

OMNI PEARL HARBOR DAY NEWSLETTER #3,
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OMNI's NATIONAL DAYS series for a Culture of Peace.

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One of my projects since the beginning of OMNI has been the gathering of evidence revealing the illegality, injustice, ruthlessness, unnecessary of U.S. wars, from the theft of a third of Mexico to the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, resulting not only in catastrophe for the nations attacked but ultimately for the U.S. itself. Such a study has taken a lot of time, not because the evidence was scarce but because it is so ample—not only the thousands of articles but the hundreds of books. Stephen Kinzer, for example, in *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* thoroughly excoriates U.S. toppling of some two dozen countries with horrendous consequences to some of the countries and their people. But that's only a glimpse of the slaughter. William Blum in *Killing Hope* and *Rogue State* analyses case by case the 40 foreign governments the U.S. attempted to overthrow, and the over 30 populist movements "struggling against intolerable regimes" the U.S. attempted to crush, in the process of which "the US caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many millions more to a life of agony and despair." (RS p. 4).

But one war has been clung to as legal, just, and necessary—World War II. WWII is still called "the Good War." But objections that smiling view exist. In *Worshipping the Myths of World War II, Reflections on America's Dedication to War*, for example, Edward Wood, Jr., examines four myths "that have masked the real nature of World War II and all our wars that followed" (p. x). See Newsletter #1 for additional examples. But these books have not unsettled the patriotic allegiance to the war, and particularly to the European theater, by the majority of the U.S. populace and the mainstream media. Powerful, patriotic, pro-war myths employed by leaders for foreign aggression and decades of pro-war WWII films help sustain acceptance of WWII in Europe.

However, in recent years WWII in the Pacific has received increasing criticism much more damaging than that of WWII in Europe. David Swanson in *War Is a Lie*, Paul Buchheit in his anthology *American Wars*, and of course Noam Chomsky throughout his scholarly political career have exposed the myths and their harms. One myth annually celebrated is Pearl Harbor Day—that the Japanese attack was unprovoked. Yet still today, despite our long post-WWII alliance with

Japan, Pearl Harbor Day evokes cries against "stab in the back treachery" and calls for vigilance against the terrorists of today planning to attack us.

A major study by Roland Worth, Jr., *No Choice But War*, carefully examines the events leading up to December 7, 1941, and concludes that Japan and the U.S. (and other Western nations) must share blame. (See Newsletter #1.) The war resulted overall because of racism on both sides, from competition over resources, over who would control the Eastern Pacific, and over the embargo imposed by the U.S. and allies. His argument leads one to reconceive Pearl Harbor Day, as I do, as the opening violence of the U. S./Japanese Colonial War in the Pacific 1941-1945.

If this is a persuasive argument, then we who represent a non-pacifist anti-war position against U.S. foreign policy can say with considerable empirical foundation, that except for the WWII in Europe all of the U. S. invasions and interventions were not necessary, but were expansions of imperial power.

Contents of Newsletter #1 12-7-08

Dick Bennett, *US Wars and Interventions of Aggression*, Rev. of Roland Worth, Jr's *No Choice But War*

Contents of #2 12-7-10

Review of David Swanson's *War Is a Lie* by Dick Bennett

Contents of #3 12-7-11

Answers.com

Wiest and Mattson, *The Pacific War*

Chomsky, "Backgrounds of the Pacific War"

Revolutionary Worker, "Imperialist War for the Pacific"

The following from Answers.com, Wikianswers both summarizes the basic argument in the following substantial explanations of WWII in the Pacific and the attack on Pearl Harbor as a clash of colonial empires over the resources of the Pacific and East Asia, and illustrates a popular source for the explanation (google). If to Wiest and Mattson, Chomsky, and Revolutionary Worker you add Roland

Worth and David Swanson (and Howard Zinn in his last book on the atomic bomb), a substantial body of argument exists that adds WWII in the Pacific to the long list of unnecessary, illegal, atrocious US wars.

How and why did the Pacific War start in World War 2?

In: [World War 2](#) [[Edit categories](#)]

Answer

The great arc of Asia from China to Malasia to India was very rich in minerals, timber and oil. Various nations had fought to control the area for centuries. By 1939 the area was split between three groups. First were the old colonial empires of Britain (India, Hong Kong, Malasia, Singapore), France (Vietnam, Laos), and the Netherlands (Java, Borneo, Sumatra). Second was the relative newcomer, USA (Philippines and various Pacific islands). Third was the other newcomer to empire building - Japan (Korea, parts of China, some Pacific islands).

The old line colonial empires had their hands full dealing with Germany in Europe and were unable to defend their possessions. As such these were easily grabbed by the Japanese in 1940, 1941 and 1942.

The USA had been expanding its influence in Asia for decades. The USA had annexed Hawaii around 1890. Quickly following this the USA picked a war with the weak, nearly defenseless Spanish empire and thus gained colonies in Guam, Wake and the Philippines. These colonies were used to expand American influence in China. However, Japan considered China within its sphere of influence and sought to limit American involvement.

Ultimately this (the conflict of American and Japanese interests in China) led to war. Strictly speaking the USA got together with Britain and the Netherland to freeze Japanese financial assets so that Japan would not be able to buy petroleum. The Japanese were thus forced to choose war or surrender. They chose to attack and thus the shooting war began December 1941.

The reason I give this extensive background is to show that the roots of the war ran deep. The Japanese attack on the USA should not have been considered a surprise. Likewise the Japanese should have realized that the various western nations were not going to give us their commercial interests and colonies in the area without a major fight. The Japanese were hopelessly outclassed in men, money, and machines by the combined forces arranged against them and as such, lost the war.

Read more:

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_and_why_did_the_Pacific_War_start_in_World_War_2#ixzz1fKv3u9II

The Pacific War: Campaigns of World War II

By Andrew A. Wiest, Gregory Louis Mattson, 2001. (I was not able to cut and past a passage from the book.)

<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/196709--.htm>

On the Backgrounds of the Pacific War

Noam Chomsky

Liberation, September-October, 1967

word of explanation may be useful. The essay was written for a memorial number of *Liberation* which, as the editor expressed it, was, and is, a profoundly important doctrine, both in the political analysis and the moral conviction that it expresses. The circle is not at all sure. I still feel quite ambivalent about the matter. There are several points that seem to me fairly clear, however. The American similarities between Japan's escapades and our own -- both in character and in rationalization -- with the fundamental differences between American conquests in Asia.

and his interpretation of it in connection with the Second World War; on the backgrounds of Japan's imperial ventures; on the West would be more coherent were it limited to one or two of these themes. I am sure that it would be more clear if it advocated a pa

revolutionary nonviolence that was the guiding principle of an extraordinary life. "In a world built on violence, one must be a revolution as well. Subconsciously, we tend to give the preference to 'social peace,' though it be only apparent, because our lives and positions acquiescence in a cramped life or mere submission to superior force." Muste was insistent that pacifists "get our thinking focussed on men throughout the world.... So long as we are not dealing honestly and adequately with this ninety percent of our problem, the American history have these thoughts been so tragically appropriate as today.

ph of the essay.

g from a social system based on violence and putting a premium on acquisitiveness, and to identify themselves in some real fashion. The technique of social progress less crude, brutal, costly and slow than mankind has yet evolved.

uch standards as these. His essays are invariably thoughtful and provocative; his life, however, is an inspiration with hardly a parallel. He was not a man who acted out of fear. There are things they dread more than the continuance of the evil." He enriched half a century of American history. He lived in a time when a socialist society, if you please, could be achieved," a time when the labor movement could be described as "that remarkable combination of idealism and pragmatism," to the days when American sociologists could proclaim that "the realization that escapes no one is that the egalitarian and democratic ideal has emerged in the form of our cumbersome, bureaucratic mass society, and has in turn engulfed the heretics." ² And finally, still not a man who acted out of fear. "The American society" is facing a virtual rebellion from the lower depths, when young men are being faced every day with the questions posed by the fact that something is drastically wrong in American society.

ilateralist, on political as well as moral grounds." ³ In part, he bases his position on an absolute moral commitment that one may expect to find in the words "what produces like, kindness provokes kindness," hence an appeal to "the essential humanity of the enemy." ⁴ It is very difficult to recall the lifetime of anti-Communist indoctrination. When the enemy is a remote technician programming B-52 raids or "pacification," the moral dimension of the problem of producing concepts like "un-American" and "peacenik" -- of turning "peace" into a dirty word -- has advanced a long way toward the point where it is almost unthinkable from consciousness -- what else can a right-thinking person possibly believe? Americans are simply "pragmatic," and they must be seen to move from doctrinaire reliance on state enterprise to a pragmatic support of private initiative," ⁵ and a headline in the *New York Times* that reads "The narrowing of the range of the thinkable comes an inability to comprehend how the weak and dispossessed can resist our benevolent

is to consider what it implies in concrete historical circumstances. As a prescription for the United States in the mid-sixties, it is a prescription that accepts repeated risk of nuclear war, hence a near guarantee of nuclear war in the long run -- a "long run" that is unlikely to be anything but a long run. To accept a probability of 1/3 to 1/2 of nuclear war, in order to establish that the United States alone has the right to maintain missile bases in China, is something from their Vietnam fiasco by bombing at the Chinese border? Furthermore, it does not require an unusual political intelligence to see that governments maintained by force or subverted by intrigue, by troops and bases on foreign soil, by willingness to use the most awesome weapons, are a far cry from the ideal of international pacifism in the context of a decade ago, when international gangsterism was more widely distributed, with the British engaged in the conquest of the European empire with brutality and deceit. **But it is the international situation of December 1941 that provides the most severe test of internationalism, on American possessions and the forces defending them, and even more from a consideration of the varying reactions to the situation in the extreme circumstances.** By arguing that it was, Muste isolated himself not only from any mass base, but also from all but a marginal

powers, which includes Britain and the United States, and perhaps "free" France, controls some 70% of the earth's resources and how is to be left at peace, and if so they are disposed to make their rule mild though firm.... On the other hand stands a group determined to alter the situation in their own favor, to impose their ideas of "order," and armed to the teeth to do that, even if it means plunging into a subservient Britain, "that we shall be the next nation to seek world domination -- in other words, to do what we condemn Hitler to do but that...means being able to decide by preponderance of military might any international issue that may arise -- which would prove that just proved that war and violence pay. Who will now teach him a lesson?"⁸

Muste's forecast was political realism; to forecast that it would act accordingly, having achieved this status by force, was no less realistic. It was a forecast of all peoples of equitable access to markets and essential materials, armament reduction, massive economic rehabilitation, and a popular revolution. And at that moment, events and policy were taking a very different direction.

The possible outcome of such a course. The accuracy of Muste's forecast unfortunately requires little comment. Furthermore, a plausible

alternative. To see how little the intellectual climate has changed, it is enough to consider the lengthy debate over the decision to drop the atomic bomb. It was justified as a means of bringing the war to a quick conclusion. Only rarely has the question been raised whether there was a need to have removed a counterweight to growing Chinese power, soon to become "Communist" power?

Conclusion:

It is time to rejoice. Germany and Japan had been defeated, and American troops, victorious everywhere, would soon be returning home.

It is not to be accepted. Is it true that in August 1945 the American people "had every reason to rejoice" -- at the sight of a Japanese countryside reduced to rubble and being, so it appears, history's most abominable experiment); or at the news of a final gratuitous act of barbarism, trivial in the eyes of the victors? ¹⁰ To Secretary of War Stimson it seemed "appalling that there had been no protest over the air strikes we were conducting." What then are we to say of a country that still, twenty years later, is incapable of facing the question of war guilt?

The answer to Germany is complete, even today, without a ritual sigh and wringing of hands over the failure of the German people to face the corruption of their nature. Just recently, a group of American liberal intellectuals gave their impressions of a tour of West Germany. They emphasize, we were plainly a group made coherent by our shared suspicions of Germany's capacity for political health ... we had been struck with the "dignity and fortitude" with which young Germans "carry an emotional and moral burden unmatched in history: they have

fervent apologist for the American war in Vietnam, asks, "How does a human being 'come to terms' with the fact that his father's generation (or, to take a closer analogue, the prettification of Los Alamos -- provoke the same response?) To what extent is the "moral and moral burden" carried by those whose "parent generation" stood by while two atom bombs were used against a beaten and vanquished enemy? If it has become a national scandal, it is a good idea occasionally to read the measured reactions of conservative Asians to someone who has assessed the war guilt of the Japanese. In his carefully argued (and largely ignored) dissenting opinion to the decision of the tribunal

in the early days of that war, wherein he stated as follows: "My soul is torn, but everything must be put to fire and sword; merely affecting a people as degenerate as the French, the war will be over in two months, whereas if I admit considerations of humanity and the policy of indiscriminate murder to shorten the war was considered to be a crime. In the Pacific war under our consideration, if the decision of the tribunal. Future generations will judge this dire decision. History will say whether any outburst of popular sentiment against usage of the atom bomb of the whole nation to continue to fight. We need not stop here to consider whether or not "the atom bomb comes to force a moral issue to say that if any indiscriminate destruction of civilian life and property is still illegitimate in warfare, then, in the Pacific war, the second World War. Nothing like this could be traced to the credit of the present accused. [11](#)

of self-hatred -- a good thing, no doubt. But for us the matter is infinitely more serious. It is not a matter of self-hatred regarding the Kaiser's act on this belief. Unlike the German Kaiser, our soul is not torn. We manage a relative calm, as we continue, today, to write new

of his proposals was that there be no attempt "to fasten sole war-guilt on any nation." The second was that measures be taken to ensure that the Japanese military, that it was "now or never." The Western powers controlled the raw materials on which their existence depended. The United States launched an American diplomatic offensive aimed at changing it "from a hostile expansionist empire, with great pride in its destiny and its power, to precisely what was achieved by the war, if we replace "Hitler" by "the international Communist conspiracy." To understand the Japanese position on "freedom," and to appreciate the substance of Muste's radical pacifist alternative, it is necessary to look with some care into the

nineteenth century, and had then undertaken a remarkably successful effort at modernization. A new plutocracy replaced the old, and the living standards of the peasantry and urban workers rose during the period of transition from a medieval to a modern capitalism. By the late 1920s, Japan was what in modern political parlance is called a "democracy" and was attempting to play the normal role of a rising power. Its rise was shortly to have disastrous consequences.

rights and interests" in China and provided new markets for expanding Japanese industry. The revival of European competition came from the industrial powers. In good faith, Japan accepted the subordinate role assigned it and consented, throughout the twenties, to be a weak power. In 1941, accepting the American position of "equality of security" rather than the Japanese goal of "equality of armaments." As Schreier

for defense, while the United States, in the midst of two oceans without a powerful enemy on two continents, had defensively an

Treaty of 1930 involving Japan, Great Britain, and the United States. The matter is discussed in detail in a study by James Crowl to defend two coastlines and on the 'great concessions' which the American government had made at the time of the Washington subsequent negotiations was the question whether Japan could maintain its primary objective: "supremacy over the American fleet naval power, nor did it endanger the safety of the United States or its insular possessions in the Pacific," but it did compromise "t

to a strengthening of the role of the military, which felt, with reason, that the civilian leadership was seriously endangering Japan's story of that country during the 1930's" when Premier Hamaguchi, who was responsible for the treaty, was shot by "a patriotic yed position in Manchuria, and a foreign policy which discounted the necessity of cooperation with the Anglo-American nations grant to Japan hegemony in its waters (while of course insisting on maintaining its own hegemony in the Western Atlantic and Ea d been hoodwinked more generally in the diplomatic arrangements of the early 1920s, which "embodied the idea that the Far East an equal footing, thus ignoring the desirability of providing special relations between particular countries, especially between J s [Japan] was getting really skillful at the game of the grab, the other Powers, most of whom had all they wanted anyway, sudden

on Japan and calling it "peace." Their whole conception of diplomatic machinery and collective security is that it is simply a me ty if some machinery can be devised which provides for "peaceful change." ... Japan has a legitimate desire to expand. What are average reasoning of the Japanese people is that Great Britain and the other Western powers have done it, so why shouldn't w

the imperialist powers to the Kuomintang in its attempt to unify China. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek stated that the Japanese policy diffe the imperialist bombardment of Nanking to the "cruelty inherent in the Western civilization"; this "indicated Japan's friendship for warlord Chang Tso-lin over an at least semi-independent Manchuria. At the time, this seemed not totally unreasonable, although

warlord, Chang Tso-lin, was also commander-in-chief of the anti-Kuomintang coalition controlling Peking. But Chang's economic ar

realistic in aiming to prevent the growing nationalist movement in China from overwhelming Manchuria, and at the same time

the "Manchurian incident" of 1931-1932.

of the 1920s was unlikely to secure the "rights and interests" regarded as essential for Japan's continued development. The effect of the League of Nations was to isolate Japan from the imperialist powers. Manchuria remained independent of the Kuomintang, but Chinese Nationalist pressures for unification were increasing. Japanese military. Japan had a substantial investment in the South Manchurian Railway and, rightly or wrongly, regarded Manchuria as a vital artery. The Japanese presence in Manchuria had settled in Manchuria, inflaming Chinese nationalism and, simultaneously, deepening the commitment of the Kwantung Army to Manchuria. The future of Japanese and Korean immigrants and residents -- was very much in doubt, as Chinese pressures mounted both inside Manchuria and outside. The Japanese government was reluctant to construct any lines which might endanger the commercial traffic along it,"²⁰ but China was quite naturally disinclined to honor this demand. To incorporate Manchuria within China and to eliminate Japanese influence, no doubt with the support of the majority of the Manchurian population, was a goal of the Chinese government. In the summer of 1931. In Shanghai, a boycott of Japanese goods was initiated.

lay in "the political leadership of an East Asia power bloc" guaranteed by military force, or in continuing to abide by "the new rule of law" established by the League of Nations. Chinese forces (the "Mukden incident") and proceeded to take full control of Manchuria. China, not unexpectedly, refused the Japanese demand. The Kwantung Army established control by force, and in August 1932 the Japanese government, under strong military and popular pressure, agreed to the "Twenty-One Demands." The procedure of setting up "local Chinese governments which are dependent upon Japan" was "a familiar one," not unlike the American procedure in the Philippines.

led an international crisis. The boycott in Shanghai and a clash between Chinese troops and Japanese marines near the Japanese concession in Shanghai. The presence of Chinese soldiers dispersed among a congested civilian population generated a profound sense of shock and indignation in England. Lippmann's analysis in his memoirs²⁵ that he was responsible for the request that the government dispatch troops to Shanghai "to save the Japanese concession." The Japanese government, with its rather left-wing tendencies. Furthermore, "Chinese Communists" were starting strikes in Japanese-owned mills. For all of that, the Japanese government was not without precedent -- a "familiar procedure," as Lippmann rightly observed, and not without present-day parallels.²⁶

in their impact. According to the outstanding Japanese political scientist Masao Maruyama, "the energy of radical fascism stored up since the Manchurian Incident, the Shanghai Incident, and Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations."²⁷ Furthermore, "the issue of the incident at the London Naval Conference, "was a great stimulus to the fascist movement" (p. 81). In 1932 a series of assassinations of important political figures in Japan.

ns sent a commission of inquiry, the Lytton Commission, to investigate the Manchurian situation. Its report rejected the Japanese claims and recommended that Japan withdraw from the League of Nations. The United States also found itself somewhat isolated diplomatically, in that the harsh anti-Japanese policy of the League of Nations.

ernment, and the central army authorities, Sadako Ogata demonstrates a considerable area of agreement:

one with authority to negotiate settlement of Manchurian problems, but under the formal sovereignty of the Chinese National Government. A special regime for the administration of Manchuria possessed of a large measure of autonomy but under Chinese jurisdiction. For a collision with the powers, which by then had lined up behind the doctrine of non-recognition of changes caused by Japanese military of government and central military leaders.²⁸

situation. The report drew the following conclusion:

...without previously exhausting the opportunities for conciliation provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Neither is it a simple exact parallel in other parts of the world.

...both China and Japan "claim to have rights and interests, only some of which are clearly defined by international law; a territory which is the roots of this conflict."²⁹

...to take into account some of the real problems faced by Japan might have helped the civilian government (backed by the central army) to the *fait accompli* of a Manchukuo that was more a puppet of the Kwantung Army than of Japan proper.

...The status of Manchuria set Japan and the United States on a collision course. Japan turned to an "independent diplomacy" and reliance

...ultimately with China and Manchukuo a new order comprising the three independent states. In accordance with this programme, East Asia was to be freed from the hands of the Western powers.³⁰

...influence of the United States on the Open Door policy in China.

...civilian Japanese governments, which attempted to play the game of international politics in accordance with the rules set by the dominant Japanese society. The independent initiative of the Kwantung Army was largely that of the young officers of *petit-bourgeois* expression of the radical reform movement that was originally inspired by Kita and Okawa,"³¹ who had developed the view that Japan should be a republic. The fundamental law proposed for Manchukuo, in 1932, protected the people from "usury, excessive profit, and all other unjust economic measures. From an itself, this program appealed to the Social Democrats, who blamed "Chinese warlords and selfish Japanese capitalists for the disaster of Manchuria."³³

...The Kwantung Army never expected to establish Japanese supremacy, but rather proposed to leave "wide discretion to the local self-governments."

program for autonomy was apparently influenced by and attempted to incorporate certain indigenous Chinese moves towards autonomous Manchuria based on cooperation of its six largest ethnic groups (Japanese, Chinese, Russians, Mongolians, Koreans, and

administrative organs was undertaken by utilizing the traditional self-governing bodies.... Yu Chung-han, a prominent elder stockholder group in Manchuria which, in contrast to the warlords, had held to the principle of absolute *hokyo anmin* (secure boundaries) for Manchuria proper. Through tax reform, improvement of the wage system of government officials, and abolition of a costly army, the

half of whom had immigrated since the initiation of Japanese development efforts a quarter of a century earlier -- as "suffering from the abundance of the region."³⁴ Furthermore, the Army regarded Manchuria as "the fortress against Russian southern advancement." It felt that "Under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek and with the support of the Western democratic powers which wanted to prevent Japan from trying to dominate Manchuria. To use the kind of terminology favored by Secretary Rusk, it was unwilling to sacrifice the Manchurian independence to responsible Chinese leadership that had itself been working for Manchurian independence."³⁷

With a strengthened China, the Tibetans and Mongols would have simply resumed their own national sovereignty after the fall of the Manchurian empire. The Japanese position with equality of Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Moslems, and Tibetans and taken the position that China should rule the outer regions of Asia "without future Western investment and exploitation"³⁸ (a fact which adds a touch of irony to current Western complaints about "Chinese domination of Asia from Western dominance).

Japan's interest in northern China as well -- was motivated by the desire to secure Japanese rights and interests. A liberal professor of American history at the University of California, San Diego, described the expansion into Florida, Texas, California, Cuba, and Hawaii.³⁹ He describes the bandit-infested, warlord-controlled Manchurian region as a "Caribbean policy." He asks why there should be a Monroe Doctrine in America and an Open Door principle in Asia, and suggests an international conference defining an international conference to define the Monroe Doctrine and review Mexican relations." He points out, quite correctly, that the purpose of the maintenance of the *status quo*."

On the Manchurian incident and subsequent events on the "pragmatic" grounds of self-interest. Rather, they emphasized the high moral character of the Japanese "paradise" in the independent state of Manchukuo (later, in China as well), defended from Communist attack by the power of Japan. "If anyone other than anyone else they deceived themselves."⁴⁰ To illustrate, he quotes the observations of American Ambassador Joseph Grew on the

broken the Kellogg Pact, the Nine-Power Treaty, and the Covenant of the League. A comparatively few thinking men are capable of

'self-determination for Manchuria' are rot; but we needed Manchuria, and that's that." But such men are in the minority when he signs the obligation. It merely means that when the obligation runs counter to his own interests, as he conceives them, he finds it a great deal harder to deal with than a mentality which, however brazen, knows that it is in the wrong.

Not one American in a hundred understands that we have actually violated our commitments, not only at Geneva but, more importantly, the mentality that reinterprets obligations to suit self-interest, and may very well be perfectly honest -- in some curious sense of the word.

On grounds of self-interest, those who spoke of a new Monroe Doctrine "to maintain the peace of East Asia," and those who fantasized about the Pacific, were attacked -- both verbally and physically -- for their betrayal of Japan. In 1936, for example, the printing presses of the *Asahi* identified those groups most responsible for the betrayal of the national polity -- the senior statesmen, financial magnates, court officials, and the press -- among other times, in the conclusion of the London Naval Treaty and in the removal of the Inspector General of Military Affairs.

These are but a few of the most notable instances of their villainies...." [42](#)

is, but not impossible. Consider, for example, the column by William H. Stringer on the editorial page of the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1936, "The Burden of the East." The final paragraph explains why the "carping and caterwauling from the pseudointellectual establishment" must be removed.

President and Congress -- with our prayers. Yes, to see that no mist of false doctrine or sleazy upbringing can upset the constitution and the *wisdom from on high*, that they indeed can perceive and follow the "path which no fowl knoweth." (Job 28) [Italics mine]

to find such a statement. An obscure Japanese military officer condemns the disloyal professors and other betrayers who have tried to lead us into a "path which no fowl knoweth" and sleazy upbringing who refuse to recognize that our leaders are divinely inspired. There are, to be sure, important differences between the two. But the basic principle is the same.

er international life.... The international position of Japan -- with Nationalist China, Soviet Russia, and the race-conscious England -- is a complex one.

th China and Japan regarded the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908 as indicating "American acquiescence in the latter's position in the Far East."

the effects of which were of course felt chiefly by Japanese traders, whose markets in India had been growing rapidly." [59](#) "Japan's possession of important industrial minerals under her domestic control, while, on the other hand, the greater part of the supplies of tin and copper in the same was true of iron and oil, of course. In 1932, Japanese exports of cotton piece-goods for the first time exceeded those of the United States. The United States had effectively blocked Japanese trade with the Commonwealth, including India. As the IPR conference report noted, "Ottawa had dealt

with a closed, autarchic system; the contemporary American policy of self-sufficiency proceeded in a similar direction. The only recourse available to the United States was grinding to a halt, unable to meet Japanese competition. The Open Door policy was appropriate to an expanding capitalist economy. The United States had cotton textiles from Japan to the Philippines for two years, while American imports remained duty-free. Similarly, revised commercial

agreements between the United States and Japan," William W. Lockwood observes that American preponderance in Philippine trade "is attributable to the fact that the United States is alone among the nations able to compete on equal terms, there is no doubt but that Japan's share of the trade would advance rapidly." [62](#) At the same time,

the textile industry, which was hit most severely by the discriminatory policies of the major imperialist powers, produced nearly half of the world's textile output. Industrialized by Asian standards, Japan had only about one seventh the energy capacity per capita of Germany; from 1927 to 1932, it had to compete with Malaya, Indochina, and the Philippines erected tariff barriers favoring the mother country, and could not survive the deterioration of the world economy under Western imperial systems, which quickly abandoned their lofty liberal rhetoric as soon as the shoe began to pinch.

When the embargo failed, President Roosevelt finally took direct action. In May of 1936 he invoked the flexible provision of the tariff law and ordered a 50% increase in duties on goods taken by more than half of their other markets. Japanese xenophobia was further stimulated as tariff barriers [rose] against Japan in the Philippines, which Japan could control politically; an argument for further political expansion ... against an iron ring of tariffs. [64](#)

the Japanese perspective of China. From the Japanese point of view, the new government of North China established in 1937 represented the intention of Japan to control the continent. [65](#) On December 22, 1938, Prince Konoye made the following statement:

When the two countries, should recognize the freedom of residence and trade on the part of Japanese subjects in the interior of China and the Philippines, should extend to Japan facilities for the development of China's natural resources, especially in the regions of North China and Indochina.

When the League of Nations is re-established, which would defend China and Japan against Western imperialism, unequal treaties, and extraterritoriality. Its goal is to

it would succeed in freeing itself from dependence on the West for strategic raw materials.

dizement. To use the contemporary idiom, they emphasized that their actions were "not intended as a threat to China" and that they were quite willing to negotiate with the recalcitrant Chinese authorities, and even sought third-power intervention.⁶⁸ Such Japanese officials argued that China was worth more to Japan than she could possibly gain in return. Japan was "paying the price that leadership of Asia demands," they said, attempting to show that the United Front and the Sino-Soviet pact of 1937 were steps toward the destruction of Nationalist China and the Bolshevization of the East. The pact was terminated,⁷¹ and the safety and rights of Japanese and Korean residents in China guaranteed.

For example, Secretary of State Kellogg had stated United States government policy as: "to require China to perform the obligations of the Chinese government's proposal for the modification of existing treaties in measure as the Chinese authorities demonstrated their ability to enforce those treaties," and admonished China of "the necessity of giving concrete evidence of its ability and willingness to enforce respect for the unequal treaties (notes of September 4, 1925).⁷² Because of this "inability and unwillingness," "none of the Treaty of Washington's interests were prejudiced by lawlessness and the ineffectiveness of the government of China."⁷³

Wang Ching-wei, who had been a leading disciple of Sun Yat-sen and, through the 1930s, a major figure in the Kuomintang, was seen as a man who had broken away from the Western imperialist powers. Japan was bogged down in an unwinnable war on the Asian mainland. The policy of "crushing the Communists" was expanding its economic and military power.⁷⁴ How familiar it all sounds.

These spokesmen ever surpassed the level of fatuity that characterizes much of American scholarship, which often seems mired in imperialism or war-mongering. In fact, we have used our wealth to help other countries and our military strength to defend the independence of the weak.

The attack on China became known. When notified of the intention of the Japanese government to bomb Nanking, the United States responded that such an act is inadmissible and runs counter to the principles of law and humanity."⁷⁶ Now that these principles have been repealed, it is hard to see these events in the manner they deserve would be the ultimate in hypocrisy. For this reason I will say very little about them.

China's situation, beginning in 1931.⁷⁷ The record is instructive. In 1932,

the number of insurgents [the perfect way of the ancient kings, or the kingly way] had at one point reached 300,000, but the earnest and brave efforts of the Chinese government in 1934; 40,000 in 1935; 30,000 in 1936; and 20,000 in 1937. As of September, 1938, the number of insurgents is estimated at 10,000.

the national army of Manchukuo, and in part by the police. "Because of the success of these activities [which led to the winning of the war] the 'bandits' and 'rebellious troops from the local armies' had been absorbed by the Chinese Communist party during this period, a

ina. The goal of the insurgents was "to destroy the government's pacification efforts" and to win public confidence and disturb public development of natural resources and the improvement of the people's livelihood." Through a combination of pacification and prop

ng peace and order, in that it will directly reduce the number of insurgents. But this method is to be used only as a last resort; for a righteous government is that of liberating the masses from old notions implanted by a long period of exploitative rule by understanding by the masses of the true nature of righteous government, the reasons behind the establishment of the state, and cooperation for the inducement of surrender has such grave significance.

the insurgent groups return to their original state of operation as soon as the subjugation period is terminated and troops are was created within the guerrilla groups. The formerly anti-Japanese Korean community was won over by "sociopolitical and escaping from the control of their Chinese landlords" (Lee, p. 23). Among the Chinese, the situation was different, and more difficult

people and convinced them that the guerrillas were the only true defenders of their interests. When necessary, the guerrillas t both with the necessary supplies and with vital intelligence. Farmers who were located in regions too remote to be protected b , p. 25]

the end of 1937, the Police Affairs Headquarters reported that over 10,000 hamlets had been organized accommodating 5,500,000

en if the collective hamlets were not ready. Some farmers were forced to move just before the sowing season, making it impossib d in mop-up operations before preparations had been made for the farmers' relocation. The only concern of the military was to c

o has been reading the American press since 1962.

prevent insurgents from "assaulting the weakly protected collective hamlets and ... plundering food and grain" and to prevent es," and the Communists continued to exploit the farmers' grievances with skill (Lee, pp. 33 f.). Vice-Governor Itagaki formulated

"We are not afraid of the ignition of fire; rather we are afraid of the seeping oil" (p. 34).

methods," including registration of residents, issuance of residence certificates, unscheduled searches, and so on. [80](#) They also mentioned that it was totally unrealistic to expect reforms or innovations to be initiated by those who were already well off" and therefore replaced the government-sponsored organization to recruit mass support for the Manchukuo regime" (p. 46). Many abuses at the village level were conducted to win the hearts and minds of the villagers (cf. pp. 55 f.). In comparison with American efforts, the Japanese were committed to guaranteeing the persistence of the old semi-feudal order and was less solicitous of property rights. The reports in

April 1939 describes the achievements of pacification in Tunghwa Province in glowing terms:

"The activities on the citizens of the province has been very uplifting. We have observed an increase in the areas under cultivation as a result of improvement in market facilities; remarkable progress among merchants and industrialists assisted by government loans; and

"revolutionary development" was not yet quite so successful and insurgents still operated:

"The Japanese are also systematically conducting Communist indoctrination operations in various villages. As a result, many villages are being infiltrated by Communist pacification forces. [83](#)

Although some continued to "sympathize with Communism." However, plans were being laid to "establish confidence" and destroy insu-

permitted to the public about these matters. No doubt, many Japanese deplored the excesses of the pacification program, though there were vocal advocates of Japanese withdrawal from Manchuria, they could be shown reports of the sort just quoted, and would be of cost, the Japanese must continue to use limited means to secure law and order and to permit the responsible elements of M-

officials in charge. Vice-Governor Itagaki described the moral dilemma that they faced in moving words:

... small subsidy funds and severe orders [to the farmers], telling them to move to a designated location by such and such a date... in rags and smiling on carts that are carrying the household goods away. A few days ago, a girl of sixteen or seventeen made me wonder, "What is the councilor?" She had walked a long way to town thinking, "If I asked the councilor, something could be done." Watching the bony figures at the forefront who have to guide the coercive operation directly is beyond imagination. I was told many times while I was on my way to the *kaoliang* gin, sounded as though someone was spitting blood. In each case we had to console and keep telling each other that this was the only way. More than 100 defense hamlets were constructed throughout the prefecture. These were built with blood, tears, and sweat. [84](#)

... been solved by 1940. In China itself, pacification continued throughout the Pacific war. Chalmers Johnson summarizes these efforts as "the physical destruction of all life and property in an area where guerrilla activity was rampant, followed by the construction of a 'defense hamlet' program, described in the following terms in a recent Japanese commentary:

... show in Central China and its "Ailutsun" (Railway Defense Village) program in Shangtung Province in North China.... The concept was to make an economic and ideological effort on a single village, in building it up into a peaceful, stabilized and secure area; then by using this as a model to build up other villages. [86](#)

... With far greater power to enforce their efforts and a much smaller and weaker enemy, American political scientists were not unprepared. Immediately for allies, Japan joined with Germany and Italy in the Tripartite Pact at a moment when Germany appeared invincible. With the loss of French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, and for gaining "independence" for the Philippines. The expiration of the treaty was the only way in which Japan could obtain from no other source, [88](#) and in September, a total embargo on scrap iron. Meanwhile American aid to China was cut off. Supplies to Chiang Kai-shek and to take steps towards acquisition of petroleum from the Dutch East Indies. On July 2, 1941, a decision was made. On July 24, President Roosevelt informed the Japanese ambassador that if Japan would refrain from this step, he would use his authority to stop its plans to move troops to southern Indochina and the United States government ordered all Japanese assets in the United States to be frozen. "Supplies outside her own control." [90](#)

... talks, which had been under way since February. The nature of these talks has been a matter of some dispute. Pal points out that the issue was not once a major issue, though Japan persistently de-emphasized it. Schroeder argues that the American motive was in part "selling the Dutch East Indies -- constituted an attack on the United States." [92](#) It may be that the underlying motive was to justify the fortification attempt to secure "special interests" of the sort possessed by the United States and Britain in the areas under their domination, but not in the expectation of victory over the United States but in the hope "that the Americans, confronted by a German victory in Europe and

tion in commercial relations" in the Pacific, including China, if this principle "were adopted throughout the world." The qualification was that the United States would not be expected to send its forces from China and Indochina. The Western powers could not be expected to respond in kind in their dominions. A few days later, the Japanese government made a statement on the subject. Japan had insisted that in its plans for "coprosperity" and then a "new order," it was simply following the precedent established by the United States in the Caribbean. The United States' response to this claim. Hull professed to be shocked. In his view of the matter, the Monroe Doctrine, "as we interpret and apply it," was "difficult for ... [Japanese generals] ... to see why the United States, on the one hand, should assert leadership in the Western Hemisphere and our Government educate the generals" to a more correct understanding of this fundamental distinction?⁹⁵

A detailed analysis, concludes that no comparison can be made between the Monroe Doctrine and Japan's plans.⁹⁶ The United States' position in the Caribbean is "entirely different from that in the Pacific." Rather, "it has exercised its powers of military intervention or of financial administration for the benefit of the peoples of the Caribbean States," which characterizes the main difference between the American and Japanese position in this way:

The Caribbean republics, each with a relatively small area and population. Japan, on the other hand, is a country with a relatively small area and population. The United States' position in the Caribbean States does not appear natural for Japan to take toward China.

originality. To my knowledge, no one had previously argued that attempts by one nation to dominate another are proper to the Monroe Doctrine. The next explanation of the fundamental error in the Japanese analogy:

Caribbean republics to permit American capital to find profitable investment. The doors are voluntarily wide open.

is nicely illustrated in the fall of 1933, a few months after Blakeslee's article appeared, when Ramón Grau San Martín came into power in Cuba. "The Grau government has closed its doors to our imports." As Welles noted, this government was "highly prejudicial to our interest ... our own commercial and export interests in Cuba (which were admitted were "anomalous") with Batista, who was, in his judgment, "the only individual in Cuba today who represented authority and order" (October 4, 1933). The Grau government soon fell, with the result that "the pre-1930 social and economic class structure was retained."

difference in aims. The United States

sions of stability and prosperity. The United States does not wish to seize territory, directly or indirectly, or to assume political
withdrawn.

their appeal to the precedent of American practice is entirely without worth. The matter is simply put in a recent study of postwar
sense of benevolence." ... "We engaged in a kind of welfare imperialism, empire-building for noble ends rather than for such base n
money and even sacrificing the lives of our own soldiers on their behalf? Of course we have."⁹⁹

stands exposed as the kind of "unprecedented evil" that fully merited the atom bomb.

face in context the policy alternatives that were open to the United States in 1941 and in earlier years. The predominant American
Schroeder, who argues against the mistake of basing policy on an "emphasis on meting out justice rather than doing good." The "mor
uncompromising adherence to moral principles and liberal doctrines." The "realistic" approach of accommodation favored by Gr
its principles, reserving for America full freedom of action at some later, more favorable time." ¹⁰⁰ Schroeder does not question
d States adhered, but only our insistence on abiding by these principles at an inappropriate time.

utionary pacifism of Muste seems to me both eminently realistic and highly moral. Furthermore, even if we were to grant the c
means one uses inevitably incorporate themselves into his ends and, if evil, will defeat him." Whether Muste's was in fact the most
The lack of a radical critique of the sort that Muste, and a few others, sought to develop was one of the factors that contributed t

opolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1967), pp. 179-85.

72.

not with respect to the mentalities of those who use them as a guide to action. If anything can be more frightening than the

the crisis has cooled, that this was Kennedy's "finest hour," in which he demonstrated his skill at the game of "nuclear chicken" (cf. h

Historian and the Diplomat (New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 123-69. Morton goes on to develop the conventional v
"penetration" (unthinkable to the West, of course), and by support of revolution, as in Greece, "in violation of allied wartime agreem
was opposed to the Greek rebellion and adhered to the Churchill-Stalin settlement that divided Europe into spheres of influence
sian sphere in the Churchill-Stalin agreement, "are not to be spheres of influence of any one power." Nor is there any reference t
s essay as "an always intelligent account of the role of history and historians in the era of the cold war," which "will disappoint the
n after 1945."

War II (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953), Vol. 5, pp. 732-33:

o area in a 1,000-plane mission: the Twentieth Air Force had put up 853 B-29's and 79 fighters on 1 August, and Arnold thought th
y a poor target for conventional bombing; instead, he proposed to divide his forces between seven targets. Arnold was apologetic
ay to the top." The teleconference ended with a fervid "Thank God" from Spaatz.... From the Marianas, 449 B-29's went out fo
even planes dispatched on special bombing missions by the 509th Group brought the number of B-20's to 828, and with 186 fighte
ced the unconditional surrender of Japan.

." *Tenbo*, January 1965, translated in the *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan*, Vol. 4 (August 1966), pp. 75-84.

d and intensive aerial bombardment of an arsenal in Osaka. I was a witness to the tragedy. I saw dozens of corpses -- loyal subje
reason these people died was because they happened to have been in the arsenal or environs at the time of the air raid. After w
n American bombers had dropped over the destruction. The leaflets proclaimed in Japanese, "Your Government has surrendered. T

nyal and Co., 1953), pp. 620-21.

.Y., Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 87.

(Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1966), Ch. 1.

ncil, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941), p. 8. He goes on to argue that it was Japanese inexperience that led to passivity and a

ton University Press, 1961), p. 17.

, University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 195.

65), p. 160.

Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 188, "over 200,000 Japanese were living along the South Manchuria Railway and in the Kwantung

ne million ("World Peace Machinery and the Asia Monroe Doctrine," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 5 (November 1932), pp. 941-53; reprinted

American destruction of cities of the Mekong Delta in early February 1968, for example, the destruction of Ben Tre with thousand
e NLF forces.

, 1958). Shigemitsu describes the Manchurian incident as, in effect, one aspect of an attempted coup, of which the domestic as

of China." By 1930, the "revolutionary diplomacy" of China was attempting to reverse and overthrow the unequal treaties, inclu

d blocking trade between Japan and the colonial possessions of the European powers, and the League of Nations was following th

imate interests of Japan in Manchuria. Later steps to defend Manchukuo were determined in part by the threat of ultimate Comm

d that the Japanese must attempt "to attain self-sufficiency." This view of the situation, to which I return below, was not unrealistic

s did, say, American Ambassador to the Dominican Republic W. Tapley Bennett or Presidential Envoy John Bartlow Martin 23 year

ork, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 30. Maruyama adds that "while there is no doubt that the Manchurian Incident acted as

1931-1932 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964), p. 178.

Japan's foremost political scientists and a leading pre-war liberal."

...fascism in Japan was a great concern for the suffering of the poor farmers, particularly after the great depression struck. See Ma

...more successful in establishing a functioning puppet government in Manchuria than the United States has ever been in Vietnam, J
...Vietnam. On the insurgency that developed in Manchuria, and the Japanese attempts to suppress it, see below.

...Joseph Barnes, ed., *Empire in the East* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1934), pp. 3-36.

...the grounds that it would then be impossible "to face the myriad spirits of the war dead" (General Matsui, 1941, cited by Maruya

...Senior Retainers close to the Emperor, who had chosen war abroad in preference to class struggle at home, and who were then l
...*can Power and the New Mandarins* (Pantheon, 1969).]

5; cited in Takagi, *op. cit.*

urt, Brace & Company, 1938; paperback ed., New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1962), p. 130. American scholarship generally
. Thorp, ed., *The United States and the Far East* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 30.

Order (New York, Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 124, 126. The Lansing-Ishii Notes, however, contained a secret protocol which

late 1937, the Japanese had 160,000 troops in China. One tends to forget, these days, what was the scale of fascist aggression a

1938 (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 590.

al Matsui, departing to take up his post as commander-in-chief of the Japanese expeditionary force in Shanghai in 1937, stated: "I
following words: "The struggle between Japan and China was always a fight between brothers within the 'Asian family.'... It has b
them, but on the contrary because we love them too much. It is just the same as in a family when an elder brother has taken all t

University Press, 1954), p. 156, from *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1948), Vol. 1, pp. 725-26.

w of 1924 had been a particularly bitter blow to the Japanese. In addition there were immigration barriers in Canada, Latin Amer
rsing the "principle of equality of Nations" and "just treatment of their nationals" had been blocked by Britain. Woodrow Wilson
ates failed to vote for this resolution. See Neumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54.

University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 5.

17-1960 (New York, Bookman Associates, 1960), p. 159.

American postwar Philippine policy served to perpetuate what United Nations representative Salvador López calls the prewar "system of relations between the two countries," and which, in "tacit allegiance with the Filipino economic elite" led to a "colonial economy of the classical type." Moreover, this "shortsighted policy of pressing for immediate commercial advantage" interrupted the Philippine revolution that was underway, which had arisen in the persistent experimentation with public corporations of various kinds by a firm avowal that public policy was to be improved. The effect of this "improvement" in "the political and economic aspects of the investment climate" was that from 1957 to 1963 "earnings from the Philippines In fact, the preferential trade relations forced on the Philippines in 1946 virtually guaranteed American domination of the Philippine economy. Payments. In view of the prevailing economic circumstances, Filipinos had no alternative but to accept, after considerable controversy, the payments ... in effect went back to the United States in the form of payments for imports, to the benefit of American industry and commerce." (López, *op. cit.*, 1963, 185-212.

and willing even to accept members of the Kuomintang if they would join.

In the light of the parallels between Japanese fascism and contemporary American imperialism in Southeast Asia, we should also not overlook the fundamental similarity between the two. It is a paranoid delusion.

That they wanted American aid in achieving a quick settlement [in 1937], United States officials again failed to understand the situation. The Chinese counterparts to explain the failure of the Chinese to accept their honorable offers. For example, the director of Harvard's East Asian Research Center said it was a "normal thing to do," but the Asian mind does not share our belief "in the supremacy of law and the rights of the individual protected by law." It is the superficial critics who do not understand the Asian mind who insist on taking the North Vietnamese literally when they state that they will "increase their violence."

Affairs Press, 1961), p. 19.

...ing its control over Chinese tariffs in 1928. Germany and the Soviet Union had relinquished extraterritoriality in the 1920s (the U

... by Asians. Thorp, formerly Assistant Secretary of State and member of the UN delegation, and at the time a professor of econo
... to support aggression in Indochina. The conference whose proceedings he was editing concluded finally with the hope that "the C
... and lived in freedom.

...*etnam*, Stockholm, July 1967, Bertil Svanhnstrom, chairman.

...ce, RAND Corporation Memorandum RM-5012-ARPA, January 1967, unlimited distribution. I am indebted to Herbert Bix for bring
...e in cheek. There is no reason to question the scholarship, however. The original documents translated in the memorandum are p

...hukuo, October 1938 (Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 189 f.). The kill ratio is omitted.

).

...*tion in Vietnam* (Praeger Special Studies; New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1967).

...*Mandarins* (Pantheon, 1969).

...yama, in his analysis of the "theory and psychology of ultranationalism": "Acts of benevolence could coexist with atrocities, and
...ain, the reader will have no difficulty in supplying contemporary examples.

...April 1939, entitled: "Pacification Activities in the Communist Bandit Area (Personal Reflections)" (Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 217 f.).

... (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 86-87.

...t Program," *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (July-September 1967), pp. 297-303. The author, a Southeast Asian specialist and editorial w
... among them the following: "... the wounds inflicted on Nature, so ruthlessly destroyed for this, are too brutal to see. Beautiful g

ed and dug over. The ugly land, no longer green, has lost its power to attract people and to stir deep in the hearts of people a love
rched earth and the system and the traditions born of a race of people have been destroyed."

ferences (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 11.

ding to Ike, *op. cit.*, p. 108, the order to freeze assets was given on the evening of July 25, the announcement that troops would
ere was still some room for diplomatic maneuver at this time.

states "today is in a position to wreck completely the economic structure of the Japanese empire," and Admiral Stark as predicting

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78.

iversity Press, 1962), p. 109.

erves, this generosity is the price we must pay to enjoy our imperial role. Compare the remarks of H. Merivale, cited on page 58
witness to, rather than evidence for, the pervasive self-delusion of our highly conformist and ideologically committed society. In A

Fewer matches

Imperialist War for the Pacific: The True Story of Pearl Harbor

Revolutionary Worker #1105, June 3, 2001, [posted at http://rwor.org](http://rwor.org)

http://revcom.us/a/v23/1100-99/1105/pearl_harbor.htm

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, the news passed quickly across the U.S. and around the world that the Japanese navy had attacked part of the U.S. fleet, anchored at its Pearl Harbor base in Hawai'i. In two intense hours, Japanese aircraft sank four aging U.S. battleships and other vessels.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt immediately called for the U.S. to enter the second world war--and argued that this was an American war of self defense against the treachery and expansionism of Japan. Roosevelt said: "Our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger... I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire."

This myth--born within hours of those first bombs--is being retold this week onscreen with the release of *Pearl Harbor*. In this new movie, the U.S. is portrayed as a "sleeping giant"--where only a few military "hawks" could see the real threat. According to this military parable, the population of the U.S. was soft, passive, and dangerously preoccupied in the diversions of their daily lives, while a ruthless enemy plotted to take advantage of their lack of vigilance.

The message of this "summer blockbuster" is as subtle as an airborne torpedo. The propaganda is crude and pro-imperialist: "*Don't get too self-absorbed in your little lives,*" this movie is saying, "*because the U.S. operates in a very dangerous world, and you, too, may be called upon to kill for this flag.*"

And exactly because it would be so wrong to fight for U.S. dominance--and make heroes out of airborne government killers--we need to peel away this myth of Pearl Harbor and World War 2, and tell the true story of what that battle and that war were all about.

Whose Territory?

"We have pacified some thousands of islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors; furnished heartbreak by exile to some dozens of disagreeable patriots; subjugated the remaining tens of millions by Benevolent Assimilation, which is the pious new name of the musket...and hoisted our protecting flag... And so, by these Providences of God--and the phrase is the government's, not mine--we are a World Power."

Mark Twain, after the 1901
U.S. conquest of the Philippines

"Our general diplomatic and strategic position would be considerably weakened--by our loss of Chinese, Indian and South Seas markets (and by our loss of much of the Japanese market for our goods, as Japan would become more and more self-sufficient) as well as by insurmountable restrictions upon our access to the rubber, tin, jute, and other vital materials of the Asian and Oceanic regions."

State Department memorandum
on how Japan's moves affected
U.S. imperialist interests, 1940

The men who ruled the U.S. were not surprised when war broke out in 1941. They had prepared for it, even dreamed about it, for long years.

Over 40 years before Pearl Harbor, the U.S. had made its first massive armed moves into the western Pacific. In 1899, the U.S. sent half its military forces to conquer the Philippines and caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos in three years of bloody warfare to crush their resistance.

And before the U.S. imperialists could even start this colonial move, they had set up forward military bases for themselves scattered across the vast Pacific--to store the new steel navy that would carry out their conquests. That is why they seized Hawai'i from the Hawaiian people. The lands of Hawaiians were stolen and turned into plantations. Their culture attacked and dissed by missionaries. Finally, in 1893, their home government was overthrown and their islands annexed. In the U.S. Congress, the argument was made: "In the possession of the United States it will give us the command of the Pacific."

But the U.S. was not alone in its plans to seize the wealth and labor of southeast Asia. The British, French and Dutch imperialists had already invaded and carved out rich colonies for themselves--in Indonesia, Indochina, and Malaysia. And everyone knew that Japan, which was emerging as a newly industrial nation, would be working to seize for itself secure sources of rubber, oil, and labor.

For decades, rivalry raged over which oppressor power would rule what in east Asia. In 1922, the U.S. and Britain imposed restrictions on Japanese navy building--fixing a 5/5/3 ratio for larger classes of warships. This treaty, and the use of U.S. gunboats and troops against Chinese people that same year, was a declaration that the U.S. intended to seize a position of power in east Asia through military force, if necessary.

The U.S. called for a *joint* imperialist rape of China (the so-called "Open Door Policy"), so when Japan started to seize major chunks of China as its *exclusive* colonial possessions, the hostility between the U.S. and Japan escalated.

When Roosevelt said, after Pearl Harbor, that "our territory" was "in great danger," this talk of defending "our territory" is really a defense of U.S. imperialist interests. Hawai'i was not "sacred American soil"--it had recently been seized (from its own people!) at gunpoint. And those warships that lay at anchor in Pearl Harbor were an aggressive imperialist navy--built, deployed and based in Hawai'i *precisely* to threaten east Asia with U.S. military might.

After Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government deliberately inflamed fears of invasion to rally a reluctant population by *claiming* the war and their sacrifice were for self-defense. The authorities created coast watches and blackouts. President Roosevelt fanned the hysteria, and signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, putting 110,000 Japanese-Americans into concentration camps. In the movie *Pearl Harbor* there is laughable talk about Japanese troops penetrating all the way to Chicago. In fact, the Japanese were seeking to take and hold China and southeast Asia, not Oklahoma, and everyone knew it.

The U.S. was also not waging a war about liberating anyone: Japan was an imperialist power that carried out extreme and oppressive acts--including the infamous Rape of Nanking and the colonial conquest of neighboring countries. But when General MacArthur said "I shall return"--he was talking about U.S. troops returning to the Philippines and re-imposing U.S. domination there at any cost--a domination that itself had been created through extreme and oppressive acts.

U.S. society had just gone through the Great Depression of the 1930s, where the heartlessness and madness of capitalism had been displayed for all to see. The U.S. military and navy were viciously Jim Crow--as was the larger society they were defending. And the oppression of Black people was there at every level, including to the point of mass murder in Port Chicago.

Meanwhile, this U.S. war for the Pacific was a war about O.P.T.--*Other People's Territory*. The U.S. prepared and waged a colonial war over who would get to exploit the people of east Asia and the larger Pacific. This was a war about whether the corrupt Marcos-type governments of post-war Asia would

speak English or Japanese.

Whose Surprise?

"Both groups of belligerent nations were systematically preparing the very kind of war such as the present. The question of which group dealt the first military blow or first declared war is immaterial in any determination of the tactics of socialists. Both sides' phrases on the defense of the fatherland, resistance to enemy invasion, a war of defense, etc., are nothing but deception of the people."

V.I. Lenin

Lenin's point about World War 1 describes the conflict shaping up between the U.S. and Japan 20 years later in the 1930s.

The U.S. imperialists knew war was coming and, by the late 1930s, the problem for the U.S. ruling class was *how* the inevitable war should break out. There was deep-seated opposition to the war within the U.S. population--who were not interested in dying in distant war in Europe. And there were powerful forces within the ruling class who felt that the U.S. should stay with the policy that served it so well through the first two years of the world war--what Mao called "sitting on the mountain and watching the tigers fight."

But by 1941, the Roosevelt government was convinced that the time had come to step in. The various other great powers were badly bloodied. Nazi Germany had just invaded the socialist Soviet Union, and faced a long bitter battle there. Britain was on the ropes. France was conquered and partitioned. Japan was bogged down trying to hold large chunks of China--and facing a growing resistance headed by Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Communist Party. And there was an opening for the U.S. to weigh in and eventually take over much of the world.

And by 1941, the Japanese imperialists were starting to encroach on areas that the U.S. considered its vital interests--including threatening the key U.S. sources of rubber and tin in southeast Asia. On July 26, 1941, Japan began occupying the strategic rubber-growing area of southern Vietnam. The next day the U.S. froze all Japanese assets in the U.S. and forced Britain and Holland to follow suit.

The U.S. imposed embargoes of scrap iron and oil--key resources that Japan needed from overseas to maintain its industry and military. And it meant war was certain unless Japan capitulated to all U.S. demands to withdraw from the area. Howard Zinn writes in *A People's History of the United States*, "The records show that a White House conference two weeks before Pearl Harbor anticipated a war and discussed how it should be justified."

On November 25, 1941, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull gave the Japanese an ultimatum demanding that they evacuate Indochina and China and recognize U.S. ally General Chiang Kai-shek as the only legitimate government in China. They knew the Japanese would not comply.

That evening Secretary of War Stimson recorded in his diary: "[The President] brought up the event that we were likely to be attacked perhaps next Monday, for the Japanese were notorious for making an attack without warning, and the question was what we should do. The question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves. This was a difficult proposition."

The next day, the army chief of staff, George C. Marshall, sent the following cable to the commanding general in Hawai'i: "Negotiations with Japan appear to be terminated to all practical purposes with only the barest possibilities that the Japanese government might come back and offer to continue. Japanese future action unpredictable but hostile action possible at any moment. If hostilities cannot, repeat cannot, be avoided, the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act. This policy should not, repeat not, be construed as restricting you to a course of action that might jeopardize your defense.

Prior to hostile Japanese action you are directed to undertake such reconnaissance and other measures as you deem necessary but these measures should be carried out so as not, repeat not, to alarm civil population or disclose intent. Report measures taken. Should hostilities occur you will carry out the task assigned in Rainbow Five so far as they pertain to Japan. Limit dissemination this highly secret information to minimum essential officers."

In other words, they were saying: *This is it! We are going to war against Japan. Make sure they strike the first blow so they can be branded as the aggressor. And, whatever you do, don't let the masses of people find out our plan!*

Meanwhile, the U.S. had broken the code for secret Japanese diplomatic transmissions in August of 1940. Every day, top U.S. officials read cables between Tokyo and its embassies. They knew on December 7 that an attack was coming, somewhere, though they didn't know where.

Japan's militarist government, facing war against a much bigger and economically stronger rival, decided to go for a decisive strike--hoping to put the U.S. on the defensive while Japan's military consolidated their gains in Asia. And one thing that can be said for watching the air raid in the movie *Pearl Harbor*, it does remind you of the usefulness of surprise when seeking to defeat an enemy like U.S. imperialism.

Still, overall, the U.S. ruling class saw the Japanese raid on Hawaii as a opportunity to enter the war, despite the fact that they suffered some initial losses (mainly in aging warships, and not in the aircraft carrier core of their fleet).

In his diary, Secretary Henry Stimson wrote: "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 have been hitherto very discouraging."

The ones really surprised when the attack finally came on December 7 were the masses of people in the U.S. As for the FDR government, the war they wanted and expected had come in a way that *politically* allowed them to mask their real motives and goals. A colonial war could be portrayed as a war of defense. A new stage of U.S. aggression could be portrayed as a war *against* aggression.

Bourgeois historians can and do argue over which act started the war, and which side hit first. But for class conscious proletarians and oppressed peoples, these controversies of who *provoked* the war are irrelevant next to the important fact about the basic *class nature* of this conflict: The war between Japan and the U.S. was an unjust imperialist war on *both sides*.

The U.S. war campaign that followed was waged in a notoriously genocidal and reactionary way. Japanese people were openly portrayed in the U.S.--and to the U.S. soldiers--as fanatical and vicious subhumans who deserved to be extinguished to the last person. The glorification of a U.S. revenge raid on Japan that happens in the movie *Pearl Harbor* is particularly disturbing since it completely ignores how such raids eventually built up to the 1945 firebombing of Tokyo and the criminal nuclear attack on the two civilian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

General Curtis LeMay, commander of the Tokyo attack, later said: "I suppose if I had lost the war, I would have been tried as a war criminal. Fortunately, we were on the winning side."

Whose Interests?

"War is the continuation of politics by other means."

"A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, cannot fail to see that its military reverses facilitate its overthrow."

V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and War*, 1915

"If you were going to make a case about how much more terrible the fascist states were than the democracies, you'd make it better in Europe where there was more democracy than you would if you went in some of the colonial countries and started arguing about how great British imperialism was for India, for example, as compared with Japanese imperialism and its colonies."

Bob Avakian, *Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will*, 1981

World War 2 has often been portrayed as "the good war"--as the time when the U.S. was involved in some great anti-fascist crusade, where progressive people could fight for the red-white-and-blue and yet still (somehow) serve the interests of the people of the world.

This is a deeply mistaken view that badly damaged the class consciousness of a whole generation of communists and working people in the U.S. Its lingering influence supports deep illusions about the capitalist system and the nature of U.S. government and military today. The idea that there was some "good war" in the past, where U.S. imperialism played some "progressive anti-fascist role," is used by some as proof that it *could happen* once again--that the U.S. could become what it says it is, a defender of democracy and human rights in the world.

A world war is (obviously) a vast and complex event--where people of many countries and of opposing classes are drawn into conflict, fighting for their interests and for their vision of the future. There were revolutionary struggles taking place during that war, struggles that deserved support and great sacrifice from the masses of people. The Soviet Union fought one of history's most bitter wars against powerful forces of Nazi Germany, in defense of its then-socialist society. The people of many countries waged resistance during World War 2 against imperialism--including in China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Philippines. And these were national liberation struggles that, under the leadership of communists like Mao Tsetung, were part of the larger worldwide revolutionary struggle to overthrow imperialism.

But the war that the *U.S.* waged in the Pacific was of a fundamentally different kind: that war was an extension of *imperialist* politics and rivalry that had grown over decades. And the second world war arose, overall and fundamentally, from such inter-imperialist rivalry--waged throughout the world, including in Europe, North Africa, and in the Pacific Basin. The second world war reached its resolution in a new imperialist redivision of the world--despite the fact that revolutionary struggles played a much bigger role in this war than in World War 1.

In fact, it is possible to see, with hindsight, what the U.S. forces were fighting for by seeing what emerged from that new redivision.

As early as 1940, study groups set up by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations mapped out plans for a new global order they intended to create after a victory in the world war (which they had not even yet joined). The U.S. emerged out of World War 2 proclaiming "the American Century"--it established over 400 military bases around the world, and set about bullying everyone in sight. From its defeated Japanese rival, it took over half of Korea, occupied Japan itself, seized Okinawa, maneuvered unsuccessfully to dominate China, retook the Philippines and seized the many island chains of the Pacific. Not content with that, it also seized many areas previously dominated *by its allies*. In the post-war world, the U.S. emerged as the main oppressor in the former French colony in Indochina, with its hand deep in formerly Dutch Indonesia and formerly British Malaysia. Hundreds of millions of people got a new oppressor and were slated for a future of sweatshops, occupation, sex trade and financial domination. Meanwhile, some of the Pacific islands that the marines "liberated" became ground zero

for French and American nuclear tests.

As for the talk of "anti-fascist war"--the U.S. saw continuing use for fascist dictatorships after World War 2, and backed them all over the world--including Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in China (and then Taiwan), Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, Diem and then Thieu in southern Vietnam, plus a string of torturers in southern Korea and elsewhere. U.S. generals went on to wage brutal counterrevolutionary wars against the people of Asia--General Douglas MacArthur tried to conquer the Korean peninsula for U.S. imperialism, and even dreamed of invading China to overthrow the victorious 1949 Maoist revolution. General Curtis LeMay went on to direct the U.S. bombing of Vietnam--where he coined the phrase "Bomb them back to the Stone Age."

Now, 60 years after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. cause in World War 2 is portrayed as noble--in books and film. Those who fought it are glorified as "the greatest generation."

Well, what is so "great" about killing to create a bigger U.S. empire? What is so noble about a naïve patriotism that made people think they were fighting "against fascism and aggression"--while they brought nuclear attack and new oppression to the people of Asia and the Pacific?

This war for the Pacific was an oppressors' war to expand and consolidate oppression. Their victories are not our victories. And their defeats and setbacks are something to welcome (then and now)--because they create openings both here and around the world for people to overthrow them and everything they stand for.

This article is posted in English and Spanish on Revolutionary Worker Online
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DICK'S LETTER TO ADG 12-2-11, 221 words

Dear Editor:

In your newspaper November 22, Mr. Richard Dixon reminded us of the importance of Pearl Harbor. One of his claims deserves reconsideration: "Never in the history of military warfare had there been such an instance of unprovoked war upon a U.S. naval base...." I was nine years old when the attack on Pearl occurred, Dec. 7, 1941, and for most of my life I believed the attack was unprovoked. But in recent years, many historians have concluded that the attack on Pearl was the inevitable outcome of colonial competition over resources (oil, rubber) between the U.S. and European nations—Netherlands, France, England—and Japan, and the Dec. 7 bombing specifically motivated by the U.S. and allied embargo of Japan. The Japanese attack on the U.S. should have surprised nobody. The U.S. and other western nations were not going to share their empires with the Japanese without a fight. The Pacific was sometimes called "the American Lake," and the Europeans depended upon the resources of their colonies. Likewise the Japanese were not going to abandon their urgent imperial expansion for resources. Their economic desperation, militarism, and underestimation of U. S. power and determination led them to attack. The imperial arrangement of nations at the time made the war almost inevitable. Read the book *No Choice But War* by Roland Worth, Jr. for a careful analysis of this history.

END NEWSLETTER #3 ON WWII PACIFIC WAR/PEARL HARBOR

Response to Newsletter #3 from Prof. Sonny San Juan

8:07 PM to me

Thanks for this bonanza of articles. I will read all of them because I am participating in an international conference on "War Memories and Literature" in Taiwan next week. Indeed, our lifetime and that of our parents have been dominated by world wars and wars of all kinds--both total war and regional wars...

Cheers, Dick, and thanks for your thoughtfulness!

Sonny

<http://philcsc.wordpress.com>