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain Alan Kirk, was replaced in October 1941, because he insisted on warning Hawaii.<sup>73</sup> It is also noteworthy that the Roosevelt administration allowed such flagrant spying at Pearl Harbor, going against the requests of J. Edgar Hoover to arrest or deport the spies.<sup>74</sup>

### NAVAL CODES

It has been acknowledged in establishment circles that if the United States government had broken the Japanese naval codes, it would have been aware of the impending attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>75</sup> Claims have been made that the British and the Dutch had broken the Japanese naval codes. The most prominent individual who has made such a claim is Eric Nave, an Australian officer attached to the Royal Navy, who was one of the actual code-breakers.<sup>76</sup> But mainstream historians have doubted these allegations and have held that American intelligence had not yet broken the Japanese naval codes, especially the leading Japanese naval code, generally called JN-25. In contrast, Robert B. Stinnett contends that American code-breakers were able to read the Japanese naval codes. (Stinnett uses different terminology for the codes, claiming that the name “JN-25” was not in use until after the Pearl Harbor attack.)<sup>77</sup> Stinnett writes:

Testimony given to various Pearl Harbor investigations suggests that the navy codes were not solved until spring 1942. The author’s research proves otherwise. Their solution emerged in the early fall of 1940.<sup>78</sup>

According to Stinnett, American code-breakers were reading the Japanese coded naval communications, called the *Kaigun Ango*, the most important of the codes being the 5-Num (naval operations), SM (naval movement), S (merchant marine), and Yobidashi Fugo (radio call sign) codes. The intercepted messages made it clear that Pearl Harbor would be attacked on December 7, 1941. Stinnett continues: “A sixty-year cover-up has hidden American and Allied success in obtaining the solutions to the *Kaigun Ango* prior to Pearl Harbor. American naval officers hid key code documents from congressional investigators.

Naval intelligence records, deceptively altered, were placed in the US Navy's cryptology files to hide the cryptographic success."<sup>79</sup> Stinnett points out that much of this information is still classified or blacked out in those documents available the public.<sup>80</sup> However, he was able to locate some documents that explicitly show that the naval codes were broken, and he had this confirmed by interviews with surviving code-breakers.<sup>81</sup>

Proponents of the mainstream position categorically reject Stinnett's contention that American code-breakers were reading Japanese naval codes. In a recent article, Stephen Budiansky writes that the United States was unable to read JN-25 or any other high level naval code prior to Pearl Harbor, in part because the Japanese kept changing the code books. By the time the American code-breakers made some headway in breaking a code, the code would be changed to the extent that the code-breakers would have to start over again. It was only after Pearl Harbor that successful decoding took place. All of this is brought out, Budiansky intones, in recently released documents in the National Archives, which provide month-by-month reports on the code-breaking progress of the Navy cryptanalytic office in Washington (known as OP-20-GY) during the entire 1940-1941 period. These monthly reports include the progress of navy decryption units in the Pacific. Budiansky writes:

The monthly reports filed by OP-20-G confirm that at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, not a single JN-25 message from the previous 12 months had been read... The reports also confirm only two other Japanese naval code systems being examined seriously before Pearl Harbor, and neither was yielding any results, either.<sup>82</sup>

Budiansky implies that unwary researchers sometimes do not realize that information intercepted in 1941 was not decoded read until 1945-1946.

### TRACKING THE FLEET

But even if American intelligence had been unable to read the Japanese naval code, Stinnett provides additional information that American monitors had actually tracked the Japanese Pearl Harbor task force by means of radio direction finding techniques. American stations could intercept radio transmissions that enabled trained operators to pinpoint the location of the sender even if the message were indecipherable. The mainstream position has long been that no radio transmissions from the Japanese task force were intercepted after it had begun its movement toward Hawaii. And Japanese naval officials have testified that the fleet was under orders to maintain radio silence.<sup>83</sup>

Stinnett, however, points out that the order for radio silence from Admiral Yamamoto allowed radio communication in an extreme emergency.

Radio intercepts obtained by US Navy monitoring stations disclosed that the broadcasts continued after the order was issued. Instead of radio silence there was substantial, continuous radio traffic from the Japanese naval ministry, foreign ministry, and warships.<sup>84</sup>

John Toland had earlier made the claim that the Pearl Harbor task force had been tracked, though with less hard evidence. He wrote that a Dutch naval attaché in Washington, Johan Ranneft, received information at the Office of Naval Intelligence indicating that the Americans knew a Japanese task force was heading toward Hawaii. Ranneft revealed this information in his diary.<sup>85</sup> Also, an American steamship, the Lurline, had picked up the Japanese task force's radio traffic and reported it to the FBI. Finally, Toland cited a seaman in the intelligence office of the 12<sup>th</sup> Naval District headquarters in San Francisco who had intercepted the Japanese radio traffic and used it to plot the location of the task force as it headed eastward toward Hawaii. This information was supposedly sent on to the White House. Toland initially referred to this individual as "Seaman Z," who was later identified as Robert D. Ogg.<sup>86</sup> What Stinnett provides is documentary evidence to complement and give credence to these eyewitness accounts.

How do these findings mesh with the Japanese claims of radio silence? In essence, Stinnett maintains that ships in the Japanese fleet only engaged in limited radio communication. Radio communication was necessary in order to regroup the task force after a storm had scattered ships beyond visual signaling range. The Japanese were under the impression that low-power frequencies would travel only a few miles and thus be secure from enemy interception. However, a solar storm caused the radio transmissions to travel vast distances, allowing for interception by American listening posts.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Stinnett maintains that American monitors were able to determine the location of the Japanese fleet from transmissions to it from shore-based stations in Japan. This involved analysis of the changing radio frequencies. As the distances increased between the ships and the shore transmitters, the radio frequencies, by necessity, changed. Stinnett asserts: "A first day communications intelligence student, aware that Radio Tokyo and Radio Ominato were transmitting to warships could approximate—if not pinpoint the position of the vessels." <sup>88</sup>

If, as Stinnett claims, the United States had actually tracked the Japanese task force while knowing that Japan was on the verge of war, it would provide conclusive proof that high American officials were aware of the impending attack. And one might add, why would the United States government make the onerous effort to keep tabs on the movement of the Japanese fleet and then not make use of this crucial information? The only counter argument is that Stinnett is completely wrong about the documentary evidence—that no tracking had taken place. And it would seem that Stinnett would be so radically wrong on this issue that it could only be the result of fraud on his part, not simply error.

It should be added that unlike other revisionists Stinnett's argument posits a very large conspiracy that stretched beyond Washington. (In contrast, Barnes, by the 1960s, had limited to conspiracy to Roosevelt and Marshall.)<sup>89</sup> Stinnett goes so far as to maintain that Joseph J. Rochefort, the commander of the cryptographic center at Pearl Harbor, and Edwin Layton, the Pacific Fleet's chief security officer, were aware of the approaching Japanese fleet and refrained from warning Kimmel. This tends to stretch credulity. However, Stinnett does cite documentary evidence, which, though ridiculed by proponents of the mainstream position, has not been directly refuted.<sup>90</sup>

Revisionist Mark Willey puts forth an argument that would keep Hawaii intelligence out of the conspiracy loop. Willey points out that it requires two bearings to determine the location of radio transmissions, while Hawaii had only one. He claims that Hawaii was deliberately sent false cross-bearings that precluded accurate tracking.<sup>91</sup>

### POPOV'S WARNING

In addition to the American code-breaking, revisionists have cited a number of other warnings of the impending attack on Pearl Harbor that were provided to the United States government. One of the most intriguing came from Dusko Popov, a Serb who worked as a double agent for both Germany and Britain. Popov's true sympathies, however, were with the Allies. Popov was also a notorious playboy, who was code-named "Tricycle" because of his proclivity for bedding two women simultaneously. It is reputed that Popov was Ian Fleming's model for James Bond.<sup>92</sup>

In the summer of 1941, Germany sent Popov to the United States to establish an espionage cadre. Popov's instructions were contained in an questionnaire miniaturized to microdots, which could only be read by a microscope. The instructions asked Popov and his subordinates to obtain information about American war material production and, more ominously, called for a detailed study of Pearl Harbor and its nearby airfields. Popov learned from a German spy that the Japanese needed

this information for their planned attack on Pearl Harbor before the end of 1941. Popov made this information known to his British handlers, and the British had him provide this information to the FBI when he came to America in August 1941.<sup>93</sup>

It has been argued that the FBI did not trust Popov's information and the microdots, and did not fully transmit it to the White House. One explanation is that the prudish J. Edgar Hoover gave little credibility to Popov's information because of his distaste for his playboy lifestyle.<sup>94</sup> However, documents the FBI released in 1983 show that it assigned considerable importance to Popov's information and that this information was passed on to high ranking officers in Army and Naval intelligence. In Frank Paul Mintz's analysis of the FBI material on Popov, he found that much of the information had been blackened out, so it would be impossible to know that the important parts were not transmitted to the military intelligence and the White House.<sup>95</sup> As Mintz concludes:

It passes credibility to assume that the microdot questionnaire remained effectively dead to the world in 1941. English intelligence knew about it; the FBI knew; and so did the intelligence services of U.S. armed forces. Most likely both Churchill and Roosevelt became familiar with the full contents of Popov's microdots during the last quarter of the year.<sup>96</sup>

### OTHER WARNINGS

On January 27, 1941, Dr. Ricardo Shreiber, the Peruvian envoy in Tokyo, told Max Bishop, third secretary of the United States embassy, that he had just learned from his intelligence sources that there was a Japanese war plan involving a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. After being presented to Ambassador Joseph Grew, this information was sent to the State Department, where it was read by Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Naval Intelligence. Arthur McCollum of Naval Intelligence, Roosevelt's close confidante according to Stinnett, sent a cable on this issue to Kimmel, with the analysis that "The Division of Naval Intelligence places no credence in these rumors" and that "no move against Pearl Harbor appears imminent or planned for the foreseeable future."<sup>97</sup> In contrast to the reaction of Naval Intelligence, Ambassador Grew was much impressed by the information. As he wrote in his diary:

There is a lot of talk around town to the effect that the Japanese, in case of a break with the United States, are planning to go all out in a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor. I rather guess that the boys in Hawaii are not precisely asleep.<sup>98</sup>

The American ambassador was not the only source from Japan providing warnings of the impending attack. Early in the fall of 1941,

Kilsoo Haan, a Korean agent-lobbyist in Washington, told Eric Severeid of CBS that the Korean sources in Korea and Japan had proof that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor before Christmas. In late October, Haan finally convinced Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa that the Japanese were planning to attack Pearl Harbor. Gillette alerted the State Department, Army and Navy Intelligence, and President Roosevelt personally. Stanley K. Hornbeck, then the number three man at the State Department and an intimate of Henry Stimson, wrote a memorandum to Secretary of State Hull stating that Haan's Pearl Harbor warning should be taken seriously.<sup>99</sup>

In early December 1941, the Dutch Army in Java succeeded in decoding a dispatch from Tokyo to its Bangkok embassy, referring to planned Japanese attacks on the Philippines and Hawaii. The Dutch passed the information on to Brigadier General Elliot Thorpe, the U.S. military observer. Thorpe found this information so disturbing that he sent Washington a total of four warnings, the last one going to General Marshall's intelligence chief. Thorpe's message was acknowledged and he was ordered to send no further messages concerning the matter. The Dutch also had their Washington military attaché, Colonel F. G. L. Weijerman, personally warn General Marshall.<sup>100</sup>

Dr. Hans Thomsen, the German *charge d'affaires* in Washington, who was anti-Nazi, told Colonel William J. Donovan, American intelligence chief (and later head of the OSS), that the Germans intended to attack Pearl Harbor. This information was put into a memorandum. It is hard to believe that Donovan would not have brought this to Roosevelt's attention since he conferred with him several times in November and early December 1941.<sup>101</sup>

According to Congressman Martin Dies, his House Un-American Activities Committee's investigation into Japanese intelligence activities in 1941 had uncovered a map and other documents providing "precise information of the proposed attack" on Pearl Harbor. When Dies informed Secretary of State Hull, he was told to keep quiet on the matter because of "extremely delicate" relations between Japan and the United States. Dies claimed that representatives from the State Department and the Army and Navy inspected the map.<sup>102</sup>

### REVELATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ATTACK

Revisionists also cite a number of revelations that officials of the United States government, including Roosevelt, had prior knowledge of the Pearl Harbor attack. In his November 15, 1941, secret press briefing, Marshall told his audience that the United States had information derived from encrypted Japanese messages that war between the United States and Japan would break out during the first ten days of

December. Although Marshall apparently did not specifically mention Pearl Harbor, his reference to the cracked codes implied that American intelligence would have been aware of the location of the impending attack.<sup>103</sup>

Colonel Carleton Ketchum substantiates J. Edgar Hoover's claim that Roosevelt knew of the Japanese plans to attack Pearl Harbor. According to Ketchum, at the behest of Congressman George Bender of Ohio, he attended a private meeting of a select group of congressmen and government officials in Washington in early 1942 at which J. Edgar Hoover referred to various warnings of the attack on Pearl Harbor that he had passed on to FDR. Hoover also said that Roosevelt had received information on the impending attack from other sources. Hoover was allegedly told by Roosevelt to keep quiet on that matter. Ketchum said that before Hoover spoke, the group was reminded of their usual pledge of secrecy (confidential matters were supposedly often discussed before the group), but that Ketchum believed that since the release of Toland's *Infamy* in 1982, which discussed similar matters, he was freed of his pledge of secrecy. Ketchum had referred to this meeting and the talk on Pearl Harbor in general terms in his 1976 autobiography, in which he stated that he still observed his pledge of silence on the specifics of what was discussed. It was this earlier reference that helps to give Ketchum's later statement regarding Hoover's actual message some credibility.<sup>104</sup>

In an oral history, John A. Burns, a governor of Hawaii, said that while he was a police officer on the Honolulu force, an FBI agent informed him in early December 1941 of the impending attack on Pearl Harbor. Other witnesses identified the agent as Robert Shivers.<sup>105</sup>

### JOSEPH LEIB'S ACCOUNT

One of the most fascinating revelations comes from Joe Leib, a newspaper reporter who had formerly held posts in the Roosevelt administration. Leib claimed that his friend, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, confided to him on November 29, 1941 that President Roosevelt knew that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor within a few days, and that the President was going to let this happen as a way to get the country into war. Hull was strongly opposed to this scheme. He turned over to Leib a document containing a transcript of Japanese radio intercepts which allegedly concerned the Pearl Harbor plan. While making Leib promise never to reveal his source, Hull urged him to take the story to the press. Leib took the story to the United Press bureau, which it refused to run it. Although Leib did manage to get a version of it placed onto United Press's foreign cable, only one newspaper took it,

the *Honolulu Advertiser*, which created a front-page banner headline in its Sunday, November 30 issue: "Japanese May Strike Over Weekend."<sup>106</sup>

### ROOSEVELT AND THE RED CROSS

A recent Pearl Harbor investigator, Daryl S. Borgquist, contends that Don C. Smith, who directed War Services for the Red Cross before WWII, was told by Roosevelt in November 1941 to prepare secretly for an impending Japanese attack on Hawaii. This story came to light in a 1995 letter from Smith's daughter, Helen C. Hamman, to President Clinton dealing with the issue of the culpability of Admiral Kimmel and General Short, which was then being reconsidered by the United States government. Roosevelt, Ms. Hamman wrote, told her father that he was to keep this effort secret from the military personnel on Hawaii. Roosevelt said that "the American people would never agree to enter the war in Europe unless they were attack [sic] within their own borders." Borgquist was able to confirm the basics of Hamman's story--the Red Cross did quietly send large quantities of medical supplies and experienced medical personnel to Hawaii shortly before December 7, 1941.<sup>107</sup>

### CONCLUSION

How is one to evaluate the various parts of the revisionist position? The evidence would seem to be clear that Roosevelt provoked the Japanese to attack the United States. It is apparent that the U.S. could have taken alternative policies aimed at the preservation of peace. And given the threat the United States posed to Japan in its very own geographical region, it was quite understandable that Japan would strike at the United States. Moreover, American government officials clearly recognized that the American policies would push Japan into belligerency. Furthermore, it seems clear that Roosevelt desired a Japanese attack on an American territory or ship in order to galvanize public support behind a declaration of war that would enable him to honor his commitments in the ADB agreement.

Nevertheless, some qualifications are necessary. It is not as apparent, or necessary for the revisionist thesis, that Roosevelt was following some rigid plan to achieve war with Japan going back to the first part of 1940, as some hard revisionists such as Stinnett maintain. It is quite conceivable that at times Roosevelt considered maintaining peace with the Japanese so as to focus on the European war. Moreover, it does not seem to have been in Roosevelt's character to have a perfectly consistent policy—certainly this was the case in his domestic policy. As revisionist Frederic Sanborn opines:

Therefore it may be true that there was a complex ambivalence, not thoroughly thought out, in Mr. Roosevelt's attitude toward the expedience of peace or war with Japan. It is quite possible that

he did not fully commit himself to the latter choice until late in November 1941. By his own express declarations we know that he deliberately temporized. Temporizing is sometimes merely a way to postpone making a decision, but it may also be a method of awaiting a favorable opportunity to put into effect a decision already made.<sup>108</sup>

That Roosevelt had foreknowledge of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor requires some qualification. It is likely that not all failures to see the impending attack on Pearl Harbor were the result of conspiracy. As Harry Elmer Barnes realized, part of the reason for the failure of official Washington to alert Hawaii was its fixation on Japanese troop movements in the Southeast East Asia because of the implications this had on the ADB agreement.<sup>109</sup>

Also as late as the first days of December, there seems to have been extreme nervousness among Roosevelt and his inner circle that the Japanese might avoid attacking American territory. Certainly, the British government seemed to be of this opinion in its effort to get assurances from the United States that it would honor its commitment to fight the Japanese when they moved southward.<sup>110</sup> And, of course, why would Roosevelt try to arrange an incident with the three little ships if he knew the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor? Perhaps, Roosevelt was aware of the possibility of the attack on Pearl Harbor but lacked certitude. Then again, as Harry Elmer Barnes implied, perhaps Roosevelt sought to save the fleet by getting the United States into the war earlier through an incident involving the little ships.

But while Roosevelt might not have been certain of the Pearl Harbor attack, it would seem that he was at least aware of its likelihood. There is just too much converging evidence to conclude otherwise—that the attack on Pearl Harbor took Roosevelt completely by surprise. Perhaps, some of this evidence can be questioned, but it is hard to question all of it. Even before the new information provided by Stinnett became known, Frank Paul Mintz concluded that “the ‘argument from saturation’ is the most persuasive one in behalf of the contention that Washington was forewarned.”<sup>111</sup> If the information provided by Stinnett is accurate—that the United States actually was reading the Japanese naval codes and was tracking the task force as it moved toward Hawaii—it would by itself be sufficient to prove the revisionist case.

Of course, a number of arguments (some mutually exclusive) have been used to criticize the overall revisionist position. (Earlier in this essay, criticisms of specific revisionist points have been noted and countered.) One of the mildest deals with the idea that while the agencies of the United States collected information that would show that Pearl Harbor was a target, such information was not in Roosevelt’s hands.

However, Roosevelt was actively involved in American foreign policy decision-making, so it would seem hard to believe that he would be uninformed regarding intelligence issues. And as discussed earlier in this essay, Stinnett points out that Roosevelt was given access to, and was interested in, specific intelligence information regarding Pearl Harbor.

A more fundamental criticism of the revisionist position relies on an argument made by Roberta Wohlstetter in *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decisions*<sup>112</sup> that claims that American intelligence was so overwhelmed with information, which she refers to as “noise,” that it could not make an accurate evaluation. Wohlstetter acknowledges that in hindsight one could see that information pointed to a Japanese attack, but that before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor it was impossible to select out the valid information, which was “imbedded in an atmosphere of ‘noise.’”<sup>113</sup> However, it is hard to see how this could be an insurmountable problem for intelligence gatherers. Being able to select the wheat from the chaff is their fundamental function. “Noise” would exist in any intelligence situation. It is not apparent that the situation American intelligence faced in 1941 was vastly more complicated than what is normally the case.

Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon write that in a “thorough search of more than thirty years, including all publications released up to May 1, 1981 we have not discovered one document or one word of sworn testimony that substantiates the revisionist position on Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor.”<sup>114</sup> One wonders what the authors mean here. Certainly, there is evidence for the revisionist case. If Goldstein and Dillon<sup>115</sup> use the term “substantiate” to mean something like absolute proof, it must be admitted that no one document, to date, absolutely proves the revisionist case. But then again a single document rarely “proves” any historical argument. It is numerous pieces of evidence that point to one conclusion. Michael Shermer makes use of this “convergence of evidence” argument to prove that the Holocaust happened and for historical proof in general.<sup>116</sup> It would certainly seem to be applicable to Pearl Harbor. And this argument meshes with Mintz’s “argument from saturation.”

Another criticism of the revisionist position is the rejection of the possibility of a successful conspiracy. Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon assume that such a conspiracy would have had to have encompassed a large number of individuals.

To accept the revisionist position, one must assume that almost every one of those individuals, from the President on down, was a traitor. Somewhere along the line someone would have recalled his solemn oath to defend the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and have blown the whistle.<sup>117</sup>

But there is no need to assume a massive conspiracy because its actions were extremely limited—the conspirators simply refrained from sending necessary information to Hawaii. And there is no reason to assume that the members of Roosevelt's inner circle would ever publicly confess to this operation because instead of regarding their action as traitorous, they undoubtedly believed that they were acting for the good of the country.

Other arguments against the revisionist thesis make assumptions about Roosevelt's character—that he was too humanitarian to sacrifice American lives. Dillon and Goldstein, for example, write that “nothing in his history suggests that this man could plot to sink American ships and kill thousands of American soldiers and sailors.”<sup>118</sup>

But, as demonstrated by his efforts to get into the war, Roosevelt, like many other leaders considered great, was not squeamish about the loss of lives to achieve a higher good. And contrary to the Goldstein and Dillon scenario, revisionists do not accuse Roosevelt of actively plotting to kill Americans. He simply allowed the attack to take place. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, Roosevelt could have reasonably expected the damage to have been much less than it was. According to the conventional wisdom of the day, the battleships in Pearl Harbor were virtually invulnerable to air attack and the harbor was too shallow for torpedoes to be effective.<sup>119</sup>

A related argument assumes that allowing the fleet to be destroyed was just too much of a risk for Roosevelt to have taken. But leaders considered “great” have been known for taking risks—think of Napoleon, or Alexander the Great. And the American risk was actually not that great considering what Roosevelt thought to be the alternative if the United States did not enter the war—Axis domination of the world that would imperil the United States. Moreover, because of the anti-war stance of the American public, Roosevelt realistically believed that only an overt attack on the United States could generate the necessary public support for war. Thus, from Roosevelt's point of view, only an attack on the United States would enable the United States to take the necessary step—i.e., war—for its survival. Any risk would be worth it—somewhat like the risk a terminal cancer patient takes in having a serious, even experimental operation, in order to stave off an otherwise unavoidable death. But again there was no reason for Roosevelt to regard the risk to be of any great magnitude—certainly the security of continental United States was not endangered. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, Roosevelt could have reasonably expected the damage to have been much less than it was. And Japan was not perceived as an all-powerful foe. Once the Allies, which included the Soviet Union, had taken care of the greatest danger—Germany—it could reasonably be assumed that they could easily defeat Japan.

Henry Stimson revealed in his diary that the White House proponents of war could see the positive results of the Pearl Harbor attack from the very outset:

When the news first came that Japan had attacked us my first feeling was of relief that the indecision was over and that a crisis had come in a way which would unite all our people. This continued to be my dominant feeling in spite of the news of catastrophes, which quickly developed. For I feel that this country united has practically nothing to fear; while the apathy and divisions stirred up by unpatriotic men had been hitherto very discouraging.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, many mainstream historians, instead of writing with any type of detachment, have closely identified with World War II as the “good war,” and are automatically hostile to any ideas that might tarnish this image. This is quite apparent in Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon, who refer to the Allies as the “free world” even when Stalinist Russia is included. Ultimately, Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon view the revisionists as not simply producing erroneous history but as posing a deliberate threat to human freedom. Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon write:

We would not devote so much space to it [the revisionist interpretation] except for two frightening aspects. First, such disregard for the laws of evidence undermines the structure of Occidental justice, so laboriously erected over the centuries. If contemporary documents and sworn testimony can be disregarded in favor of unsupported charges and personal venom, no citizen is safe... It also recalls uncomfortably the notion so widespread among the Germans after World War I, and such a favorite thesis with Hitler, that Germany did not really suffer military defeat, but had been stabbed in the back by politicians on the home front.<sup>121</sup>

Thus, Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon connect Pearl Harbor revisionism with Nazism. The emotionalism evident in such thinking can easily distort their writing. In short, they judge the revisionist account by much higher standards of proof than are conventionally applied to historical events.

It can be wondered what could possibly constitute proof of the revisionist argument that could satisfy adherents of the establishment position. It should be noted that in rejecting the revisionist thesis mainstream historians are quite willing to abandon establishment arguments fervently held in the past. For example, John Prados, a proponent of the mainstream position, actually accepts Stinnett's contention that the Japanese fleet approaching Hawaii did not maintain radio silence and that American intelligence monitored its radio transmissions. Now the radio silence argument had been a bulwark of the mainstream position to explain why the Japanese task force could

reach Pearl Harbor undetected. The fact that the mainstream historians might have been completely wrong on this crucial point, however, does not cause Prados to consider the idea that the revisionists might be right in their overall view. Rather, Prados goes on to chastise Stinnett for,

attributing every failure to a nefarious 'plan,' giving no attention to the ambitions of certain Navy officers who wanted to dominate all intelligence, operations and communications services to the fleet... and their plan was not a conspiracy to get the United States into World War II.<sup>122</sup>

But what evidence would be necessary to prove the revisionist thesis? It appears that for some establishment thinkers no type of evidence would provide sufficient proof. Certainly, Prados' argument allows for a pre-emptive rejection of revisionism even if the revisionist contention that American intelligence could read the Japanese naval codes would be accepted as true.

As revisionist James J. Martin aptly points out:

There are never enough data to enable one to *prove* an unpopular historical thesis. An establishment, having anchored its lines, predictably vilifies a rival and subjects those involved to ridicule and ultimately to personal detraction and traducement which goes far beyond that. This *ad hominem* denigration is expected to transfer to their intellectual product. And no matter what the latter put on the record, the former insist that it is not enough 'proof,' regardless of how flimsy or unconvincing was the 'proof' used to create the establishment position.<sup>123</sup>

Pre-conceived ideas generally control historical observations. Historians, especially those who make their living in academic circles, must necessarily work within the paradigmatic confines of the prevailing orthodoxy, especially where taboo topics are involved. The heretic must labor on the scholarly fringes, with little or no financial backing and no major avenues for dissemination. Perhaps this would be considered a tautology, but it is likely that the revisionist account of Pearl Harbor and the origins of the war with Japan can never receive a fair hearing in mainstream circles until the presentation of World War II as the "good war" is no longer of great instrumental value to the reigning establishment.<sup>124</sup> Obviously, the "good war" scenario still serves a vital purpose as America, victorious over the mighty Taliban, marches forward to make the world safe from "terrorism."

---

*Stephen J. Sniegowski holds a Ph.D. in American diplomatic history and is the author of several historical articles.*

---

## ENDNOTES

1. Gordon Prange with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1986), p. 40.
2. Frank P. Mintz, *Revisionism and the Origins of Pearl Harbor* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
4. For example, British historian Antony Best writes: "In particular, it is important to see how the restrictive trading practices which the British Empire introduced to buttress British industries during the Depression, such as imperial preference and quotas on Japanese exports, pushed Japan towards the desire for autarky and the establishment of a yen bloc, and thus expansionism in East Asia." *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41* (London: LSE/Routledge, 1995), p. 3.
5. Charles C. Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 96.
6. Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963), p. 3.
7. Bruce M. Russett, *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the U.S. Entry into World War II* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 57.
8. Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), pp. 8-9.
9. Wayne S. Cole, *An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations*. Revised edition. (Homewood, Il.: Dorsey Press, 1974), p. 377.
10. Robert Smith Thompson, *A Time for War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Path to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991), pp. 322-23.
11. Jonathan G. Utey, *Going to War with Japan, 1933-1941* (Knoxville, Tn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 34-35.
12. Prange, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, pp. 70-71.
13. Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War Between the United States and Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 170.
14. James J. Martin, "Pearl Harbor: Antecedents, Background and Consequences," [<http://www.blancmange.net/tmh/articles/pearl.html>].
15. John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill--The Shocking Truth Revealed* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), p. 146.
16. Thompson, p. 366.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366.

18. Stinnett, pp. 9-10.

19. This argument has been made that Roosevelt did not intend the freeze on assets to be a complete embargo but that the latter was brought about by anti-Japanese officials in the State Department led by Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson. See Utley, pp. 153-54. This argument is difficult to accept. That Roosevelt made some early statements implying that the embargo would not be total can be seen as an effort to counter those who complained that such an embargo would inevitably lead to war. If the full embargo were a mistake, Roosevelt could have easily rectified it. Certainly, Roosevelt was aware of the effects on Japanese and their belligerent reaction to the embargo.

20. Quoted in Costello, p. 59.

21. George Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1947), p. 147

22. Quoted in Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 148.

23. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 11.

24. Quoted in Bruce R. Bartlett, *Cover-Up: The Politics of Pearl Harbor, 1941-1946* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), p. 38.

25. Bruce M. Russett, *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the United States Entry into World War II* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), p. 53.

26. Thompson, pp. 366, 375.

27. Ibid., pp. 375-77.

28. Russett, p. 53.

29. Kemp Tolley, *Cruise of the Lanikai: Incitement to War* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1973), p. 40; Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 115.

30. Thompson, p. 352.

31. Ibid., p. 379.

32. Russett, p. 54.

33. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 140.

34. Ibid., *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 150-52.

35. John Berlau, "Red Alert at Pearl Harbor," *Insight Magazine*, [http://www.insightmag.com/archive/200106185.shtml].

36. Harry Elmer Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter of a Century* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 76.

37. Basil Rauch, *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor: A Study in the Creation of a Foreign Policy* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1950), p. 472.

38. Kubek, pp. 108, 111.

39. Paul W. Schroeder writes: "For those who believe that a vital moral difference existed between the two cases, the problem would seem to be how to show that it is morally unjustifiable to violate principle in order to keep a potential enemy out of a war, yet morally justifiable to sacrifice principle in order to get a potential ally into it. The dilemma appears insoluble." *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations: 1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 210.

40. Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Interventionists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 444.
41. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Interventionists*, p. 447.
42. Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Lowering Clouds, 1939-1941* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 630 quoted in Bartlett, *Cover-up*, p. 20.
43. Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: F. D. R. and the War Within World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 34-35.
44. Fleming, pp. 34-35. Historians have added that America's secret war plan for attacking German-occupied Europe, which was leaked to the press in early December 1941, helped to motivate his Hitler's decision for war. Fleming thinks that Roosevelt intentionally leaked the secret war plan in order to bring about this desired result.
45. Barnes, *Pearl Harbor after a Quarter of a Century*, p. 108.
46. Costello, p. 146.
47. Quoted in Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 517.
48. Bartlett, pp. 57-59; John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982), pp. 291-92.
49. Fleming, p. 24.
50. Fleming, p. 47; Costello, pp. 146-47; A first hand account of this episode is provided by Tolley, pp. 268-80.
51. An alternative explanation in Gordon Prange's *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981) is that Roosevelt's order simply reflected his "indestructible faith in small crafts." (p. 848). This explanation, which presents Roosevelt as a somewhat irrational busybody, is far from convincing.
52. Edward T. Layton with Roger Pineau and John Costello, *And I Was There: Pearl Harbor and Midway—Breaking the Secrets*, p. 247.
53. Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter of a Century*, p. 90.
54. Henry C. Clausen and Bruce Lee, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992), pp. 154-56.
55. Quoted in Clausen, p. 156.
56. George Morgenstern, "The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor," in *Perpetual War For Perpetual Peace*, edited by Harry Elmer Barnes (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1953), pp. 352.
57. Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter of a Century*, pp. 48-57; Morgenstern, "The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor," pp. 352-54.
58. Quoted in Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter of a Century*, p. 60.
59. Stinnett, pp. 144-45.
60. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 246, 255.
61. Toland, *Infamy*, pp. 208-217, 244-45.

62. Ibid, pp. 195-98; 322-23.
63. John Toland, "Postscript," *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and its Aftermath* [Paperback] (New York: Berkley Books, 1983), pp. 346-47.
64. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 361.
65. Toland, *Infamy*, p. 5.
66. Barnes, *Pearl Harbor: After a Quarter of a Century*, pp. 37-40.
67. Toland, *Infamy*, p. 320.
68. Naval Court of Inquiry, p. 69 quoted in Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 244.
69. Stinnett, pp. 83-107.
70. Ibid., p. 101.
71. Ibid., pp. 106-107.
72. Charles Lutton, "Pearl Harbor: Fifty Years of Controversy," *Journal of Historical Review*. <http://www.vho.org/GB/Journals/JHR/11/4/Lutton431-467.html>.
73. Toland, *Infamy*, p. 63.
74. Stinnett, p. 97.
75. Frederick D. Parker, "The Unsolved Messages of Pearl Harbor," *Cryptologia* 15 (October 1991), pp. 295-313.
76. See for example: James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into WWII* (New York: Summit Books, 1991).
77. Author's telephone conversation with Robert B. Stinnett on July 30, 2001.
78. Stinnett, p. 22.
79. Ibid., p. 71.
80. Ibid., p. 82.
81. In the author's telephone conversation with Robert B. Stinnett on July 27, 2001, he emphatically stated that documents explicitly noting the reading of the Japanese naval codes in late 1941 exist in the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.
82. Stephen Budiansky, "Too Late for Pearl Harbor," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1999, pp. 47-51 [<http://www.usni.org/Proceedings/Articles99/PRObdiansky.html>].
83. Prange, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, pp. 54-55.
84. Stinnett, p. 124.
85. Toland, *Infamy*, pp. 298-99.
86. Ibid., pp. 278-80, 285-86; Roy Davis, BBC, *Sacrifice at Pearl Harbor*, 1989 (Television documentary).
87. Stinnett, p. 205;
88. Ibid., Footnote 37, p. 367.
89. Mintz, pp. 96-97.
90. Especially see, Robert B. Stinnett, "Afterward to the Paperback Edition," *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), pp. 261-70.

91. Mark Emerson Willey, *Pearl Harbor: Mother of All Conspiracies* (NP: NP, 200), p. 196.
92. Dusko Popov, *Spy/Counterspy: The Autobiography of Dusko Popov* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1974).
93. Toland, *Infamy*, pp. 258-60; Mintz, pp. 97-98.
94. John F. Bratzel and Leslie B. Rout, Jr., "Pearl Harbor, Microdots, and J. Edgar Hoover," *American Historical Review* 87 (Dec. 1982): 1342-1351.
95. Telephone interview with Frank P. Mintz on July 31, 2001. Mintz reviewed the Popov documents at the FBI building.
96. Mintz, p. 100. In a telephone conversation with the author on July 29, 2001, Mintz said that most of the FBI documents dealing with Popov that are available to the public have large segments blacked out.
97. Stinnett, pp. 31-32.
98. Toland, *Infamy*, p. 253.
99. Ibid., *Infamy*, pp. 260-61, 289-90, 311; Toland, "Postscript," pp. 349-50; Thompson, pp. 370-71.
100. Toland, *Infamy*, pp. 281-82, 291.
101. Thompson, p. 383.
102. Martin Dies, *Martin Dies Story* (New York: Bookmailer, 1963), p. 165.
103. Stinnett, pp. 157-58.
104. Toland, "Postscript," p. 342-44. Ketchum had referred to this meeting and the talk on Pearl Harbor in general terms in his 1976 autobiography, in which he stated that he still observed his pledge of silence on the specifics.
105. Toland, "Postscript," p. 345.
106. Davis, BBC, *Sacrifice*.
107. Daryl S. Borgquist, "Advance Warning? The Red Cross Connection," *Naval History*, 13:3 (May/June, 1999), [<http://www.usni.org/navalhistory/Articles99/NHborgquist.htm>].
108. Frederic R. Sanborn, "Roosevelt is Frustrated in Europe," in Barnes, ed., *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, p. 221.
109. Mintz, p. 38.
110. Costello, pp. 326-27.
111. Mintz, p. 101.
112. Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1962).
113. Ibid., p. 387.
114. Prange, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, p. 850.
115. Prange was deceased when this part was written.
116. Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Didn't Happen and Why Do They Say It?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

117. Prange, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, p. 64.
118. Ibid., p. 64.
119. Toland, "Postscript", p. 348.
120. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 309.
121. Prange, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, p. 39.
122. John Prados, "Rumors of War," Review of *Day of Deceit* by Robert Stinnett in "Book World," *Washington Post*, March 5, 2000, p. X-7.
123. Martin, "Pearl Harbor."
124. This could be interpreted as a "paradigm" shift, a term made famous by Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

# THE WESTERN CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD HISTORY

JAMES C. RUSSELL

---

“I shall begin by speaking about our ancestors, since it is only right and proper on such an occasion to pay them the honor of recalling what they did.” Thus wrote Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*<sup>1</sup> and so it is fitting to pay tribute to those whose deeds contributed toward the creation and defense of our Western Civilization. The deeds of our ancestors, which we have chosen to commemorate today, include those of a military, cultural and scientific nature.

In his book entitled *The Birth of Europe*, medieval historian Robert Lopez posed the question: “What enabled Europe to emerge finally on top?” His answer was “the absence of great invasions for a thousand years.”<sup>2</sup> Hence we begin our survey of Western contributions by paying tribute to those who, throughout the history of the West, courageously repulsed alien invading forces.

The first great battle for the survival of the West occurred nearly 2,500 years ago, in 480 B.C. in Greece. Herodotus, the first great Western historian, describes this legendary battle in his *History of the Persian War*. When the Persians invaded Greece, the Greeks realized that they were outnumbered and needed time to reorganize their forces. They sought to delay the approaching Persians at a narrow mountain pass. The following selection describes a scenario not unlike that which confronts us today: the fear and resignation of the many, the outright treason of some, and the sacrifice of the few who fight valiantly against insurmountable odds. Herodotus wrote:

[7.207] The Greek forces at Thermopylae, when the Persian army drew near to the entrance of the pass, were seized with fear; and a council was held to consider a retreat. It was the wish of the Greeks generally that the army should fall back. But Leonidas, the Spartan King, gave his voice for remaining where they were.

[7.210] Four whole days went by, and Xerxes, the Persian king, expected that the Greeks would run away. When, however, he found on the fifth day that they were not gone, thinking that their firm stand was mere impudence and recklessness, he grew angry,