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# *A Day of Infamy ?*

*By  
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Even after fifty-two years the question of who is to blame for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, at 7:55 A.M. still lingers. Over half a century after the Japanese launched a successful surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii, documents, journals, and official reports related to the attack are only now being declassified. In the years since, President Roosevelt's possible participation in that surprise attack on Pearl Harbor is still in question. Did Roosevelt deliberately incite the Japanese to make an attack on the Hawaiian island and withhold information that would have prevented or even lessened the damage done by the Japanese attack? If President Roosevelt wanted to use the Japanese to enter the Second World War, he was not alone. One month before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote in his diary "For a long time I have believed that our best entrance into the war would be by way of the Japanese.(1)

The Roosevelt Conspiracy places a possible reason for Roosevelt masterminding the Pearl Harbor attack on his great concern for Europe. Europe was fighting a war with the supreme leader of Germany, Adolph Hitler, and the United States entering the war was inevitable. On March 19, 1941, Prime Minister Churchill begged for both economic assistance from the U.S. and for the U.S. military forces to join England in the fight against Germany (2) . President Roosevelt knew that Americans wanted to stay out of the war, but they also wanted strongly to defeat Hitler and his allies. He wanted strongly to assist England in its fight against the Axis powers, and he wanted to gain time for American rearmament. He felt that he could restrain Japanese by means of diplomacy and naval deterrence. Roosevelt did not want a two front war, as neither the Army nor the Navy was prepared for the two sided conflict with Germany on one side and Japan on the other. Instead of declaring war with Germany and Japan it was his policy, not only to give aid to Britain in the form of armaments, but restrain the Japanese by a cautious embargo of war materials.

Before the Great War, Americans had enjoyed a policy of isolationism. Many Americans considered the Atlantic and Pacific oceans as a protective barrier against assault (3) . The strong feelings that America should continue its policy of isolation thwarted Roosevelt in his early attempts to repeal arms embargoes laws (4) . According to John Toland (5) the U.S. more or less invited that attack by projecting the image of a country too isolated and "Sleepy" to see what was going on in the world. During the 1930's the primary concern of most Americans was not the war in Europe but finding an end to the depression.

The attack on December 7, 1941, changed that isolationist feeling. The next day Congress with one dissenting vote declared war on Japan. three days later Germany and Italy, faithful to the tripartite

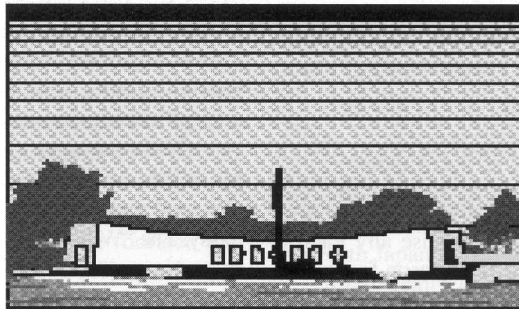
pact, declared war on the United States (6) Roosevelt had his wish, America had entered the war.

In 1946 Senator Arthur Vandenburg of Michigan made the following statement about the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor "Pearl Harbor drove most of us to the conclusion that world peace is indivisible. We learned that the oceans are no longer moats around our ramparts. We learned that mass destruction is a progressive science which defies both time and space and reduces flesh and blood to cruel importance." Vandenburg was a leading isolationist until the attack on Pearl Harbor(7) . Additionally, Homer Ferguson, Senator from Michi-

gan, and Owen Brewster, Senator from Maine, both members of the Joint Congressional Committee came to the conclusion that authorities in Washington and the Commanders in Hawaii should have expected that the Japanese government would make a surprise attack in starting war with the United States (8) . In meetings with Roosevelt, Churchill indicated that a declaration of war by either the US., U.K., the Dominions, the Netherlands and possibly the Soviet Union would restrain Japanese aggressions (9).

To those that strongly believe in the Roosevelt Conspiracy, an important fact in the investigation of the attack was that the all important carriers (Lexington, Enterprise and Saratoga(10)) were at sea, while the majority of the Pacific fleet was at Pearl. Carriers would become the major fighting weapons of the war in the Pacific. If the attack was a real surprise, why were these carriers at sea? During the investigation the Committee (11) came to the conclusion that the carriers were not specially saved from destruction because no one had realized the potential of the carriers (12).

Roosevelt and his commanders should have known that the future balance of sea power in the Pacific would depend less on capital (13) ships and more in the newer weapons particularly adapted to the long-range cut and run war on commerce. The important facts about the future of air power at sea were known, and available in the early twenties. Testifying before the House Naval Committee in February 1921 Brigadier General William Mitchell made the astounding assertion that bombing planes could sink or disable the strongest battle ships in existence (14) . This was down right heresy to the pre-WWI gunboat views. He based his arguments on the tactics that direct bomb hits could cause disruptive damage by breaking vacuum tubes, causing lights to go out, disrupting wireless communications. He stated that such directed hits could also jam turrets, cause fires, explode ammunition bays, and finally destroy the ship (15) . In the summer of 1921, Billy Mitchell proved his theory in extended bombing tests that sank several old American and ex-German WWI battle ships. Despite some confident views that the capital ships had ability to continue its dominance in the country's fleet, when the Washington conference met in 1921, there was not the slightest doubt that modern



*Battleship Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor*