

# Day of Infamy

By EDWARD HALL

Franklin Roosevelt called December 7, 1941 "A day that will live in infamy." Yet it was he who plotted this incredible betrayal and schemed to bring on the universal bloodbath which followed. A trained historian takes another look at Pearl Harbor.

Twenty-five years ago this month Japanese aircraft over Pearl Harbor gave substance to President Franklin Roosevelt's fond dream of dragging a reluctant America into World War II. Japan, in the words of Henry L. Stimson, had been "maneuvered" into "firing the first shot." Why an American chief executive deemed it necessary so to "maneuver" Nippon and how he contrived to do so remain unknown to most Americans to this day. For the interested there is, however, no mystery about the story. An entire school of so-called "revisionist" historians has laid bare the essential details of this exercise in presidential infamy. There are no more admirable works of scholarship to be found anywhere than their brilliant exposure of White House integrity at ebb tide.

The question of *why* Roosevelt goaded the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor is of first importance. When it is recognized that this is precisely what he sought to do, all his actions fall together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. There is to begin with the fact that even as a young man he entertained vigorously anti-Japanese feelings. As if to cinch matters he was also possessed of a warm devotion to the interests of China, Japan's great Asian adversary of the time. His thoroughly anti-Japanese bias was revealed by his early support of the non-recognition doctrine of Henry L. Stimson at the time of the Manchurian Crisis in

1931. Once more he tilted his lance in the direction of Japan with his speech of October, 1937, advocating a "quarantine" of aggressors. We shall see shortly the degree of provocation he offered Japan in 1941. But before we do it must be understood that he was not motivated entirely or even mainly by considerations affecting either Japan or China.

Like most American Liberals he suffered a deep emotional trauma with the advent of National Socialism to power in Germany. The Third Reich's policies towards ethnic minorities and leftist political elements stirred him deeply. It should perhaps be observed parenthetically that the far more thoroughgoing and brutal Communist suppression of non-Russian nationalities, religious groups, Kulaks and others in the Soviet Union struck no similar responsive chord in his makeup. Animated by a deep dislike of everything German, it is not surprising that Roosevelt should set himself the task of thwarting at every turn the plans of Germany's leaders. The German press attache in London in prewar days, Fritz Hesse, later described the President as "the great opponent who had everywhere crossed Hitler's plans." Scholars like the late Professor Charles Tansill have demonstrated conclusively that F.D.R. contributed, by his belligerently anti-German pressures upon Britain, France, and Poland, to the outbreak of the European war in 1939. Thereafter he

became increasingly pathological about Germany, subordinating all other purposes and aims to the destruction of that nation. Above all other motives it was his unremitting quest for a certain path to war with Germany that led with the inevitability of a Greek drama to the tragic bloodbath of Pearl Harbor. Embroilment with Japan in the Pacific assured a welcome backdoor entry to war with Japan's European allies.

## Roosevelt Obsessed With Hatred

Had German leaders been willing to oblige with a declaration of war, they could have found ample justification under international law for the President had violated every canon of neutrality with his belligerent assistance and blatant side-taking on behalf of Britain, and the Soviet Union too after June 22, 1941. But Germany had no desire to grease the path of American entry into the war. The memory of 1917 was still all too vivid in German minds. Thus an extended catalogue of determined American provocations ranging from Lend-Lease to carrying munitions to Germany's enemies and finally even firing upon German submarines could elicit no martial response from Berlin. Somehow, the President was nevertheless resolved, Germany would have to be smashed. However this would not be simple for Britain could scarcely do it alone and the Soviet armies were reeling under the hammer blows of the Wehrmacht after June 22, 1941. More than that, Roosevelt, according to the testimony of the late Senator William E. Borah who had been the able chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had given Anthony Eden a secret war commitment as early as December, 1938. Thus if Rooseveltian counsels of intransigence brought on a war with Germany which Albion could not herself handle, America could be relied upon to somehow complete the difficult task. Certainly Senator Borah's charges seemed to find an echo when, in 1940,

Roosevelt's lackey, Harry Hopkins, was dispatched to London to assure Churchill that "at all costs and by all means" the President "will carry you through."

With the men of the Third Reich in a distinctly cheek-turning mood, the most promising opportunity lay in the direction of war with Japan, Germany's ally since the signing of the Tripartite Pact of September 28, 1940. To the saber-rattler in the White House a stern program of sharp economic pressure seemed precisely the right formula for driving the Empire of the Rising Sun to some desperate expedient that would guarantee the ardently desired American entry into war against Hitler. The highlight of this program to "squeeze Japan now," as it has been described, came with the notorious White House order of July 26, 1941, freezing all Japanese funds in the United States. The British and the Dutch now followed suit within their own possessions. The consequences were exactly as anticipated: Japan robbed of currencies needed for crucial foreign purchases, *above all oil*, found herself in an impossible position from which she could only escape by some drastic action. In a word, Japanese military action was now a matter of "when" and not "whether." That the President was fully aware of this is clearly evident from a statement he made to a delegation shortly before the freezing order:

It was very essential, from our own selfish point of view of defense, to prevent a war from starting in the South Pacific. So our foreign policy was trying to stop a war from breaking out down there. . . . Now, *if we had cut the oil off, they [the Japanese] probably would have gone down to the Netherlands East Indies a year ago, and we would have had war.*

[Italics added.]

Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations at the time, subse-

quently admitted in the course of a Congressional investigation of the Pearl Harbor attack that, in the circumstances of this "throttling" of Japanese life "the natural thing for a Jap was to say, 'Well, I will go down and take it [oil].'" Historian Louis Morton's description of the fateful freezing order as "the Japanese Pearl Harbor" was very much to the point.

#### Japan Seeks Peace

In the tense weeks and months that now lay between the world and Pearl Harbor the Japanese sought with might and main to discover some promising path to peace. We now know that they were entirely sincere and, even more importantly, that the Administration knew it as well for American intelligence had successfully cracked the top Japanese diplomatic code—"Purple"—as far back as August, 1940. Since that time Tokyo's secret messages to her diplomats around the globe had been intercepted and read. Hence the old popular view, officially encouraged after December 7, 1941, that peace negotiations by Japanese diplomats here were contrived purely as a smoke screen behind which to hide the diabolical plans for the forthcoming surprise aggression, is simply no longer tenable.

The Administration's design to goad Nippon into taking the first overt military step, thereby assuring Washington of a more favorable propaganda image around the globe and the united support of an outraged public at home culminated in the momentous diplomatic action of Secretary of State Hull on November 26, 1941. That afternoon he presented the Japanese diplomats with a sharply worded ultimatum demanding that Japanese troops be unconditionally withdrawn from China and Indochina and that there be "no support of any government in China other than the National Government [Chiang Kai-shek]." Roosevelt and Hull were under no illusion as to what the outcome of

so imperious a command would be. Hull confided to Stimson that having "broken the whole matter off" with the Japanese "I have washed my hands of it and it is now in the hands of you and Knox—the Army and the Navy." Three days later he spoke to Lord Halifax in a similar vein, remarking that "the diplomatic part of our relations with Japan was virtually over and that the matter will now go to the officials of the Army and the Navy." The renowned British naval historian, Captain Russell Grenfell, accurately summed up the foregoing account of American foreign policy in 1941:

It is beyond doubt that President Roosevelt wanted to get his country into the war, but for political reasons was most anxious to insure that the first act of hostility came from the other side; for which reason he caused increasing pressure to be put on the Japanese, to a point that no self-respecting nation could endure without resort to arms.

Captain Oliver Lyttelton, British Minister of Supplies, spoke even more pointedly to a group of Americans in London in 1944, asserting that "America provoked Japan to such an extent that the Japanese were forced to attack Pearl Harbor. It is a travesty on history to say that America was forced into war." Publicist George Crocker, no doubt correctly, opined that "Obsessed as he was with the British point of view, Captain Lyttelton probably meant to pay his American listeners a compliment." Nevertheless, Crocker continues, "He later apologized when he learned that he had blurted out a truth that was embarrassing on the other side of the Atlantic."

#### Roosevelt Wanted Bloodshed

The foregoing account of Franklin Roosevelt's scheming to involve Americans in a war they neither wanted nor needed does not, however, exhaust the chronicle of his infamy. Even more

monstrous, was the fact that he knew in advance the place and time of the attack *but withheld this crucial information from the commanders concerned lest they might take counter-measures which might discourage the Japanese from carrying out their plan of attack and thereby frustrate his dream of plunging the country into war!*

The remarkable accomplishment of American intelligence services in cracking the Japanese "Purple" code in August, 1940, made it unmistakably evident by late November, 1941, that a Japanese attack would soon occur somewhere if the current negotiations, upon which Tokyo was staking so much, fell through. Indeed, some intercepts (the so-called "Bomb Plot" messages) even pointed specifically to Pearl Harbor inasmuch as they involved unusual curiosity about ship movements and berthings there. These latter, however, did not awaken anyone including even Roosevelt for a rather simple and logical reason: the bustle of Japanese activity in the Far East, particularly the powerful Naval task force movements, diverted all attention elsewhere. Everything seemed to indicate the Philippines or the South Pacific as the certain locale of the impending Japanese attack. Apparently even Roosevelt believed this until he learned the truth from British intelligence sources, either the second or third of December. Even then he did not reveal this vital information to anyone other than his Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall and perhaps one or two others.

From what has been said it is crystal clear that only a very narrow circle of White House conspirators was privy to the design to keep the Hawaii commanders in the dark about the coming attack. Thus the allegation sometimes heard that virtually all top Washington officialdom had a hand in the matter is entirely without foundation in fact. The guilt was entirely that of F.D.R. and possibly two or three other men. The

last-mentioned were, of course, operating entirely under Presidential orders and so, in the final analysis, the responsibility was especially and singularly that of the President.

On the afternoon of Saturday, December 6, a "pilot message" from Tokyo to Ambassador Nomura advised of a shortly-to-arrive 14-part message in reply to the Hull ultimatum of November 26. Part 14 was to specify *the exact time* of presentation of the lengthy message to Secretary Hull. When President Roosevelt saw the first 13 parts on the evening of the 6th he exclaimed to Harry Hopkins that "this means war." When part 14 was decoded by the Navy at 7 a.m. on the 7th it was immediately apparent to the decoding officers that the stipulated time of delivery of the full message at 1 p.m. (7:30 a.m. Pearl Harbor time) indicated the time of the anticipated attack. But their frantic efforts to induce superiors to alert our Pacific outposts came to nothing inasmuch as a Presidential order had required all warnings from the 4th on to be cleared by Marshall. Not till nearly noon (Washington time) of the 7th was any intimation of the danger sent to Hawaii. Then Marshall sent a rather vaguely worded message by ordinary commercial radio without even troubling to mark it "urgent" or "priority." It reached its destination several hours after the end of the attack.

This, in brief, is the true story of Pearl Harbor as seen in the light of a quarter of a century of careful scholarship. Regrettably, it has not been permitted to reach most of the reading public. A conspiracy of suppression by editors, reviewers and others has seen to that. One may at least hope, however, for wider dissemination of the facts in the years to come. If this should happen it will mean not only a reevaluation of pre-World War II international politics but indeed of the postwar as well.