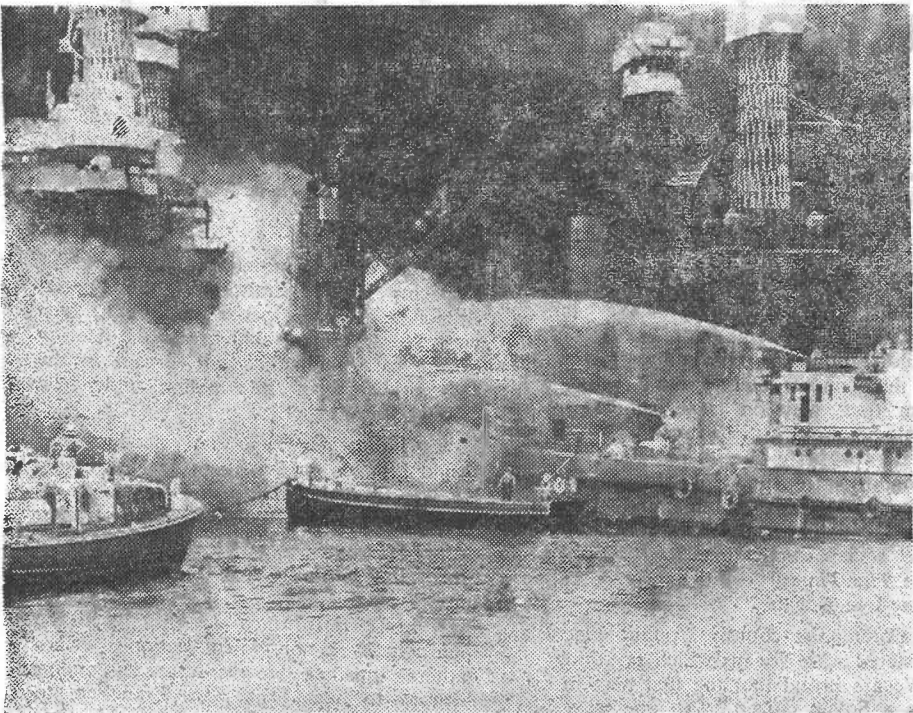


Harry Elmer Barnes

# What happened at Pearl Harbour?



"Wars have a way of coming about in circumstances that have not been foreseen by humans. For example, the Pearl Harbour attack is a case in point. Of all the places in the Pacific that apparently the planners and political leaders thought might be attacked that was probably the last one." - President Eisenhower, August 28, 1958.

American suspicion of her political enemies is constantly nourished by the memory of the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 - 21 years ago today. This incident is known to almost all Americans as one of the most infamous acts of treachery in the history of international relations, and is used to justify the maintenance of a "garrison state" in the US today as a preparation against the possibility of a similar act by the Soviet Union. The "Pearl Harbour complex" was in part responsible for President Kennedy's violent reaction to the discovery that Russia had installed long-range missiles close to the American mainland.

In two articles which appeared in Peace News on April 24 and May 1, 1959, Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, the eminent American modern historian, showed that the American government knew in advance of the Japanese plans to attack Pearl Harbour and that they failed to warn the Pearl Harbour commanders because they wanted the attack to take place. The reason for this was that Roosevelt had made an electoral pledge not to enter the war unless America was attacked first, and he wanted America in the war since this was the only way he could see to bring the US out of economic depression and save his New Deal programme.

This article outlines in some detail exactly how Roosevelt, with the help of General Marshall, prevented warnings of the Pearl Harbour attack from being transmitted to the Pearl Harbour commanders, and describes how those responsible for the disaster successfully concealed their guilt. It includes information which has never been printed before. The article has been checked by a number of leading experts on this subject.

The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, is regarded by most people who recall it at all as a dramatic historical episode, now consigned to political and military archaeology. Quite to the contrary, it was one of the most decisive battles in the history of the human race. Its complex and continuous aftermath played the dominant role in producing the

"Old Glory still flies through the thick of battle as these brave tars bring the blaze under control," says the caption to this official photo (above) of the attack.

menacing military pattern and political impasse of our time. It created the two most likely focal points for the outbreak of a thermo-nuclear war - Berlin and Formosa - unless sudden flare-ups like that in Cuba may turn the lethal trick. Hence Pearl Harbour may well have determined the fate of mankind. American entry into the war ultimately produced atomic warfare as well as Russian domination of Central Europe.

Moreover, a detailed study of how Pearl Harbour came about provides ominous lessons as to the uncertainties and eccentricities of human conduct in controlling the outbreak of wars, an ever more crucial matter in the destinies of the human race. The damage done to the American Pacific Fleet, although exaggerated at the time, was impressive and devastating. The personal and political ambitions, professional stereotypes, ruts of thinking and action, and martial passions that brought on Pearl Harbour would, if repeated in such a crisis as that caused by the Cuban incident, or a future one at Berlin or Formosa, almost surely destroy civilisation. Hence, a discussion of the lessons of Pearl Harbour for today is somewhat more than a matter of idle curiosity for military antiquarians.

The interpretation of the causes of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour which was slowly built up and established by the so-called revisionists was based upon the assumption of a three-fold conspiracy. The larger and all-encompassing conspiracy was that of President Roosevelt and his interventionist supporters to get us into the war then raging in Europe. A very important item in this overall conspiracy was the need to have the war started by an attack on the United States, to fulfil Roosevelt's campaign pledge that he would not lead us into war unless attacked. The second assumed conspiracy was a lesser but more precise one, organised and directed by President Roosevelt to prevent the commanders at Pearl Harbour, General Short and Admiral Kimmel, from getting the large body of alarming information available in Washington as a result of our breaking and reading Japanese codes. These intercepted messages, properly interpreted, indicated an imminent Japanese bombing attack on Pearl Harbour. The third conspiracy was the effort to cover up the responsibility for the failure to warn Pearl Harbour.

The first of these conspiracies involved nearly everybody in the top political and military circles in Washington, either directly in the plotting for war, or indirectly in their more or less willing participation due to their official posts and professional duties. But until August, 1941, it did not mean a conspiracy to get the United States into war with Japan. Mr. Roosevelt preferred to enter the war directly in Europe and did not decide to use the Japanese "back door" until the front door was closed to him by the refusal of Hitler and

Mussolini to be provoked into committing some warlike act on the Atlantic after the United States began to convoy vessels bearing war materials to Europe.

Impatience about this failure led to the first steps towards war with Japan when harsh economic, financial and shipping measures were imposed on Japan in July, 1941. The die was cast for the back door entry when Roosevelt met Churchill off the coast of Newfoundland in August, but Roosevelt never quite abandoned his hope of an adequate incident on the Atlantic. He added verbal insults to naval provocations of Germany, but all in vain.

With regard to the second conspiracy, it was formerly believed that the main officials in all the top civilian and military levels connected with such matters in Washington were aware, surely by December 4, 1941, if not by November 27, of an impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and wished to warn Short and Kimmel. They were only held back by strict orders from Roosevelt not to send any warning information to Pearl Harbour before it would be too late to ward off the Japanese attack. It now seems certain that this conspiracy to black out Pearl Harbour was limited solely to Roosevelt and General Marshall. And this did not take shape until after December 2 or 3, at which time Roosevelt received from some foreign source, presumably Great Britain, specific information that the attack would take place at Pearl Harbour. Until that time he was of the same opinion as all the others in the related top civilian and military posts in Washington, namely, that if war broke out it would be somewhere around the Philippine Islands or in the South Pacific area. This expectation was fully shared even by Short and Kimmel right to the hour of the attack.

Due to the fact that American cryptanalysts had broken many Japanese codes long before Pearl Harbour - even the most important of all, the top diplomatic or Purple Code, by August, 1940, nearly seventeen months before Pearl Harbour - our experts in the Army Signal Corps and Naval Communications had been reading the Japanese messages sent all over the world. Hence they were able to get a clear idea of the Japanese plans for peace or war, and the most probable time and place of the latter. By late November, 1941, a great mass of information had been accumulated at Washington indicating that Japan would make war on the United States somewhere if diplomatic negotiations failed. Many intercepted Japanese messages, the first of which was picked up on September 24, 1941, and

decoded on October 9, actually pinpointed the attack on Pearl Harbour.

By December 3 and 4 it was certain that war would come in a matter of days, and on December 4 that it would be against the United States. By the afternoon of the 6th it looked as though it might come the next day, and on the early morning of the 7th it was apparent that it would take place about 1 p.m. Washington time - about 7.30 at Pearl Harbour. Yet no warning of any probability of an attack on Pearl Harbour was sent to Short or Kimmel until about noon on the 7th, when Marshall sent a message to Short. This could not have arrived in time to have had any real effect in warding off the Japanese attack or getting Short and Kimmel prepared to meet it, even if Marshall had telephoned it direct to Short in a matter of minutes. It was actually sent by ordinary commercial radio and did not get to Short until the Japanese bombers were safely back on their carriers. Moreover, the so-called warning was so vague that it would not have clearly indicated that an attack on Pearl Harbour was about to take place.

This delay in warning Pearl Harbour was due to a conspiracy directed by Roosevelt to prevent Pearl Harbour from being alerted and to ensure the execution of the attack. But no others except Marshall knew that the attack would take place at Pearl Harbour; everyone else remained convinced that war would most surely start in the Far East. Even if they had known that it would take place at Pearl Harbour, Roosevelt had so arranged it that no warnings could be sent to the Pacific or Far East from December 4 onward without being cleared by Marshall. The latter disappeared on the afternoon of the 6th as soon as he learned that war was at hand, and was not available to anybody except Roosevelt until about 11.30 on the day of the attack. When Admiral Stark had a sudden impulse to warn Kimmel on the morning of December 7 he was unable to get hold of Marshall. This was rather late, anyhow.

Now that it has been established that there was no comprehensive conspiracy on the part of the Army and Navy to black out Pearl Harbour, it is inevitably asked why, with all the accumulated evidence of an imminent Japanese attack somewhere, and the pinpointing of the attack on Pearl Harbour in many messages beginning with the one decoded as early as October 9, all the top-level authorities in Washington continued to believe that war would begin in the Far East. With the abandonment of the conspiracy theory, save for Roosevelt and Marshall, the usual explanation has been

continued on page 10

## Joke over

Satire is bursting out all over. It is funny when you think that not long ago no manager, producer, agent or editor would touch satire with a barge-pole. The process by which the public knows what it wants is one of the baffling mysteries of life.

A glimpse now and again of an old film on television reminds one of the musts and must-nots of other periods. Do you remember the late forties? Every British film of that era seemed to have in it a concert pianist and a psychiatrist. No kitchen sinks, except for scenes with comic plumbers. As of now, the pianists and psychiatrists have long since passed, and even serious plumbers at real sinks are in the process of passing. Now we can only be serious by joking about being serious.

Difficult stuff, satire. Touch it, and the bloom is gone. I imagine it is hard, too, for the satirist to suppress the superior smirk which tends to blunt the point. But surely the chief source of anxiety for the satirist is the competition he gets from life. The famous sermon from Beyond the Fringe can be surpassed almost any night in the TV Epilogue; and no comedian can possibly outdo some of our political leaders and commentators. As one of them remarked during the recent bye-elections: "They could be right, or on the other hand of course they could be wrong." One is often tempted to try one's hand. But in a column like this the harsh facts will not let one stray into ambiguity. Harsh facts are as follows:

To publish this paper every week costs us far more than all the tanners you pay. The rest has to be found somewhere, and a lot of brains are cudgelled every week in the search for the extra. These brains could be put to much better use. We want to keep up a 12-page issue throughout 1963. We want not only to maintain but to improve our standards and coverage. We cannot do this unless you come as readily to our aid as you have in the past. Failing a huge influx of cash we must cut back.

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JACK SHEPHERD.

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## PEARL HARBOUR from page 3

that all the others were simply stupid or indifferent.

This is not true, and interestingly enough the Japanese were perhaps the first to emphasise that the stupidity thesis will not hold water. They maintained that nobody reading their codes for months before Pearl Harbour could have been stupid enough not to know that the attack would come there. They were right. Those top officers who knew about the threat of war but failed to warn Pearl Harbour were victims of what the social psychologists call the situational set-up which controlled their outlook and directed their thoughts, especially after October, 1941, towards the Far East as the place of danger.

The threatening Japanese task force movements known to Washington were all in that area. Even as late as December 1, Roosevelt seems to have shared this view, for on that date he ordered three little ships, fitted out to fly the American flag, to move out in front of a Japanese task force and to get fired upon. This would give him the all-essential attack on the American flag which he so desperately needed to fulfil his campaign pledges not to enter a war unless attacked and to unite the country behind him when he did go to war.

Even Admiral Kimmel at Pearl Harbour was not there to keep a fleet safely concentrated and inactive awaiting an attack. His task was to inspect, prepare, and dispatch our Pacific naval forces to the mid-Pacific and Far East to get ready for war there in accordance with a naval war plan worked out months before. He knew little about the Japanese war plans and nothing about the many intercepted messages pinpointing the attack on Pearl Harbour. He did not even know that Hull, the Secretary of State, had sent an ultimatum to Japan on November 26. The few so-called warnings sent to him and Short after November 26 made both of them feel all the more convinced that Washington had no suspicion whatever that the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbour.

Kimmel had, fortunately, sent the more important units in the Pacific fleet, the heavy cruisers, carriers, and many destroyers, out of Pearl Harbour westward to get ready for battles around Wake, Midway and the Far East. Most of his submarines had been sent to Seattle to be prepared for war far away from Pearl Harbour. This pattern of activities, which had been going on for months, apparently made Kimmel less concerned for the moment about the traditional item in our Pacific naval strategy, to the effect that if the Japanese did ever make war on the United States it would start with an attempt to destroy our Pacific fleet.

The cryptanalysts and translators who were decoding and reading the Japanese messages, such as Commanders Safford and Kramer in the Navy and Colonels Sadtler and Schukraft in the Army Signal Corps, and men in Army and Navy Intelligence like Colonel Bratton and Commander McCollum, were convinced as early as November 27 that Short and Kimmel should be explicitly warned. But they were either unable to get the information and recommendations up to the top levels that had authority to send out warnings, or could not get these high officers to pay careful attention to the material if it did get to them. Especially notorious in this regard was Admiral Turner, Chief of Naval War Plans, who killed two clear warnings to Admiral Kimmel that McCollum had prepared and which would most certainly have averted the Pearl Harbour disaster.

When, at least as early as December 4, Roosevelt was informed that the attack would be on Pearl Harbour, he passed the information on to Marshall, who was extremely close and subservient to Roosevelt. From the 4th onward nobody could send any warnings to the Pacific or Far East without Marshall's consent. When on Saturday afternoon, the 6th, it looked as though war would come at any moment, Marshall disappeared and could not have been found if anybody except Roosevelt had wished to send a warning message. Alarmed by the information that came in on Saturday afternoon, Secretary of the

Navy Knox, not knowing of this ban, ordered that a clear warning should be sent to Kimmel on Saturday night, but it was suppressed and never sent.

When the attack finally came a little after 1 p.m., Washington time, on Sunday, December 7, Roosevelt and Marshall were greatly relieved, although Roosevelt was shocked when he learned that the damage to the fleet was far greater than he expected. As Knox observed, "he expected to get hit but not hurt." The bad guessers who had steadfastly looked for an attack in the Far East were stunned. Both the conspirators and the bad guessers immediately felt it necessary to conceal their responsibility.

This precipitated the most scandalous and despicable procedure that had involved high officials in any civilised country since the Dréyfus affair in France at the turn of the century, and in many ways the Washington scandal was more reprehensible. In the case of Dréyfus only one person suffered humiliation and punishment, and his life was spared. In the attempt to cover up the responsibility for failing to warn Pearl Harbour the courageous and competent commanders there were retired from service and were smeared and humiliated for years. They have still not been cleared of incompetence and wrong-doing in the public mind because the materials published to absolve or whitewash those responsible for Pearl Harbour have greatly exceeded those setting forth the facts, and they have been read by far more people. Secretary Knox cleared them immediately after he had visited Pearl Harbour following the attack, but Roosevelt suppressed his report.

The moral depravity exhibited by those who sought to obscure the guilt in Washington was as extreme as that shown by those who plotted and executed the false charges against Dréyfus. While many were involved in the scandalous plot to whitewash the guilty, the leading figures below Roosevelt were Stimson, the Secretary of War, and Marshall.

Finally, while there was more bungling, hysteria, misjudgment and uncertainty involved in the failure to warn Short and Kimmel than any deliberate attempt to black out Pearl Harbour, except on the part of Roosevelt and Marshall, there was none of this lack of deliberate intent in the as yet successful whitewashing of those responsible for the Pearl Harbour scandal. All the steps taken were deliberate, intentional and persistent. They began with the Roberts Commission and ended in the Congressional Investigation.

Few Americans have ever heard of this aspect of the Pearl Harbour scandal. The culprits remain unpunished. Many of them were signally rewarded for their services in concealing the truth, destroying incriminating documents, assisting the preparation of misinformation, and promoting malicious deceptions. Few who told the truth received promotions.

Only a handful of those involved in the episode stuck by the truth, and almost without exception these were men who had been engaged in intercepting and reading the Japanese messages and had vainly tried to get their superiors to take account of the information contained therein. Even some in these lower or operation echelons were intimidated into falsifying their testimony.

I suggested at the outset that the main lesson to be drawn from the Pearl Harbour scandal today is its revelation of the personal and political ambitions, the conspiracies, the situational stereotypes, the martial passions which made a successful surprise attack possible. It is obvious that such evils, errors, and weaknesses must not be allowed to prevail in controlling the politics and military technology of our thermo-nuclear age if there is to be any real hope of human survival. This warning cannot be too often repeated, and it has never been more cogent or more needed than on the twenty-first anniversary of Pearl Harbour, which comes so soon after the near-disastrous Cuban crisis.

Next week we shall publish a comment on Dr. Barnes's article by William Neumann, Professor of History at Goucher College, Baltimore.



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