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The Battle Over Pearl Harbor: The Controversy Surrounding the Japanese Attack, 1941-1994

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THE BATTLE OVER PEARL HARBOR

The Controversy Surrounding the Japanese Attack, 1941-1994

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Robert S. Hamblet

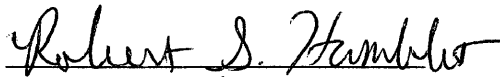
1995

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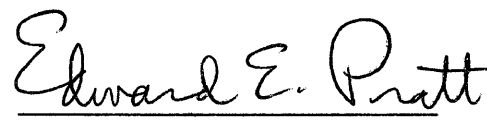
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Approved, November 1995


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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the controversy surrounding the history of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Since December 7th, 1941, the subject of the Pearl Harbor attack has been dealt with by various executive branch and military investigations, a Congressional investigation, the media, historians and foreign governments. Despite the years of study, the reasons for the success of the attack are still disputed.

The purpose of this study is to examine the various opinions which have formed the controversy. It looks at the statements by key administration officials provided in diaries, memoirs, writings and testimony to the official investigations. It details the specific allegations made by revisionist writers in their attempt to prove that the Roosevelt administration was guilty of a conspiracy to allow the Japanese attack to occur. It compares these attacks to the official statements and to the interpretations of those who challenged the revisionists.

The paper also studies the factors which allowed the controversy to develop, decline and revive over the past half century. It looks at how political ambitions, the change in the political climate and the release of classified information affected the controversy and allowed it to continue for so long. The paper concludes with an evaluation of the controversy and various elements of it.

BATTLE OVER PEARL HARBOR

The Controversy Surrounding the Japanese Attack, 1941-1994

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of December 7th, 1941 the forces of imperial Japan launched an attack against the United States at Pearl Harbor. The attack devastated the American forces, destroying or severely damaging 188 American planes, 8 battleships, 3 light cruisers, 3 destroyers and four other vessels. There were also 3,435 American casualties.¹ The following day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked for and received from Congress a Declaration of War against Japan. Within a week Germany declared war on the United States, propelling the nation into a global conflict.

As the shock of the attack wore off, people at all levels of American society wondered how the attack could have happened. There were some questions as to how relations between the United States and Japan had deteriorated to the point of war. Other questions focused on the reasons for the success of the attack. The initial reaction to the attack was to blame the Japanese. Americans accused warmongers in Japan of pursuing a policy of conquest, deciding on war and planning the treacherous surprise attack. The simple view of Pearl Harbor was that the Japanese were guilty.

Had these held, there would never have been a controversy. Although many people endeavored to support this view, others repeatedly challenged and revised it over the years, resulting in more than a half century of controversy surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Since the days following the bombing, the facts have been shrouded in secrecy and censorship, a problem that led to doubts about what really transpired. The early challenges grew out of skepticism over Japan's capabilities. Many Americans did not believe that the Japanese could have accomplished the feat unless America had deliberately ignored warnings and allowed the base to remain unprepared. Some people accused the

administration of planning the attack and even claimed that American pilots flew the planes. Less radical opinions held that Japan would not risk war with the United States unless given no other option, thereby implicating the administration's foreign policy. As time passed critics held the Roosevelt administration responsible, claiming that the war could have been prevented by diplomacy and that Roosevelt, wanting war, had refused to negotiate seriously in order to provoke a Japanese attack. They also accused Roosevelt of withholding information from the Pearl Harbor commanders and allowing the Japanese to surprise the fleet in order to get the United States into the war.

Ironically, those who charged that Roosevelt conspired to allow the attack to take place claimed that his motive had to do with unifying the nation. Conspiracists charged that Roosevelt put the fleet in Pearl Harbor and lured Japan to strike it in order to shock the nation into rallying behind the war effort. The disaster did initially rally the nation against its enemies, but it also became the most divisive issue of the war, one that would long outlast the administration, the war and most of those involved.

After fifty-three years of official and private investigations, there has never been any direct proof that President Franklin Roosevelt was involved in a conspiracy to get the United States into World War II. As one writer put it, "The Pearl Harbor record ends with no signed confessions."² Nevertheless, the controversy over Roosevelt's culpability in the Pearl Harbor attack has continued. The clash between the necessity of secrecy and the desire for truth provided the impetus for the debate. Political ambitions, struggles for control over the direction of American foreign policy and the classification and release of relevant information sustained the Pearl Harbor debate and allowed it to become a major part of the history of the second World War. The history of the controversy is a tale which reveals both the political effects of withholding information in America and the vigorous struggles to discover or manipulate the truth.

MAGIC

Before going into the development of the controversy, it is important to understand one of the biggest sources of the controversy, Magic. This was the name given to the intelligence derived from the decrypted Japanese messages.

American code breakers had been working on deciphering other countries' codes since World War I. Primarily, this consisted of intercepting radio traffic and decrypting the messages. Under the leadership of Herbert Yardley, the Black Chamber (the name given to the codebreaking agency which was funded by both the State Department and Military Intelligence) broke the Japanese diplomatic code prior to the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922. The intelligence gained from the decrypts of messages sent from Japan to their representatives at the conference gave the United States a great advantage in the negotiations.³ Although Yardley's group was shut down under the Hoover administration, codebreaking continued under the newly formed Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) of the U. S. Army. This was led by William F. Friedman and concentrated on breaking the Japanese diplomatic codes. The United States Navy had its own codebreaking unit called OP-20-G which was originally led by Lt. Lawrence F. Safford, who was again in charge at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack.⁴

The Japanese diplomatic code was enciphered using a machine. In order to transmit Japanese messages over commercial airwaves the Japanese used *kana*. This expressed the Japanese syllabary in ideographs which represented the Japanese and Chinese sounds. These ideographs were then romanized in order to be printed out by western typewriters.⁵ The enciphering machine had a typewriter keyboard by which the message was entered in *kana*. Using a system of telephone exchange stepping switches, it enciphered the message, which was then printed out by a second typewriter. The value of the machine was that it had millions of possible combinations.⁶

By 1936, the United States was able to read Japanese diplomatic messages on a regular basis. However, the Japanese implemented the new code machine in 1939 which

Friedman named "Purple." Fortunately for the American codebreakers, the Japanese were unable to switch to the new machine all at once. For a brief period of time, some embassies did not have the new machine, which meant that messages were being sent using both the old and new code. Using clues given from the two sets of messages, Friedman and his team were able to build their own Purple machine by mid-September, 1940.⁷ The United States could again read the Japanese messages sent to and from their embassies and consulates around the world. This gave the United States some knowledge of the advice the ambassadors were receiving and the information Tokyo was seeking, thus providing a clue to Japanese intentions. America had also broken other diplomatic codes and could predict to some degree the location of the Japanese naval ships through radio traffic analysis.⁸

Although the United States could read the Japanese messages, this did not give them complete knowledge of Japanese plans. There were certain limitations. Because it was the diplomatic code that they had broken, it meant that they could read the Japanese Foreign Ministry messages, not the military messages. (The controversy over whether the United States had broken the Japanese Naval code prior to Pearl Harbor will be discussed in chapter four.) There was also a limited number of machines. By 1941 only eight Purple machines had been built; four were in Washington, one was in the Philippines and three had been given to the British. The commanders in Hawaii did not have one. The lack of machines made it difficult to decrypt the large volume of messages being intercepted. Other factors included the few people involved in processing the information and the lack of people in intelligence who could translate Japanese. The codebreakers were also hindered by transmission and translation errors.⁹

Secrecy played an important role in hampering the use of Magic. The decrypts were shown only to a select group of people: the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Army Chief of Staff and a handful of other high ranking army and naval officers. For the first four

months, Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull were actually denied the information and did not begin receiving Magic until January of 1941.¹⁰ Because of the value of the information, the administration was very careful to keep it secret. In planning actions based on information from the decrypts, it was afraid that the Japanese would deduce that America had broken the code. The military was particularly wary of sending information to Hawaii due to the number of Japanese natives living in the islands.¹¹ Thus, although Magic provided important information, it also restricted the actions that could be taken in response to the information.

During the war, the government never revealed that it had broken the Japanese codes, because it was getting its most valuable intelligence information from its codebreaking operations. However, Congress and the press did uncover some hints that the United States had been reading Japanese messages before Pearl Harbor. This was what sparked the controversy over Pearl Harbor in 1944 and 1945. When the actual decrypts were released to Congress after the war, the controversy flourished. Many historians looking at the messages insisted that the administration must have known that the Japanese were going to attack, and thus began piecing together the conspiracy theories.

The Information

One important piece of information which the U. S. intelligence intercepted was the series of messages which later became known as the "bomb plot messages." The correct analysis of these messages would have pointed out that Japan was seeking information on targets to bomb. On September 14, 1941, Tokyo sent a message to the Japanese consulate in Honolulu labeled "strictly secret." It requested the consulate to make reports on vessels in Hawaii and commanded that "the waters [of Pearl Harbor] are to be divided rightly into sub areas." The dispatch stipulated that Tokyo's need for information on warships and aircraft carriers "at anchor, tied up at wharfs, buoys and in docks" and

stressed the importance of types and classes of the ships.¹² On November 15th, Tokyo sent another message which said:

As relations between Japan and the United States are most critical, make your "ships in harbor report" irregular, but at a rate of twice per week. Although you are already no doubt aware, please take extra care to maintain secrecy.¹³

Three days later the Japanese consulate transmitted information to Tokyo describing which ships were in each sub area. It also provided facts on destroyers entering the harbor, including the course and speed of the ships. On November 29th, Tokyo further requested that the consulate report even when there were no ship movements.¹⁴ Other more detailed messages were intercepted but not translated until after December 7th.

Although many who studied the messages after the war claimed that they provided direct evidence of Japanese intentions on Pearl Harbor, it may not have been so clear. There were also numerous messages asking for information concerning American ships in the Philippines, Panama, the Far East and in the United States.

Another series of dispatches that hinted at future conflict dealt with a deadline for diplomatic action. In the fall of 1941, Japanese and American diplomats attempted to reach an agreement between the two countries which would prevent war. The negotiations were unsuccessful. However, while they were still going on, there were a number of messages sent from Tokyo to Washington, using the Purple code, that urged the diplomats in Washington to move quickly. On November 5, the Japanese government told its ambassador in Washington that "it is absolutely necessary that all arrangements for the signing of this agreement are to be completed by the 25th of this month."¹⁵ Six days later the 25th was confirmed as a "definite deadline." The message also noted that America seemed "still not fully aware of the exceedingly criticalness of the situation here."¹⁶

Probably the most poignant message in this series was sent from Tokyo on November 22. It said:

There are reasons beyond your ability to guess why we wanted to settle Japanese-American relations by the 25th, but if within the next three or four days you can finish your conversations with the Americans, if the signing can be completed by the 29th ... we have decided to wait until that date. This time we mean it, that the deadline absolutely cannot be changed. After that things are automatically going to happen.¹⁷

After this message, the situation began to decline rapidly. On November 28th, Tokyo sent a message praising the "superhuman effort" of the ambassadors and calling the U. S. proposal "humiliating." Although Tokyo conceded that negotiations were to end in a few days, it asked the diplomats to keep up the appearance of negotiation.¹⁸ Two days later, Japan warned its embassy in Berlin that war could "break out between the Anglo-Saxon Nations and Japan ... quicker than anyone dreams."¹⁹ On December first and second, messages were sent to embassies in many countries to destroy the code machines and secret documents.²⁰

The most important intercepted dispatch was the fourteen part message sent from Tokyo to Washington on December 6th, 1941. As previously mentioned, negotiations were going on between both countries. In November, the Japanese had made a proposal. The Americans had made a counter proposal on November 26 that Japan had seen as an ultimatum. The fourteen part message was in response to that proposal. The ambassadors were to give this response to the Secretary of State. Translated in Washington on the sixth, the first thirteen parts certainly pointed to a deterioration in relations between the two countries. The communique began by defending the Japanese policies and interests in China. It outlined the steps taken to reach an accord with the United States proclaiming Japan's "attitude of fairness and moderation." Tokyo listed a series of charges against America including: "seeking for the extension of the war," wanting to "maintain ... its dominant position in China and the Far East" and making "a proposal totally ignoring Japanese claims, which is a source of profound regret to the Japanese Government."²¹ Roosevelt received the translation of the message from the American intelligence staff on December 6th. Roosevelt's confidant, Harry Hopkins, was

with the President at the time. According to the officer who delivered the message, after reading the translation, Roosevelt told Hopkins, "This means war."²² Thus, on eve of the attack, the U. S. had some evidence that war was about to break out.

The following morning the last part of the message was translated. It stated:

The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.²³

Following this came another message directing the ambassadors to deliver the reply to the Secretary of State at exactly 1:00 P.M. on the seventh of December, Washington time.

The next message thanked the ambassadors for their efforts and prayed for their health.²⁴

Thus, during the morning of December 7th, 1941, American leaders knew that Japan had decided to break diplomatic relations at a specific time: 1:00 P.M. of that day.

There were other pieces of information, as well as specific actions or lack of actions, that contributed to the controversy and they will be discussed later in the paper. However, the Magic information made the most significant contribution to the controversy, first because the messages could not be made public and later because they were made public and interpreted with the benefit of hindsight by those who doubted the honesty and motives of the administration.

CHAPTER I

POLITICS AND SECRETS

Although the Congressional Investigating Committee, which revealed the controversial Magic decrypts, did not meet until after the war, the controversy itself began in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor. One of the key factors contributing to the dissension during the war years was politics. Republicans and other opponents of President Roosevelt criticized his administration for the disaster and continued to search for information which would demonstrate his culpability. In Congress, Republicans persisted in attacking the explanations provided by the executive branch and charged it with not revealing all the facts. To some extent this was unfair to the administration, because in the interests of national security, it could not reveal that it had broken the Japanese code. However, it is difficult to determine where the interests of national security ended and the desire to conceal mistakes began. Despite the motive, the result was the same. Lack of information allowed critics of the administration to make serious allegations which went unanswered but generated considerable coverage in the press.

The initial reactions to the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor were ones of shock and outrage combined with calls for support of the war effort. Many of the news editorials on the day after the attack were jingoistic accounts praising the efforts of Roosevelt and calling for all efforts to meet the enemy. Some called for silencing the voice of disunity, and one promoted striking "with all our might to protect and preserve the American freedom that we hold dear."¹ Even some of the isolationists urged an attack on Japan. The America First Committee and labor leaders called for complete support for the war effort. House Republican leader, Joseph Martin, declared that party lines were out for the

rest of the war.² Although there was generally a flood of support for the President, the seeds of controversy could be detected in the early hours of the war. One source of criticism was the isolationist movement. Contrary to later years, American isolationism in 1941 was a strong political trend. A very significant portion of the population believed that American prosperity was contingent on America remaining isolated from the affairs and conflicts of the European and Asian nations. Led by individuals such as Senator Gerald Nye and Robert McCormick, the publisher of *The Chicago Tribune*, the isolationists were a very vocal political force. Many were members of the Republican party who not only resisted interventionism but also resented Roosevelt's domestic reforms. In the years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the isolationists had successfully hampered Roosevelt's intention to assist the British and resist the Germans. However, the Japanese attack effectively eroded the influence of the isolationists and thus exacerbated their suspicions of the event.

Senator Gerald Nye, one of the leading isolationists, received word of the attack minutes before he was to address an isolationist crowd in Pittsburgh. Remarking, "It sounds fishy to me", Nye went on with his anti-war speech. Later he made charges against both the President and the British for maneuvering the United States into the war.³ Montana representative Jeannette Rankin, the sole dissenter in the vote for the Declaration of War, was overheard muttering, "This might be a Roosevelt trick. How do we know Pearl Harbor has been bombed?" John Flynn and Charles Lindbergh refused to comment.⁴

Once the anger over the attack had begun to subside, most people were perplexed as to how it could have occurred. Many refused to believe that the Japanese were capable of succeeding at such a complicated endeavor. *The Chicago Tribune* spread a rumor that German pilots had flown the planes and that many of the planes had swastikas.⁵ Another popular belief was that the American officers had all been drunk the night before.⁶ Congress and the press also speculated on the attack. Some may have just wanted to

know why it happened, while others were probably intent on causing problems for the administration.⁷

One factor which facilitated speculation both during the war and in the decades since was the withholding of information by the government. This began in 1941 with the dearth of information released by the White House. Although Secretary of Navy, Frank Knox, had left for Hawaii on December 10th and returned to D. C. on the fourteenth, the government was not releasing many facts. The first reports said that the U. S. had lost only one battleship, three destroyers and a target ship, the *Utah*. Tokyo radio claimed that the damage was more severe. Although most Americans believed the Japanese claims to be mere propaganda, Japan was closer to the truth.⁸ Knox feared that if the American people knew the extent of the damage, "they would panic and the war would be over before we get into it."⁹ Other officials advised the President that it would be a mistake to publicize the details as that would let the Japanese know how badly the fleet had been hurt.¹⁰ Thus, even from the beginning the government felt it had to hide information from the public in the interests of national security. A poll taken in January, 1942 revealed that 61% of Americans thought that important information was being concealed. However, in a separate 1942 poll, taken after the details of the damage were revealed, 73% of those polled agreed with the navy for withholding the information.¹¹ Nevertheless, at the time the lack of detailed impelled people to question and to suspect the official account.

On December 17th, 1941 the President announced the members of a five man commission set up to investigate the attack. Justice Owen Roberts, who had been the special prosecutor in the Tea Pot Dome Scandal, was selected to lead the commission, which also included two generals and two admirals.¹² This group limited its investigations primarily to what had happened in Hawaii. It concluded that Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and General Walter C. Short, the ranking military officers in Hawaii, were guilty of dereliction of duty. The Commission said that Kimmel and Short were

notified in dispatches from Washington of the danger of the situation in the weeks prior to attack. Kimmel and Short were found guilty of failure to take the steps necessary to meet that situation. The top officials in Washington were held blameless.¹³

As far as the administration was concerned, the Roberts Commission should have ended the clamor over Pearl Harbor; instead it caused more disputes. The Republicans in Congress called for more investigations, asserting that the Roberts Commission was covering up for the administration and using Kimmel and Short as scapegoats. They blamed Washington for not giving sufficient warnings to Hawaii.¹⁴ Members of the press also called for further investigations. Owen Villard, writing in *Current History*, wanted the government to provide more information on unified commands, why the War Department did not react when General Short implemented an alert for sabotage as opposed to one for air attack and why the messages to Hawaii had been so vague.¹⁵ *The New York Times* blamed Washington for failing to ensure cooperation among the commands and criticized the American public for its prewar attitude.¹⁶

The administration was not completely satisfied with the report either. Writing in his diary, Secretary of War Henry Stimson criticized the report for not getting to the real truth of what happened. Stimson wrote that the primary mistake was in not learning the "lessons of the development of the airplane in respect to the defense of a navy and a naval base."¹⁷ Roosevelt added to the uproar by suggesting that Kimmel and Short would not be court-martialed. The Roberts Commission had singled those two out for responsibility, and Congress wanted blood. This raised doubts about whether or not the administration was telling the truth.¹⁸ Of course, the administration was not telling the whole truth. The Roberts Commission Report made no mention of Magic. In fact, the commission was denied access to Magic, given only some of the information derived from the codebreaking activities and not informed that the Pacific commanders had lacked much of the information that the leaders in Washington had held from them.¹⁹ The

administration hoped the issue would fade, realizing a court-martial would only reveal information about its codebreaking activities.

The debate did cool for a while in 1942 and 1943, although there were two publications that stirred criticism. The first of these was, *How War Came the American White Paper: From the Fall of France to Pearl Harbor* by Forest Davis and Ernest K. Lindley. Although the authors intended to support the administration and the official thesis on the war origins, they revealed certain information concerning the prewar actions of the administration which led to criticism. In particular the references to the strength of prewar Anglo- American ties as well as administration considerations of a possible Japanese attack. The authors wrote that the administration was perplexed as to how to get the United States into the war without a direct Japanese attack. Davis and Lindley intended to set up an argument that would condemn the isolationists for hampering American prewar planning. However, the comments about relations with Japan reinforced the isolationist attack on the administration's motives and actions.²⁰

Further fuel for the isolationist fire came in the State Department's own version of the actions taken prior to Pearl Harbor. *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931- 1941* was released to the public on January 2, 1943. Previously, the accepted notion was that the U. S. had been surprised by the attack, because at the time it was conducting negotiations aimed at maintaining peace. The State Department report revealed that as early as November 29 Secretary of State Hull thought that diplomacy had failed and the situation had become the responsibility of the army and navy. He had also warned of the possibility of a surprise attack. The critics wondered how the administration could have been surprised having been alert to the gravity of the situation.²¹

The influence of politics increased as the debate shifted back to Congress in the fall of 1943. Martin Melosi in *The Shadow of Pearl Harbor* attributed this at least partly to the election of 1942 in which the Republicans gained a number of seats in both the House and Senate. The context of the debate was the expiration of the Statute of Limitations for

prosecuting Kimmel and Short, which was to occur on December 7th, 1943. The administration did not want a trial for fear that it would interfere with the war effort. The two main problems with a trial were that it would require testimony from officials who were busy fighting the war and that it might reveal information about Magic.²² The military decided to waive the Statute of limitations and promised to proceed with the trial at the earliest appropriate time.²³

In early December, Congress decided to interfere. Some Congressmen called for the immediate trial of the Hawaiian commanders. Others openly questioned why the officers were not free to tell their story. Rather than accepting the administration's excuse, many critics believed that the administration was trying to hide something or protect someone. In the end, Congress passed a resolution extending the statute of limitations for another six months, to June 7, 1944.²⁴

By May of 1944, with the deadline for a trial looming, neither Kimmel nor Short had yet been brought to trial and the allegations resumed. Kimmel himself was asking for an open court-martial, which he believed would vindicate him. Arthur Krock, a *New York Times* columnist, exacerbated the situation in a May 31 article in which he raised a number of questions which he claimed the administration had never properly answered. He questioned why the fleet had been placed in Hawaii instead of California, why it was in the harbor during a crisis, why Washington had not ordered Short to implement the correct type of alert and why the military had not responded to the intelligence supplied by the State Department.²⁵

Congress decided to extend the statute of limitations for Pearl Harbor trials for another six months and directed the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Navy to conduct investigations into what happened. Partisan politics certainly influenced the debate over the resolution. Some Representatives called for war unity and accused the Republicans of trying to undermine the war effort. Hamilton Fish, a New York Republican, defended his party from these attacks and charged the administration with postponing the trial for fear

that it would uncover evidence pointing to the culpability of administration officials.²⁶ In the Senate, Homer Ferguson (Republican, Michigan) claimed that the facts had not all been available at the time of the Roberts Commission. Senator Hendrick Shipstead (Republican, Minnesota) stirred even more commotion by bringing up references to prewar communications and promises between Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.²⁷

The Election of 1944

The political influence on the Pearl Harbor controversy was best illustrated by the actions of both parties in relation to the Presidential election of 1944. The Republicans faced a difficult prospect in trying to defeat an incumbent in the middle of a war. There was no way to avoid the war in the campaign, since it was the overwhelming issue in America. The problem for the Republicans was that America was winning the war, and they had to be careful not to appear disloyal or unpatriotic in opposing Roosevelt's policies. Their aim was to convince the American public that they offered a better foreign policy plan as well as a better domestic policy. However, most Americans were satisfied with the administration's handling of the war.

The Republicans needed an issue that would make Roosevelt look weak on foreign policy; Pearl Harbor became that issue. The Republicans developed a strategy based on attacking the President for how he got the United States into the war, hoping to show that he had made major mistakes.²⁸ Republican Congressmen found ammunition for their attack in the summer of 1944 while serving on military and naval affairs committees where some of the Pearl Harbor secrets were revealed. Word leaked out that if the hidden facts were known, they would portray a very different view of Roosevelt's handling of foreign policy.²⁹

Although Pearl Harbor did become a campaign issue, ironically it was not the Republicans who originally raised it. Missouri Senator and Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee, Harry Truman, addressed the issue in an article he wrote for *Collier's* in the

summer of 1944. Truman blamed the Pearl Harbor disaster on the lack of cooperation between the army and navy and hinted that the fault lay specifically with the lack of cooperation between Kimmel and Short. Kimmel responded to Truman in a letter that was entered into the *Congressional Record* on August 21st, 1944. He wrote:

The real story of the Pearl Harbor attack and the events preceding it has never been publicly told...For more than two and a half years I have been anxious to have the American people know all the facts.³⁰

Truman attacked back, declaring that everything he wrote in his report was true and that a court-martial would prove it.³¹ Truman intended to defend the administration, but instead allowed the Republicans an opening to exploit the issue.

Congress was once again the arena for the dispute. Republican Ralph Church (Illinois) claimed that the full story would "shock the world," that Washington was guilty and the report of the Roberts Commission was a political document.³² On August 25th, Republican Representative Warren G. Magnuson (Washington) gave information about rumors he had heard were spreading on the west coast. According to the rumors, the Japanese had made a deal with the United States so that the latter would stop naval and aerial patrols in the Central Pacific in the fall of 1941. Magnuson blamed the State Department for accepting the Japanese proposal and "bottling up the fleet in Pearl Harbor." The State Department denied the rumor on the following day.³³

On August 30th, Clarence B. Kellard, a member of the Republican National Committee, blamed the disaster on Roosevelt. He asserted that the President's mistakes had led to a longer war and more deaths. He urged people to vote for Republican candidate, Thomas E. Dewey, to put foreign policy making authority into the hands of "a courageous President belonging to the party which alone has announced a coherent foreign policy and post-war plan."³⁴

House Republicans continued the attack, accusing Roosevelt of withholding the real story for political reasons. They claimed they were pressing the issue in order to allow the

public to accurately judge the ability of the President to maintain peace and prevent war. Representative Francis Case of South Dakota summed up the Republican motive for making the disaster a political issue. Case claimed that the public needed the real story, because if the President was re-elected, it would be on the understanding that only he could manage the war and make the peace.³⁵ The Republicans wanted the American people to see that he could not.

In the Senate, Republicans Hugh Scott (Pennsylvania) and Forest Harness (Indiana) brought new charges against the administration. They announced that the Australians had warned Washington seventy-two hours before the attack that a Japanese fleet was heading toward Hawaii. Republican Representative Church added to the attack by reading a letter from a Mr. Sydney Graves, a resident of Washington. Graves said he had overheard the Australian Foreign Minister, Sir Owen Dixon, remark at a party that his country had picked up the Japanese fleet heading toward America and had warned America. Sir Owen Dixon denied the claim.³⁶ House Majority leader, Democrat John McCormack of Massachusetts denied the Australian rumor and claimed that the Republicans were just trying to erode the public's confidence in the President. The Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin termed the rumors "pure invention."³⁷ Roosevelt tried to dismiss the claims, saying that anyone who had information should present it to the army and navy investigators. He also said, "Lots of stories of that sort would be heard morning, noon and night until November 7th (election day)."³⁸

The Republican candidate, New York Governor Thomas Dewey, also brought up the issue in September, 1944 but abruptly and somewhat mysteriously did not continue. The story behind his actions is a clear example of politics and secrecy becoming entangled. General George Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, heard that Dewey had learned about the breaking of the diplomatic code and was planning to reveal it during the campaign. Marshall conferred with Admiral Ernest J. King, the Chief of Naval Operations and decided to send a letter to Dewey. Marshall knew that the United States was still

gathering important information from the diplomatic messages and wanted to preserve that source from becoming a political casualty.³⁹

Marshall sent Brigadier General Carter W. Clarke to meet with Governor Dewey in Tulsa, Oklahoma on September 26. He delivered a letter from Marshall to Dewey that was marked "top secret." Dewey read the first two paragraphs which warned him of the secrecy involved in the rest of the letter. After questioning Clarke, he decided not to read further, refusing to "seal his lips on things he already knew about Pearl Harbor" or might find out later.⁴⁰ Dewey claimed he knew all about America's reading of certain codes before the war and stated that Roosevelt "ought to be impeached" for knowing what was happening before the attack and not preventing it. He gave the letter back to Clarke but offered to meet with him in Albany the following week.⁴¹

Marshall sent Clarke to Albany to meet with Dewey on the 28th with a new letter. Governor Dewey only agreed to read the letter if he could show it to his advisor, Mr. Elliott Bell, and keep the letter in his safe. He also claimed that he did not understand why it was so secret since "This code business is the worst kept secret in Washington."⁴² Dewey could not believe that the Japanese had not changed their codes. However, he did telephone Marshall, and Marshall agreed to allow Dewey to show the letter to Bell and keep it in his safe.

Both Dewey and Bell read the letter and asked Clarke a number of questions. According to Clarke, Dewey mentioned that he did not realize that the Japanese were still using the codes mentioned in the letter.⁴³ Marshall's letter reported how they were still obtaining information from the diplomatic code about enemy activities in both the Pacific and Europe. America's best information about German activities was coming from the intercepted messages sent by the Japanese ambassador in Berlin. Marshall also explained how revealing the codebreaking activities would threaten relations with America's allies who were very wary of sharing secrets with America.⁴⁴ Clarke testified that after he had

answered a number of questions, Dewey commented, "I suppose that may be the real reason for taking no action on the Pearl Harbor warnings they had -- they could not interpret the warnings."⁴⁵

The important point about this episode between Marshall and Dewey is that it defended the administration's secrecy in regards to Pearl Harbor. After discovering what the administration knew, Dewey still refrained from raising the issue. Of course, the governor probably also realized that revealing the secrets could backfire on him. At a time when the war was going well, he may have appeared unpatriotic or worse if the revelations proved detrimental to the war effort. Without exposing the information, he had to retreat from using the Pearl Harbor issue in the campaign.⁴⁶ After the election, *The New York Times* reported that Dewey had received special information during the campaign but did not reveal it due to its importance to the war effort.⁴⁷

The Army and Navy Investigations

The investigations which Congress had called for in June of 1944 continued their work into the fall, the Naval Court of Inquiry finishing its examinations on September 27 and the Army Pearl Harbor Board finishing on October 6. The results were not announced until December, which provoked some charges that damaging information was being kept secret until after the election.⁴⁸ Even in December, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal refused to release the full reports, claiming that publication would impede the war effort. However, they did announce that Kimmel and Short had been cleared of most of the accusations, and neither would have to face a court-martial.⁴⁹

Only after the war were the reports released, although without revealing any references to Magic. The two investigations contradicted the Roberts Commission. The Army Board blamed the Army Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall, for failing to fulfill his duty to keep Short fully aware of the severity of the situation. It also criticized Marshall for

not keeping Short informed of what precautions were necessary. Short had been taking actions to prevent sabotage instead of aerial attack, but Marshall had never commanded Short to do otherwise. The Naval Court of Inquiry cleared Admiral Kimmel of blame. Instead, it found that the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, was guilty of failure to transmit the vital information pertaining to the break with Japan.⁵⁰

Around the same time the results of two other investigations were being revealed. The Hewitt Inquiry and the Clausen Investigation reversed the blame back to the base commanders, citing Kimmel and Short for failure of judgement. The Hewitt Inquiry was established by Secretary Forrestal in 1945, because he felt that previous investigations had not uncovered everything. Admiral H. Kent Hewitt led this investigation which exonerated General Marshall, approving his efforts in the weeks prior to December 7 and finding Short guilty of not acting on the information received. The Hewitt Inquiry stressed the limitations on the intelligence information which the government received from decoded diplomatic dispatches of the enemy. The Clausen Investigation was conducted by Major Henry Clausen. On Stimson's orders, Clausen traveled around the world to further investigate the conclusions of the Army Pearl Harbor Board. Clausen took affidavits from 92 people and came to the same general conclusions as the Hewitt Inquiry had.⁵¹

The Congressional Investigation

By the fall of 1945, the American people did not know whom to blame for the debacle. A poll found that more people (17%) thought the government was responsible than accused Kimmel and Short (10%), but opinions varied. A majority (55%) of those polled thought that Congress should investigate the matter further.⁵² Congress formed the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack. Comprised of six Democrats and four Republicans, this Committee met from November 15, 1945 to

May 31, 1946. In addition to the findings of the previous investigations, the Joint Committee examined forty-three witnesses and took thousands of pages of testimony.⁵³

On November 12th, *Time* predicted the Congressional inquiry would be "shot through with politics -- on both sides."⁵⁴ The prediction proved correct. Republicans and Democrats badgered witnesses in the effort to uncover information which would either prove Roosevelt's guilt or exonerate him. After seven days of questioning General Marshall, William D. Mitchell, counsel for the Committee, announced that he and his assistants were quitting since the work was going to drag long past the deadline which Congress had set. *Time* reported that Senator Homer Ferguson, "still looking for evidence that Franklin Roosevelt had war-mongered, took up nine and a half hours of Marshall's time."⁵⁵ In the end the Committee split over its conclusions. Six Democrats as well as the Republican Representatives, Beartrand Gearhart and Frank B. Keefe, formed the Majority opinion while Republican Senators Owen Brewster and Homer Ferguson dissented and published separate conclusions.

The Majority concluded that Japan deserved most of the blame for the attack, condemning Japan's aggressive policy, duplicity and treacherous actions. It exonerated the diplomatic actions of the United States and found no justification in those actions for Japan to attack. The majority actually praised Roosevelt for making every effort to avert war. They blamed the Army and Navy for not being prepared, charging Kimmel and Short with making errors in judgement by not noting the significance of the information which they had received. The War Department was held accountable for its failure to correctly interpret the intelligence it had and take decisive action within time.⁵⁶

The critics of the administration remained highly skeptical of the Congressional investigation and the Majority Report of the Joint Committee. One critic, Admiral Robert Theobald claimed that the Democrats in Congress were part of the effort to cover up the involvement of President Roosevelt. He stated:

There can be no doubt that many members of Congress knew or strongly suspected that the full Pearl Harbor story would intimately involve the Nation's Commander-in-Chief, President Roosevelt. The Democratic majority on the Joint Committee recognized that this would have a strongly adverse effect upon their party's future fortunes. Consequently, their strategy was to bury the true Pearl Harbor story under a mass of evidence that would forever preserve its secret.⁵⁷

Theobald and others accused the Democrats of failing to press the key witnesses to clarify statements.

In opposition to the majority opinion, the Minority Report was very critical of the administration. This report stated the views of Senators Ferguson and Brewster who charged the President with knowing that war was imminent and waiting for the enemy to fire the first shot. Furthermore, they found that the President had intelligence information disclosing Japanese war intentions and felt that the President and his advisors should have foreseen that the target was Hawaii. They criticized the President for not ensuring that American commanders in Hawaii were properly warned of and supplied for an attack by Japan. They also denounced Roosevelt for not informing Congress and the American people of the dangers that the nation faced.⁵⁸

Due to political divisions, the Congressional Investigation did not provide the definitive answers to the questions surrounding Pearl Harbor. The Republicans were successful in illuminating certain administration failures and revealing more about Roosevelt's foreign policies. However, neither side obtained everything it wanted. The Republicans could not place all the blame on Roosevelt and his policies, but the Democrats could not thwart doubts about the actions of the administration. Although Senator Brewster threatened a second investigation if the Republicans gained control of Congress in 1946, this never materialized.⁵⁹

Congress had reached its conclusions; however, the controversy was not settled. The Joint Committee assured the continuation of the debate by publishing the hearings and its

findings. The multiple volumes of information included reports of the previous investigations, testimony of key witnesses and important documents. Also contained in this were the transcripts of the secret Japanese messages which the American government had intercepted and decoded prior to the attack. This information, covert for so long, had finally been revealed, but the information was not completely clear. Various interpretations of the evidence, particularly the Magic decrypts and testimony of key officials, spurred a long series of private inquiries which extended the controversy long after the war. Instead of laying to rest all the suspicions and doubt which had developed in the years of political attacks and unanswered questions, the information revealed by the Congressional investigation gave sustenance to these suspicions.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR

As the Pearl Harbor controversy moved from Congress to the historians, the nature of the investigation transformed from a politically motivated attempt to assess blame to a wider debate over America's foreign policy. The debate over the attack on Pearl Harbor continued, because people on both sides of the issue saw the political utility of convincing others that their interpretation was correct. Added to this were the details, made public during the Congressional investigation, which provided enough evidence for skeptical minds to suspect a conspiracy.

Senators Ferguson and Brewster criticized President Roosevelt for his failures; however, in the decade after the war the critics were adamant in their conviction that Roosevelt had not failed. Revisionists, such as Henry Elmer Barnes, Charles Beard, George Morgenstern, Percy Greaves and Charles Tansill as well as Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Robert Theobald, charged that Roosevelt understood the nature of the Japanese threat and knew that Japan would attack Pearl Harbor. Rather than accusing him of failure to take the proper steps necessary for adequate preparation, they claimed he deliberately withheld information from the base commanders and the American people in order to ensure that the Japanese did attack. According to the conspiracy theorists, Roosevelt had one main purpose; he wanted the United States to join in the war against the axis powers but only with the full support of the American people. They claimed that Roosevelt could only guarantee American support if the enemy successfully attacked the United States.

This theory gained popularity in the decade after the war due to the efforts of two groups: the revisionist historians and the defenders of Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who had been the Commander of the Pacific Fleet at the time of attack and received most of the initial blame. The first of these groups held a more extensive goal, that of reversing the trend toward interventionism in American foreign policy.

In his book, *Roosevelt, Munich to Pearl Harbor*, published in 1950, historian Basil Rauch claimed that the chief lesson Roosevelt learned from Pearl Harbor was "the lesson of internationalism."¹ This idea lay at the core of the imbroglio. America had turned to an interventionist, global foreign policy which included alliances, the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine and the Korean War. However, in the forties and fifties not everyone agreed with this policy and many were not willing to allow its continuation without protest. Barnes and Beard had been isolationists before the war and had maintained their views throughout the war. They and other revisionists challenged interventionism and what they deemed were the lies created by the "court historians" to justify it.

One great obstacle the revisionists faced was the increasingly popular belief that America's entry into the war had been for the best, an event that saved the world and made America great. The isolationist movement was far less significant in the post war period than it had been before the war. Post-war popular opinion dismissed the isolationist notion that America could have avoided the war and held that America lacked any choice other than war in 1941. Americans praised Roosevelt for his farsightedness that had prepared America for the war and the leadership which ensured a victory. It was popular to believe that the U.S. had preserved humanity and strengthened the United States. The revisionists called this "court history" and felt that the correct interpretation of the Pearl Harbor episode would be vital to the removal of this paradigm.

The revisionists, rather than accepting and praising America's involvement in the war, insisted that America could have remained isolated from the conflict. They emphasized

that neutrality would have resulted in a stronger America and a better world situation than America's intervention had caused. Barnes claimed that "the rise of Communism, military state capitalism, the police state, the impending doom of civilization" were all the results of U. S. "meddling abroad in situations which did not materially affect our security or prestige."² Weighing the results against the deaths, the wounded, the missing and the billions of dollars spent on the war, Barnes concluded that America would have been better off if it had "remained aloof."³ Supporting their belief that war could and should have been avoided, the revisionists attacked Roosevelt and his administration for taking actions that led America into the war. In their eyes Pearl Harbor was only the culmination of Roosevelt's covert efforts to involve the United States in foreign wars. Examining the volumes of information about Pearl Harbor, the revisionists saw an opportunity to reveal Roosevelt's duplicity and with that convince America that wars and interventionist policies were avoidable.

In the decade after the war, there were a number of writers who sought to rewrite the history of Pearl Harbor and the years before it. George Morgenstern who had contributed to many of the isolationist editorials of the *Chicago Tribune* authored *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*, which was published in 1947. He accused Roosevelt of working to precipitate a war with Japan as a means of entering the war against Germany.⁴ Charles Beard followed a year later with *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*. Beard compared the stated policies of the Roosevelt administration with what he considered to be the reality, that Roosevelt was actually pushing Japan into the war. Beard also detailed the attempts by the administration to cover its actions relating to Pearl Harbor. *Charles Tansill's Backdoor to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941*, published in 1952, expanded that attack on the former President's foreign agenda. He traced Roosevelt's interventionist efforts as well as what he considered missed opportunities reaching back into the early nineteen thirties. The following year, Henry

Elmer Barnes edited a collection of revisionist essays, entitled *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, which explored these same themes.⁵

These four writers, as well as William Neumann, Percy Greaves and William Henry Chamberlain, put forth the basic revisionist judgement of Franklin Roosevelt. They argued that national security had not been threatened by the Axis powers but that Roosevelt for political and personal ends wanted America involved in the war. According to them, Roosevelt moved the country toward war while telling a different story to the American people. They claimed that Roosevelt's frustration over failed attempts to incite Germany to attack motivated him to provoke Japan in to open a "backdoor" to war with Germany. Various publications, most notably the *Chicago Tribune*, *Human Events*, *Freeman* and *The National Review*, endeavored to publicize and support these views.⁶ Others, like the *American Mercury*, which called the attack part of a plot between the United States and Russia to carve up the world, stirred the controversy further.⁷ The revisionists provided challenges to the accepted view of American entry into the war. However, their conclusions concerning Pearl Harbor, that Roosevelt not only provoked the attack but knew it was coming and intended to keep the information hidden to ensure that the attack came, were highly controversial.

Two other writers who magnified the dispute by accusing the administration of having prior knowledge of the attack were Admirals Husband E. Kimmel and Robert A. Theobald. Although they challenged the accepted history of the attack, they differed from the revisionists by having a far narrower purpose. Instead of attacking the interventionist policies, they intended to exonerate Kimmel.

Theobald struck first in 1954 with *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack*. Theobald had commanded a flotilla of destroyers in December, 1941 and was in Hawaii during the attack. He built his case primarily on circumstantial evidence. Describing one failure after another by the military leaders, he argued that the only explanation for the withholding of such essential information was that

Roosevelt had ordered this. He claimed that the President "did not intend that any American action should cause them (the Japanese) to change their plans at the last minute."⁸

Kimmel wrote *Admiral Kimmel's Story* in 1955 in defense of his actions and in the effort to reveal information which had not been made directly available to the public. He argued that Washington had information prior to December 7 that identified an attack on Pearl Harbor and blamed Washington for not providing this information to him. Kimmel asserted that even if the data was provided just two hours before the attack, he could have at least been able reduce the damage by having all his planes and guns ready to meet the Japanese planes.⁹ The failure of the usually competent officers of the War and Navy Departments to properly command and inform the officers in Hawaii was inexplicable to Kimmel. He believed that the lack of action on the part of those officers "must have been in accordance with high political direction."¹⁰ Kimmel believed Roosevelt's involvement was the only explanation for the actions of Marshall and Stark.

Issues

Having established the motive behind those who challenged the official conclusions about the attack on Pearl Harbor, it is important to look at the key issues in their challenge and the official opinions about those issues. As this paper focuses on the Pearl Harbor incident, the debate over Roosevelt's foreign policy, particularly in relation to the European countries, will not be covered in detail. This paper examines the matters which directly pertain to the attack: whether or not Roosevelt wanted war with Japan, including the "ultimatum"; the information that the American government had prior to the attack; the war warnings; the actions of the key people in Washington on the sixth and seventh of December; as well as the "Winds Messages."

At the core of the revisionist argument was the information provided by Congress in the publication of *Pearl Harbor Attack*, the multiple volumes of testimony and exhibits put

together by the Joint Committee. The most important data in this was the collection of decrypted Japanese messages. The testimonies of those involved were also scrutinized by both sides in the debate. Although Roosevelt had died before having a chance to testify, there were numerous government officials and military officers who did speak to at least one of the investigations, if not to the Joint Committee itself. Key officials who testified were General George C. Marshall (Chief of Staff), Admiral Harold Stark (Chief of Naval Operations), Cordell Hull (Secretary of State) and Henry Stimson (Secretary of War). Other important testimony was given by War Department officials, Colonel Rufus Bratton (Chief of Far East Intelligence), Colonel Otis K. Sadtler and Colonel William Friedman, as well as Naval Department officials, Commander Laurance Safford (Chief of Security Intelligence Communications) and Lt. Commander Alwin Kramer (Chief Translator). It was their statements combined with the Magic reports that fueled the fire of the debate. Thus, in addressing each issue the opinions and statements of those involved as well as the revisionist interpretation will be explained.

Reasons for War

The first issue that must be addressed if one is to believe the accusations against the President is why he would have desired war with Japan. Had he not, then there would have been no reason to withhold information and allow the attack to occur. Although there was strong evidence showing the administration's desire to join in the war against Germany, there was more debate over whether or not he wanted to enter into war against Japan. The administration claimed that it had attempted to avoid war with Japan for fear of a two front war. Officials declared that the purpose of the negotiations with Japan had been to avert war. Their dilemma was that they neither wanted war nor would they appease Japanese demands and abandon China and possibly European colonies to Japanese aggression.

Cordell Hull wrote in his memoirs, published in 1948, that the administration had worked for peace in the Pacific. He claimed to have felt it "necessary if they were to make an adequate contribution to the defeat of Hitler...."¹¹ In November of 1941, Roosevelt, according to Henry Stimson's diary, was trying to stall for an additional six months in which to build forces to a level which would deter Japanese aggression and guarantee national security.¹² General Marshall testified that the administration had wanted to delay American involvement until preparations were complete and was hoping to avoid a two front war.¹³ At a secret press conference held before the war, Marshall told reporters, "The last thing the U.S. wants is a war with Japan which would divide our strength."¹⁴ Admiral Stark testified that Roosevelt was determined to stop Japanese aggression, that he even promised privately to resume trade if Japan ceased its aggression.¹⁵

Henry Stimson best communicated the administration's dilemma. He noted in his diary on November 27, 1941 that others were hoping to gain more time for preparation. The Secretary of War, however, did not want "time at the expense of humility on the part of the United States or of reopening the thing which would show a U. S. weakness."¹⁶ He claimed that America needed to prevent the Japanese from expanding southward as that would "encircle U. S. interests in the Philippines and get into vital supplies of rubber in Malaysia."¹⁷

The conspiracists, convinced that Roosevelt wanted war with Japan, refused to accept these statements. They stressed that Roosevelt, wanting to be in the war and unable to bait Hitler into attacking, had resorted to war with Japan in order to enter the conflict in Europe through the "back door." Morgenthern argued that Roosevelt would do anything to involve the United States in the war due to: the failure of his domestic policies, his desire to win a place in world history, his commitment to foreign interests, the need to tighten his political hold on the country and the pressure asserted by the Army and Navy leaders who saw the opportunity for increased glory and status.¹⁸

Admiral Theobald also accused Roosevelt of wanting war with Japan; however, he was less critical of the President's motives. Theobald argued that the President, in his role as the Commander-in-Chief, was looking at the larger picture of the global war. Roosevelt had to get America into the war before Hitler's power increased beyond America's ability to combat it. Theobald believed that Roosevelt was willing to sacrifice the lives of the men and women at Pearl Harbor as a strategic move. That sacrifice would unite the nation behind the war effort which would save lives in the long run.¹⁹

Admiral Kimmel claimed that Roosevelt had to get America into the war because of the secret commitments he had made to Great Britain. He argued that the President had promised Great Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to support the British if Japan invaded either Siam or the Dutch East Indies or attacked the British. Kimmel cited as evidence dispatches sent from London that assured British Air Marshall Brook Popham in Singapore that the U. S. would support Britain in the case of those actions listed above.²⁰ Kimmel stated that the Japanese, having knowledge of these commitments, concluded that if they were to attack the British or Dutch colonies, then an attack on U. S. forces was also necessary.²¹

Kimmel also directed attention to the comments of Henry Stimson on the necessity of having the Japanese fire the first shot. Kimmel took the following two quotes from Stimson's diary as evidence:

In spite of the risks involved, however, in letting the Japanese fire the first shot, we realized that in order to have the full support of the American people it was desirable to make sure that the Japanese be the ones to do this so that there should remain no doubt in any one's mind as to who were the aggressors.

and

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.²²

Other evidence that the revisionists presented to demonstrate Roosevelt's war aims were speeches by British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. On November 10, 1941 he announced that Great Britain would come to the aid of the United States if it was attacked by Japan. Theobald reasoned that Churchill would not have made this commitment "with the tremendous war burdens his country was then supporting, unless he had his *quid pro quo*."²³ Kimmel noted that in January of 1942 Churchill told Parliament that he had received assurances from Roosevelt at the Atlantic Conference that the United States would come into the war in the Far East even if they were not attacked.²⁴ Roosevelt had promised Churchill to go to war if Britain was attacked, but he had also promised the American people to stay out of foreign wars. In the case of Japan only attacking Great Britain, Roosevelt would have had to break one of these promises. Thus, the revisionists insisted that Roosevelt needed the Japanese to attack the United States if they attacked Great Britain.

Morgenstern argued that Roosevelt wanted an attack and accused him of moving the Pacific Fleet from its bases in California to Pearl Harbor to invite a Japanese attack. Roosevelt claimed that he moved the fleet in order to deter Japanese aggression. However, Admiral J. O. Richardson, Kimmel's predecessor as Commander of the Pacific Fleet, was emphatic in his opposition to the President's order. Richardson claimed that the fleet could not act as a deterrent, arguing that the military government of Japan would recognize the weakness of the fleet and its lack of readiness.²⁵ The United States could not defend the Pacific with the ships that it had nor could it deter Japanese aggression. However, as Admiral Theobald pointed out, the Pacific Fleet was a target that Japan wanted eliminated in case of war. He accused Roosevelt of keeping the fleet in Hawaii for the sole purpose of provoking Japan into an overt act against the United States.²⁶

The revisionists claimed that American diplomacy also provoked Japan to strike. On November 25th, 1941 Secretary Hull had proposed offering Japan a "modus vivendi," a

three month truce during which Japan would stop its aggression and the United States would open trade and resume oil shipments "in sufficient quantities for the available population."²⁷ Secretary Stimson did not think that the Japanese would accept such a drastic proposal, but he did think that the proposal safeguarded American interests by committing the Japanese to hold off on any aggressive actions. However, Roosevelt and Hull rejected the "modus vivendi" at the last minute and sent a more rigid proposal. According to Stimson, the President changed his mind upon hearing of Japanese troop movements into Indo-China, which Roosevelt saw as "evidence of bad faith on the part of the Japanese."²⁸

Hull explained that the decision to go with this other proposal was influenced by foreign countries. Churchill opposed the "modus vivendi" on the grounds that it left the Chinese in a bad position. Hull defended the decision by claiming that the American people would have opposed supplying Japan with oil, a resource the Asian nation needed to fulfill its war aims. Hull felt that the Japanese would never accept the new proposal but claimed he had to "leave no possibility for peace unexplored."²⁹

The revisionists argued that it was not a peace proposal at all but an ultimatum which forced Japan to go to war. Morgenthern pointed out that the "ultimatum" called for complete Japanese withdrawal from China and Indo-China, as well as binding them to peace in the Pacific and non-intervention in Europe. He charged that these proposals, rather than striving for compromise, went far beyond any previous offers in their demands for Japanese capitulation. Morgenthern looked at references to post-war comments by Shigenori Togo, the Japanese Foreign Minister at the time of the attack. Togo said, "The United States had served upon us what we viewed as an ultimatum containing demands far in excess of the strongest positions theretofore taken."³⁰ Morgenthern believed that Roosevelt understood how the Japanese would view the proposal but still sent it because he wanted war.

Henry Elmer Barnes placed these actions into the argument against interventionism. He asserted that the United States should have accepted the Japanese terms offered in November of 1941, because those terms safeguarded America's interests in the Far East. Barnes argued that the U. S. would have gained more from those terms than they received through four years of war, without the loss of lives and huge expenditures. Barnes portrayed Roosevelt as a war hawk and stated, "By November 25th, the United States had decided on war with no intention of reaching a diplomatic settlement."³¹

Information

Not only did the revisionists indicate that Roosevelt wanted war with Japan, but they argued that he knew it was coming. Thus, they continued the wartime debate over how much information the administration held before the attack and what the information meant. As explained in the introduction, the United States had intercepted a surfeit of messages alluding to an attack against it. The nation's civilian and military leaders knew that the Japanese had secretly set a deadline of the end of November for diplomatic resolution of the situation. The military had intercepted communication between Tokyo and the Japanese Consulate in Hawaii requesting frequent information about the location of Naval ships in Pearl Harbor. The U. S. government had the Japanese reply to the American ten point proposal, knew that the Japanese were going to break off negotiations and knew at what time the message was to be delivered.

In addition to this intelligence data, the administration had received warnings of a possible attack on Pearl Harbor as early as January, 1941. Admiral Richardson, who was the fleet commander in Hawaii at the time, sent a message to Admiral Stark, the Chief of Naval Operations. His message warned that he could not put torpedo nets into the harbor to protect the ships. Stark, alarmed, wrote back on January 25th that he feared that Japan might initiate a war with the United States via a surprise attack on the Fleet or

Base in Pearl Harbor. He also identified the two greatest dangers as being air bombing and air torpedo attacks.³²

A few days later the Peruvian Ambassador in Tokyo warned an American official that his intelligence sources had discovered a Japanese war plan which included a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. American Ambassador, Joseph Grew, sent the warning to Washington, where it was not taken very seriously.³³

In hindsight, the information pointed to an attack on Pearl Harbor. The revisionists argued that government had all this information signifying an attack, so they must have known about it but kept it secret due to their ulterior motives. Barnes focused particularly on the fourteen part reply message. He argued that the U. S. had the decoded message, knew what it meant, knew when it would be delivered, knew of Japan's tendency to initiate wars with a surprise attack and thus must have realized the attack was coming.³⁴ Morgenthern claimed that the administration knew that the attack would be on Pearl Harbor. He contended that if Japan was going to make a move, it could not afford to leave the American fleet untouched at Pearl Harbor. Morgenthern also pointed to the "bomb plot messages" as further evidence that the administration knew an attack was imminent.³⁵

Admiral Kimmel placed the "bomb plot messages" at the center of his charges against the administration. He pointed out that Pearl Harbor was the only harbor or base in American possession which was divided into sub areas: "In no other area was the Japanese government seeking information into whether two armed vessels were along the same wharf." Kimmel asserted that had he received this information, he would have taken different actions.³⁶ Both Theobald and Kimmel argued that these messages gave the administration definitive proof that the attack would come at Pearl Harbor and insisted that Kimmel should have been informed of them.

In contrast to revisionist methods, one needs to keep in mind that the President and his war council were not reading the past but attempting to predict the future moves of an

adversary. In defense of the administration, supporters pointed to the problems of interpreting mass amounts of information. Much of the data had to be decoded, translated, interpreted and disseminated to the proper authorities. There were mistakes and delays. The various official and private investigations had the advantage of knowing what they were looking for when conducting their searches. The controversy developed, because the investigations revealed that the administration did have a lot of information. However, the officials involved claimed that proper interpretation was not as easy as hindsight led others to believe.

The administration's principal defense was not that it was completely ignorant of the situation but that the information could be interpreted in various ways. In general they were not sure what to expect, and those who did make a prognosis figured that the war would start in the Far East. Roosevelt told the cabinet at a meeting on December 7, "We believed the Japanese would do something."³⁷ A few hours before the attack, Hull told other officials, "The Japs are planning some devilry." However, Hull, Stimson and Knox were wondering where the attack would fall.³⁸ Hull claimed that the military should not have been surprised since he had repeatedly warned of a surprise attack anywhere.³⁹

Marshall and Stark were questioned extensively by the Joint Committee concerning the information the United States had prior to the attack. Stark clearly stated that he had not had any direct or advance information that Japan was going to attack the United States.⁴⁰ He admitted that although a strike on Pearl Harbor was a possibility, he had doubted it would happen.⁴¹ He claimed that Japan had outwitted everyone by moving in more than one direction, the attention of the administration being focused on the Japanese movements into Southeast Asia. Marshall also claimed to have been duped by the southern advance. He explained the lack of concern over Pearl Harbor by saying that he had felt Pearl Harbor was prepared to meet an attack and figured that the Japanese would never undertake such a risky operation.⁴²

Neither Stark nor Marshall gave much credit to the "bomb plot messages." The former testified that he had no recollection of them, but probably would have considered the messages as basic examples of Japanese attention to detail, keeping track of the American fleet in case of war.⁴³ Marshall claimed that the messages were not unique to Pearl Harbor, that the Japanese had made inquiries about Naval vessels all over the Pacific. He stated that this "dispersed their attention."⁴⁴ Marshall's claims were supported by the evidence. The collection of intercepted messages put forth by the Joint Committee revealed numerous messages asking for information concerning American ships in the Philippines, Panama, the Far East and in the United States. Although these places had not been divided into sub areas as Pearl Harbor had been, Tokyo was nevertheless asking for and receiving information on ships, planes and defenses outside of Hawaii.⁴⁵ Looking at the number of documents, one can imagine how the American officials may have misinterpreted the information.

Another important officer who had access to the information and defended the administration was William Friedman. The man who broke the Purple code, in a pamphlet that was not declassified until 1981, explained why the administration failed to predict the attack despite the information they had. He said that the problem was that no one person "studied the whole story Magic was telling." No one was responsible for putting all the clues together to study the long range view of the situation.⁴⁶ He discussed the problems inherent in processing the information. Most importantly, he argued that there was nothing in Magic that explicitly pointed to an attack on Pearl Harbor, nor could there have been. He pointed out that Magic was the information gained from decoding the diplomatic code, and Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo who sent the diplomatic messages testified that he had not known about the plan to attack Hawaii. If Togo told the truth, than Magic did not reveal where Japan planned to strike.⁴⁷

War Messages

Even if the administration did not know positively where the attack would occur, certainly the President had enough intelligence data to realize that relations were quickly deteriorating to a state of war, but did he conspire to withhold this information? Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, senior members of the United States Government knew that the secret Japanese deadline for completion of negotiations had passed. They knew that the Japanese had instructed their embassies to destroy code machines as well as secret files and warned that "things would automatically begin to happen." Tension between the two countries increased as did Japan's interest in specific data on the ships and defenses in Pearl Harbor. Washington had all this information, but the commanders in Oahu did not. The questions over whether or not the commanders had sufficient information and why they had not been provided all of the information inspired much debate.

Stark and Stimson, who both sent warning messages to Hawaii in late November, claimed that the commanders were informed on what was happening and therefore should have been prepared for anything. Stark's message to Kimmel actually began with the words, "This message is to be considered a war warning." Stark claimed it was an unequivocal war warning. Although it directed attention to a possible attack on the Philippines and other locations in the Far East, Stark noted that it did not exclude Hawaii and actually notified Kimmel to "execute an appropriate defensive deployment."⁴⁸ Stark argued that Kimmel should have been prepared, because Kimmel himself had written to Stark earlier in 1941 about the possibility of surprise attack on Hawaii by Japan. In addition, Stark noted that he sent Kimmel a message on December 3 which informed him that the Japanese were ordering their embassies and consulates to destroy their codes and secret documents. Stark emphasized that Washington had received the diplomatic information, evaluated it and sent the conclusions and recommendations to Hawaii. He asserted that Kimmel had received enough information from Washington.⁴⁹

While Stark was informing Kimmel, Stimson sent a message to General Walter Short, the Commanding General in Hawaii and the man responsible for the defense of the Fleet when it was in harbor. Stimson had sent the message, because Marshall was out of Washington to observe maneuvers. Although the message did not precisely warn of an air attack on Pearl Harbor, Stimson thought the warning was sufficient. He testified that Short, having been warned, should have remained on alert "like a sentinel on duty."⁵⁰ The majority of the Joint Committee agreed with Stark and Stimson, blaming the Pearl Harbor commanders for failing to take the necessary steps to protect the fleet.⁵¹

The conspiracists disagreed with this assessment. They argued that the message was unclear and failed to convey the severity of the situation. Admiral Kimmel defended his own actions in response to this so called "war warning" by claiming that it was ambiguous. He argued that it warned of war in the Far East.⁵² He also noted that on the day he received the warning, he was directed to send fifty percent of his planes as well as his carriers on a mission away from the base. From these orders, Kimmel understood that Washington did not expect an attack on Pearl Harbor.⁵³ Senators Ferguson and Brewster agreed with Kimmel. They wrote in the *Minority Report*, "The War Department and the Navy Department did not instruct Short and Kimmel to put into effect an all-out war alert."⁵⁴

Admiral Theobald saw the message as clear evidence that information was being purposely withheld. He pointed out that the authorities in Washington knew that in the days preceding the attack the Hawaiian commanders were not taking actions commensurate with the situation; they were preparing for sabotage. Washington should have given further orders to the base commanders, but it did not. Theobald emphasized that the military leaders would not have made such a mistake. They would have sent a clear warning or taken steps to ensure the safety of Pearl Harbor, particularly officers as

competent as Harold Stark and George Marshall. He concluded that the only explanation for the negligent actions of the Chief of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations was that they were acting under orders from President Roosevelt.⁵⁵

As further evidence of Roosevelt's complicity, Theobald referred to a statement by Admiral Stark. The Chief of Naval Operations stated that his conscience was clear, "because all his official reactions in the days before Pearl Harbor had been governed by orders from higher authority." Theobald reminded the reader that the only higher authority was the President.⁵⁶

Events of December 6 and 7

Stark's preceding statement was only one of many controversial statements by both him and General Marshall. Their testimonies of what they were doing on the sixth and seventh of December precipitated more debate. The argument over the war messages was based on the interpretation of those messages and thus the administration was able to defend itself to some degree. However, the actions of key officials in Washington just prior to the attack were far more difficult to justify and provided further impetus to the revisionist attack. As previously mentioned, the government had translated the first thirteen parts of the Japanese reply on December 6. Although it was not a declaration of war, the language of the dispatch provided evidence that negotiations were finished. Roosevelt had declared, "This means war." On the morning of the seventh, while Hull waited for the Japanese to commit some "devilry," additional dispatches hinted that war would begin at one o'clock Washington time, early morning in Hawaii, which was supposed to be an ideal time for an air attack. Admiral Stark received the dispatches on December 7 at nine in the morning, which was 3:30 A.M. Hawaii time. He said, "My God! This means war. I must get word to Kimmel at once."⁵⁷ However, he did not act on these words. No message was sent in time to alert the commanders in Pearl Harbor.

The official explanation of what transpired did little to alleviate doubts. The revisionists attacked the actions of the civilian and military leaders, claiming they were either guilty of incompetence or of conspiring to allow the attack to occur. In support of these claims they addressed the following items which did not make sense:

1. Roosevelt, after declaring "This means war," did not meet with the leaders of the military nor even speak with Marshall until after the attack.
2. Neither Marshall nor Stark could remember what they were doing on the eve of the attack.
3. Captain Harold D. Krick, Stark's friend, told Congress he had been with Stark on the night of the sixth. He revealed that Stark had spoken to Roosevelt on the phone that night and then had told Krick that "conditions in the Pacific were serious and relations with Japan were in a critical state."⁵⁸ Still, Stark could not recall the subject of his conversation with Roosevelt.⁵⁹
4. Both Marshall and Stark claimed that they had not received the first 13 parts of the Japanese reply until the morning of the seventh, although it had come in on the afternoon of the sixth.
5. Marshall did not arrive at his office until almost 11:00 A.M., because he had been riding his horse that morning.
6. Stark decided to do nothing until Marshall arrived.
7. Neither Stark nor Marshall sent any warning to Oahu until almost noon. Marshall decided to send the message. Marshall could have used his scrambler phone to call directly. He could have used the naval communications system. Instead he sent the warning via Western Union and RCA radio, because heavy static had blacked out the army's radio circuits. The message did not get to General Short until more than seven hours after the attack began.⁶⁰
8. Colonel Rufus Bratton told the Army Pearl Harbor Board that he had given the first thirteen parts of the Japanese reply to Marshall's secretary on the sixth. However, he then told Congress that he must have been mistaken, because "honorable men" such as Marshall and others said they had not received them.⁶¹

During the various investigations, Stark and Marshall were repeatedly questioned about what had happened. Both defended themselves and provided a number of plausible explanations which the conspiracists omitted or belittle in their writings. Both officers created speculation by their memory lapses; however, Marshall reminded the Joint Committee that it had been four years from Pearl Harbor to his testimony and that he had spent those four years occupied with the war effort. Marshall also explained that his horseback ride was not a bizarre occurrence but part of his normal Sunday morning routine.⁶² Against charges that he had been in the office, not riding a horse, Marshall provided proof in the form of a memo from the secretary to the General Staff that he arrived around 11:00 A.M.⁶³

Both officers defended their actions regarding the transmission of warnings on the morning of the seventh. Stark stated that he hesitated to send an additional warning to Kimmel, because he was afraid that sending too many warnings would cause confusion.⁶⁴ He did not explain how this would have caused confusion. Marshall explained that he had chosen not to use the scrambler phone on his desk, because he had needed to alert all theatres. He claimed he had thought that the attack was more likely to come at the Philippines or the Panama Canal, and thus most likely would have called those places before Oahu. He asserted that he was trying to get information to divers places simultaneously and felt that phoning each command individually would take too much time, particularly due to the odd hour of the day in some of the places.⁶⁵

Colonel Edward F. French of the Army Signal Corps defended the use of Western Union and RCA. He noted that the army had used that route before and had found it both accurate as well as quick. He pointed out that the RCA transmitter was four times as powerful as the Army's. French also admitted that he never told Marshall what route the message would take.⁶⁶ According to these statements, Marshall had not purposely sent the message to Pearl Harbor by the most roundabout route but had tried to dispatch the message to a number of places as quickly as possible. Marshall told the Roberts'

Commission that army officials assured him that the message would arrive in Hawaii around 7:00 A.M. and thus expected the message to arrive on time.⁶⁷

This testimony did not convince the conspiracists. Examining all the evidence, they maintained their opinion that these strange actions pointed to a cover up. George Morgenstern summed up his suspicions regarding what happened in Washington prior to the attack:

What went on at the White House and among the officials of the government and of the Army and Navy high command that night is a mystery which still awaits solution ... It is about inconceivable that the witnesses still alive can have forgotten what happened, but General Marshall and Admiral Stark repeatedly testified under oath that they cannot remember."⁶⁸

Men who acted decisively at many times in their careers both before and after Pearl Harbor did not act decisively at such a crucial time and could not remember what they had been doing. The lack of a satisfactory explanation for these activities combined with the charges by the revisionists made this issue one of the strongest of the controversy and one that continued to cause dispute. Even when the Marshall Foundation released the Marshall papers in 1963, the *New York Times* questioned why Marshall could not remember what he was doing on the sixth, why he was so late getting to his office, and why he did not use the scrambler phone.⁶⁹

The Winds Messages

Another item which developed out of contradicting testimonies to become a focal point of the revisionist attack and remain at the center of the controversy for decades was the "Winds Message." This controversy began with Japanese fears of losing communication with their embassies and consulates as the situation deteriorated. On November 19, Tokyo instructed its embassy in Washington that if an emergency situation developed and international communications were cut, it would deliver a secret message in its daily short

wave newscast. The message would be hidden in the weather report. Separate codes were established for problems with America, Britain and Russia. *Higashi No Kazeame* meaning "East Wind Rain" was to signal that relations between Japan and the United States were in danger. If the message was heard, the embassy was to destroy all its codes and secret papers.⁷⁰

After this message, the United States was vigilant in listening for a "Winds Execute Message," the actual broadcast of the signal. However, after the war, military officers disagreed over whether or not the United States had ever received a "Winds Execute Message." Commander Laurance Safford, U.S.N., the Chief of Security Intelligence Communications, initiated the dispute. He testified that at 8:30 AM on December 4th, the radio receiving station at Cheltenham, Maryland received a "Winds Execute Message." According to Safford, Captain Alwin Kramer brought the message to him and had written the translation on it, "War with England, War with the United States, Peace with Russia." Safford assured the Joint Committee that he sent one copy to his superior, Rear Admiral Noyes, six or seven copies to the army and additional copies to other people on the Magic distribution list. He boldly stated, "It was a Winds Message. It meant war and we knew it meant war."⁷¹ Safford could not produce a copy of the message but claimed that there was a blank file in the office safe which he insisted represented the missing message.⁷²

Safford's testimony was controversial, because none of the people to whom he allegedly distributed the message corroborated his testimony. Captain Kramer was in charge of the OP-20-G subsection responsible for translating decrypted ciphers and recovery of Japanese codes and the man who Safford claimed gave him the message. Kramer denied that he had received a Winds Message pertaining to the United States before December but did testify to seeing a Winds Message that signified a break in diplomatic relations with Great Britain. He also discussed the missing or cancelled

message in the files of the messages. He reported that it was not unusual for there to be blanks in the files for various reasons and noted that there were similar cancelled numbers in the files for 1940.⁷³

In spite of Safford's statement that he had sent copies of the message to the Army, three army intelligence officers denied ever seeing it. Both Colonel Rufus S. Bratton, the Chief of Far East Intelligence, and Otis K. Sadtler, the Chief of Signals Intelligence, professed to seeing a message that meant a break between Japan and Great Britain, not the United States.⁷⁴ Bratton also declared that had the U. S. received a Winds Execute Message, it would not have been important, because it did not give any new information. They already knew that Japan was preparing for war; the Winds Message would not have specified the plan of attack.⁷⁵

William Friedman, who claimed to have been in the best position of anyone in Washington to see a Winds Execute Message, agreed with Bratton's analysis of its importance and argued against its existence.⁷⁶ At the Hewitt Inquiry, Friedman affirmed that the U. S. did not intercept such a message until late at night on the seventh, after the attack. This conformed with the stated Japanese purpose to use the code if their communications were disrupted.⁷⁷ In private notes written shortly after the Congressional hearings, Friedman admitted that Safford clearly thought that he had seen a Winds Execute, but Friedman postulated that Safford had seen a false message.⁷⁸

Despite the lack of proof and the numerous statements to the contrary, the revisionists insisted that Safford had told the truth. Percy Greaves charged the administration with attempting to conceal the affair, pointing out that certain individuals changed their statements. He criticized the Hewitt Inquiry for only calling witnesses who had previously testified to seeing the message and getting them to change their story under further questioning.⁷⁹ George Morgenstern charged the administration with denying the existence of the message, stealing the copies of it, and forcing or bribing those who had

seen it to remain silent or change their testimony. He labeled these actions among "the great scandals of Pearl Harbor."⁸⁰

The Majority Report of the Joint Committee ruled that there was too much evidence against such a message having been received.⁸¹ However, the revisionist attacks kept the issue alive in the minds of the public and caused them to doubt the official statements. The issue would remain and after three decades rise again with the revelation of further evidence. (See Chapter Four.)

Conclusion

In the decade following the Second World War, two groups challenged the official findings on the Pearl Harbor attack. Examining the information made available by the government, both the defenders of Admiral Husband Kimmel and the revisionists found support for their causes. Although they could not produce any direct proof that Roosevelt and his advisors had known that the Japanese would strike Pearl Harbor on the morning of December seventh, they did bring forth sufficient information to raise doubt about the claims of the administration. These writers argued that diplomatic and military actions hinted that Roosevelt wanted war with Japan. They displayed information that when pieced together properly suggested that the administration should have known the Japanese plans. They criticized the vague warnings to the commanders in Oahu. They also pointed out how the discrepancies and omissions in the testimonies of key officials alluded to the withholding of information and a coverup of misdeeds.

In order to prove their argument, Kimmel, Theobald and the revisionists relied on a conspiracy theory. Only a conspiracy by top officials could have succeeded in withholding the information, concealing the facts, and silencing those who knew the truth. By forging this thesis and demonstrating how the evidence supported it, the conspiracists created a stir and escalated the controversy.

Theobald and Kimmel hoped only to prove that the latter had been used as a scapegoat; the revisionists pursued a much larger agenda and ultimately failed. Although they challenged the actions of the Roosevelt administration, the revisionists did not reverse the course of American foreign policy nor alter American opinion about the war. More than three decades have passed since Barnes' *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* and in that time, America has consistently maintained a global approach to foreign affairs. Recent actions in Somalia, Iraq and Haiti have only emphasized this. Textbooks focus on the glory and importance of America's participation in World War Two. The hopes of the Pearl Harbor revisionists failed to materialize; yet, those writers did create doubts over Pearl Harbor. Even with the decline of the revisionist cause, the controversy continued.

CHAPTER III

REVISIONISM CHALLENGED, HINDERED AND REVISED

The revisionist view of Pearl Harbor peaked in the decade after the war. The revisionists based their arguments on the belief that Roosevelt had known of the attack and wanted it to happen. Examining the information collected by Congress, these writers capitalized on the exposure of secret information, various comments by officials, claims by the base commanders, hints of additional, unrevealed secrets and the memory lapses as well as the mistakes of key officials. They used this information and filled the void between it and their theories to construct arguments which, although based on circumstantial evidence, were outwardly convincing. These interpretations sustained the doubts which had developed amidst the unanswered charges and secrecy of the war years.

However, the revisionists did not provide the only conclusions concerning the attack on Pearl Harbor. Other writers disputed the revisionist attacks and aimed to defend the administration by offering alternative interpretations that were not based on missing evidence and conspiracies. At the same time, the revisionists encountered opposition in the media and difficulties in publishing their views. Realist and New Left historians fit Pearl Harbor into their own ideas. Even Henry Elmer Barnes revised his account by narrowing the scope of the original conspiracy theory. By the end of the sixties, the Revisionist Theory of Pearl Harbor had lost some of its greatest proponents, and the controversy over the attack continued to fade throughout the seventies.

Attacking the Revisionists

Many writers defended the administration, attempting to show that the government had done everything to keep peace while preparing for war and avoiding a policy of appeasement. They admitted that mistakes were made, but insisted that these were honest mistakes justified by the situation and the structural and personal limitations involved. They explicitly disputed the charges of conspiracy and challenged both the logic and the evidence behind those charges.

In 1948 Samuel Eliot Morison published one of the first defenses of the administration in the third volume of his *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*. Morison articulated one of the central ideas in the challenge to revisionism: that the administration had been vigilant and attentive to the information but had focused on the wrong place. He argued that the administration had discovered that the Japanese were preparing for war and did not attempt to conceal that information from the commanders in Oahu. To support this, he pointed out that the military leaders gave warnings to those commanders and claimed the warnings were clear. Morison argued that one fault of the American leaders was their belief that the attack would occur in the Far East, which resulted in them ignoring the warning signs related to Pearl Harbor.¹ Seth Richardson, the General Consul to the Joint Congressional Investigating Committee, concurred with this assessment. In an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*, he said that the reoccupation with Southeast Asia and a belief in Hawaii's invulnerability allowed the military to miss important signals.²

Some writers went beyond just defending the administration and attacked the revisionists directly. Morison criticized Charles Beard for being a relativist and for selecting only facts which fit into his frame of reference.³ Robert Ferrell called the revisionists "violent and angry men" and criticized *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* for lacking objectivity. Ferrell argued that the disaster was caused by military errors and was not a matter of "diplomatic planning."⁴ Hans Louis Trefouse blamed the Japanese for

choosing to go to war and edited a book containing the important documents pertaining to the controversy. He insisted that these documents did not divulge where the Japanese were planning to strike. Claiming that the fault lay in mistakes, oversights and lack of intelligence information, he accused the conspiracists of being "willing to believe the worst of men they had come to hate."⁵

Basil Rauch's *Roosevelt, From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, published in 1950, also attacked the revisionists and their arguments. In the beginning of the book he asserted that it was not difficult to find proof that refuted the "isolationist thesis."⁶ He also accused Charles Beard of attempting to destroy "the faith of America in the honesty of President Roosevelt."⁷ Claiming that Hull and Roosevelt negotiated in good faith, Rauch contested the revisionists by placing the blame on the Japanese. He argued that the Japanese were not only unwilling to compromise but were guilty of delivering an ultimatum. To Rauch, the secret deadline messages did more than reveal Japanese war intentions; they presented an ultimatum complete with demands, a specific deadline and the threat of repercussions if the demands were not met.⁸ He argued that the winds messages were unimportant and that the only bomb plot messages that discussed an aerial attack were not decoded until after the attack.⁹

Herbert Feis, in an article for the *Yale Review* in 1956, challenged the revisionist evaluation of pre-war American foreign policy. Rejecting the notion that the U.S. wanted war with Japan, he argued that Roosevelt had not made promises to the British and Dutch to enter the war and that American leaders sought to avoid dividing American forces. Feis also discussed a few ideas that the revisionists had not considered. He supported the embargo on Japan on the grounds that America could not trade war goods to the Japanese due to the latter's alliance with Germany, a potential American enemy.¹⁰ Feis countered the belief that Hull's ten point proposal was an ultimatum by pointing out that the Japanese reply never accused America of giving an ultimatum but of impeding Japanese goals.¹¹

Japanese Views

The anti-revisionist views involved opposing interpretations of the evidence, but information from Japan was more damaging to some of the revisionist claims. In testimony at the Tokyo Trials, in recovered documents, in interviews with historians or in their own works, former Japanese officials provided additional insight into what had happened. In 1946, the Japanese Navy released data on the planning and operation of the attack. It contradicted the idea that Roosevelt had long known when the attack would occur. According to the report, the Japanese cabinet did not decide on the date until the second of December, 1941.¹²

In 1951, Robert Ward provided Japanese evidence contrasting the charge that Roosevelt had lured the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor. Ward insisted that the Japanese had been planning to attack Pearl Harbor from as early as January of 1941, months before any "ultimatum" that may have provoked Japan. He asserted that it was the Japanese admiral, Isoroku Yamamoto, who had developed the plan over the course of the year and insisted that it be implemented.¹³ Ward explained how Japanese efforts to maintain secrecy was the major reason that America was surprised by the attack. These efforts included the Navy keeping the plans secret from the rest of the government, maintenance of strict radio silence by the attacking fleet and the transfer of the regular radio officers from this fleet to other ships in Japanese waters to further impede efforts to find the carriers.¹⁴ Thus, Ward's paper highlighted the successes of an intelligent, perfectly-executed Japanese plan as opposed to American failure or duplicity.

In 1956, Shigemori Togo, who had been the Japanese Foreign Minister in 1941, wrote an article for *U.S. News and World Report*. He blamed the Roosevelt administration for not trusting Japan, negotiating half-heartedly and pushing Japan into the war.¹⁵ However, he also confirmed the stealth involved in the planning, admitting that he had no prior knowledge of the plans to strike Hawaii. He claimed that the Japanese Navy kept the plans secret and only asked that negotiations be continued until the attack.¹⁶ These

statements put into doubt the charge that Togo's diplomatic communication, intercepted and decoded by the United States, revealed the plan to attack Hawaii.

The Media

Another element which thwarted revisionist efforts was the bias of the media and publication industry. Both gave more support to pro-Roosevelt books and articles than to those of the revisionists. As early as 1953, Barnes complained that the revisionist writers were the victims of a smear campaign and attempts to prevent them from publishing. Barnes stated that only a few small publishing companies would print the revisionist works. He insisted that important periodicals such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation* and *The National Review* ignored the revisionist theories or attacked them with "great ferocity and unfairness."¹⁷ Detailing the attacks against the revisionists, Barnes argued vehemently against many of the allegations.

Barnes was not being paranoid. The mainstream media did argue against the revisionists. *The New York Times* and *The New York Herald Tribune* employed prominent anti-revisionist writers such as Rauch, Samuel Flagg Bemis and Arthur Schlesinger to review revisionist works.¹⁸ The *Times* agreed with Morison's opinion that the administration did not know what the Japanese were planning and that the administration was focused on events in Indo-China.¹⁹

After the publication of Theobald's book, the *Times* questioned Marshall and Stark. The New York paper solicited responses to Theobald's charges that the Pacific Fleet was used as a decoy to make the Japanese attack and that the two military men had received orders to withhold information from Short and Kimmel. On April 18th, 1954 the *Times* reported that both had emphatically answered "no" to the queries.²⁰

Barnes recognized the declining influence of the revisionist version of Pearl Harbor and blamed it on the collaboration between the government and the historical profession. He

compared this to the control over society in George Orwell's 1984, claiming that "historical writing and interpretation are being brought into line with the needs and attitudes of a sick political regime."²¹ As evidence, he cited the vast number of historians who had entered into war propaganda work, Truman's move to establish a group of official historians and the growing number of historians openly supporting the cold war.²² He charged the government with attempts at thought control in relation to the Pearl Harbor dispute through their use of official historians, removal and destruction of documents, classification of information as top secret and forcing officials to alter their testimonies.²³ Barnes feared that the anti- revisionists would succeed in blacking out the revisionist arguments.

New Ideas

The sixties brought new ideas and new challenges to revisionism. In 1962, Roberta Wohlstetter published what *The New York Times* labeled the "distinct book" on Pearl Harbor.²⁴ *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* altered the debate and helped to quell the controversy, because it moved the focus away from whom to blame and disregarded the arguments over the direction of America's foreign policy. Using her background as an intelligence expert and concentrating on the lessons that could be learned from the failures, Wohlstetter argued that the disaster was caused by a series of mistakes and explained how these could affect America's future. According to her, the main reasons for these blunders were: the surfeit of irrelevant intelligence; the bias in Washington for information on the European Theater of Operations; the failure to act on certain warnings in many branches of the military including the intelligence division and the Hawaiian commands; the evidence available to support the wrong interpretations; the efforts of the Japanese to hide the relevant signals; the desire of the United States to keep secret what it knew and normal bureaucratic problems.

Many of Wohlstetter's conclusions contradicted those of the revisionists, particularly her assessment of the information available to the government prior to the war. She contested the belief that the "bomb plot messages" provided clear proof that Pearl Harbor was the designated target, claiming that the Army and Navy intelligence units misinterpreted the information. In support of this, she noted the testimony of several naval officers who stated at the Congressional Hearings that they had not determined absolutely why the information was being requested. One officer noted that Tokyo could have wanted to determine the speed at which the fleet could set to sea in case of actions elsewhere.²⁵ Wohlstetter said that there were similar requests relating to other ports in the United States and its territories. She conceded that the government could have noticed the increasing Japanese demands for information on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, but insisted that nobody had separated the useful information from the useless.²⁶

She explained the lack of attention to dispatches such as the "bomb plot messages" by:

the very human tendency to pay attention to the signals that support current expectations about enemy behavior. If one is listening to the signals of an attack against a highly improbable target, then it is very difficult for the signals to be heard.²⁷

Wohlstetter argued that the ambiguous war warnings were not evidence of a sinister plot. Her interpretation was that the ambiguity was typical. It reflected the hesitancy of intelligence officers to make definite predictions about events which could be reversed at the last minute. She added that a full alert was dangerous in that it could have led to a situation where the U.S. had to make an overt act against Japan.²⁸

Wohlstetter dulled the controversy by taking the matter away from the key administration officials and explaining it in terms of the limitations inherent in intelligence work. Two decades after Pearl Harbor, she stressed that it was not the result of a conspiracy but of the type of failures that could happen again. She said:

If the study of Pearl Harbor has anything to offer for the future, it is this: We have to accept the fact of uncertainty and learn to live with it. No magic, in code or otherwise, will provide certainty. Our plans must work without it.²⁹

Other neutral opinions appeared in the fifties and sixties. George Kennan took a realist approach to the situation. Denying the existence of a conspiracy, he stressed that America's failure was in neglecting to pursue all possibilities.³⁰ The New Left Historians Walter Lefebvre and William Appleman Williams criticized Roosevelt for pursuing the policy of the open door and international trade to solve domestic economic troubles. Although they remained neutral on the Pearl Harbor issue, they emphasized that America's insistence on the open door led to economic interventionism, which in turn led to conflicts with Japan over resources in the Far East.³¹

A New Revisionist Theory

Regardless of the new theories and the difficulties that revisionism faced, Barnes did not accept defeat in the sixties. In the light of new evidence, he revised the conspiracy theory, limiting the blame to Marshall and Roosevelt. In an article for *The National Review* in 1966, Barnes exonerated Frank Knox, the former Secretary of the Navy. He credited Knox with trying to send a warning message to Pearl Harbor on the sixth and blamed Marshall and Roosevelt for the message not getting to Hawaii.³²

Two years later, he wrote "Pearl Harbor after a Quarter of a Century" for the journal *Left and Right* in which he expanded on his idea of a limited conspiracy involving less people and beginning much later. He argued that Roosevelt did not learn of the Japanese intentions until December 4th, and worked with Marshall over the following three days to prevent word leaking to Kimmel and Short. He admitted that the failure of the October bomb plot messages to reach Admiral Kimmel was not Roosevelt's fault but that of Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the head of Naval War plans. Barnes excused Turner,

claiming that he was not guilty of conspiracy but of preoccupation with events in the Atlantic.³³ He also saw Admiral Stark as a minor member of the conspiracy who had been prevented against his will from informing Kimmel.³⁴

According to Barnes, Roosevelt was determined to get the United States into the war but needed a Japanese attack to assure public support for the war effort. On December 4, Roosevelt learned that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor but feared that if the Hawaiian commanders were warned, their actions might prevent the attack from occurring.³⁵ Barnes argued that Marshall was indebted to the President and thus followed Roosevelt's orders to keep the Pearl Harbor commanders uninformed. Marshall then informed Stark to do the same. This theory explained why Stark called Roosevelt on the morning of the seventh and then did not call Kimmel. It explained why Marshall disappeared for the afternoon of the sixth and morning of the seventh and did not arrive in time to send a warning that would arrive before the air strike.³⁶ Barnes claimed that Marshall had told Senator Barkley at the Congressional hearings that he could not reveal where he had been the night of December 6th, as it would have "got the Chief (Roosevelt) in trouble."³⁷

Barnes attested that there were new pieces of information which proved that by December 4th, Roosevelt knew about Japanese intentions to attack the United States. He claimed that British intelligence in the Far East had informed London that the Japanese were going to attack the United States; a Russian spy, Richard Sorge, had informed Stalin that Japan was going to attack Pearl Harbor; and an anonymous American Army Intelligence officer had gained knowledge of the Japanese plan and notified Washington.³⁸

Barnes also drew conclusions from General Henry H. Arnold's trip to the west coast in the days preceding Pearl Harbor. He argued that Arnold, the Chief of the Army Air Corps, would not have been allowed out of Washington for the official purpose of expediting a flight of bombers to the Philippines. Barnes claimed that Arnold, knowing

the attack was coming and worrying about his planes, flew to the West Coast to disperse planes concentrated in one spot to prevent sabotage.³⁹

Two decades after the first revisionist books on the war, Barnes' article demonstrated that the revisionists had not given up on their accusations against Roosevelt. He made a convincing argument that explained many of the questionable actions of the military leaders and claimed that Roosevelt had received evidence about the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, he still lacked direct proof to support his argument.

Into the Seventies

Barnes died in 1968, shortly after finishing his article for *Left and Right* and with his passing, the controversy over Pearl Harbor began to decline. The revisionist goals had failed. Rather than returning to a policy of isolationism, America was involved in another war in Asia. During the 1970's the media paid little attention to the dispute and rarely mentioned Pearl Harbor outside of anniversary pieces. Without further proof, the revisionists could not convince people that their interpretations were correct. Their allegations that had fueled the controversy during and immediately after the war were less convincing under closer review of the information. Opposing interpretations were also convincing and depended less on alleged information.

In the seventies historians had a new war and new controversies to study. The few books on the subject that were published treated the revisionist accusations as history. A 1973 book, *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese- American Relations, 1931-1941*, barely covered the controversy. It focused on analyzing the foreign policies of both countries rather than determining whether or not there was a conspiracy. George Waller's *Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, published in 1976 was a collection of official documents and articles which included the works of revisionists, administration officials, Roberta Wohlstetter and more recent scholars like Akira Iriye and George

MacGregor Burns. It was written not to advocate one side or the other, but to provide examples of the varying viewpoints pertaining to the attack on Pearl Harbor and American foreign policy in the years prior to it. By the seventies, the information uncovered by the official investigations had been interpreted and reinterpreted in a plethora of books, articles and pamphlets. However, without new information, without proof for the accusations, the controversy appeared to be fading into the past.

CHAPTER IV

NEW INFORMATION, SAME DISPUTE

Henry Elmer Barnes predicted in 1953 that it would take a political or economic disaster to force the public to change its views and accept revisionism.¹ Revisionist arguments and the entire Pearl Harbor controversy lost importance in the 1970's, but Watergate and the Vietnam War eroded public confidence in America's governing officials and in the policy of internationalism. The combination of America's attitude toward its government and the revelation of new information pertaining to the attack revived the controversy. The most important ingredient for this revival was the renewal of the belief that the government was concealing facts.

Information released under the Freedom of Information Act, new allegations from those involved, and alternative interpretations ignited the dispute. One interesting characteristic of the new debate was that it contained many of the same ingredients as the old. John Toland, James Rusbridger and Eric Nave presented new evidence supporting the existence of a conspiracy, although the latter two were suggesting new conspirators. Gordon Prange, Alvin Coox, Stanley Weintraub and others disputed the conspiracists with still more evidence. Katherine Dillon and Donald Goldstein provided additional information from Japanese sources. Admiral Edwin Layton and Captain Edward Beach continued the defense of Admiral Kimmel. Donald Clausen blamed Kimmel and defended Marshall. Others argued that attitudes not individuals were culpable. Thus, after laying dormant in the seventies, the Pearl Harbor Controversy charged back in the eighties and nineties. Accusations were made and challenged, multiple "Final Books" on Pearl Harbor

were written, but throughout the time nobody was able to produce the all convincing conclusion to the controversy.

New Accusations

John Toland's *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*, published in 1982, was the book that ignited anew the flames of controversy. Toland wrote the book to address questions he felt had never been answered. Using data released under the Freedom of Information Act and interviews with people who had been involved, he presented new evidence supporting the charge that Roosevelt had prior knowledge of the attack.² Specifically, he revived arguments over both the Winds Message and Marshall's actions in the last hours before the war. He also charged that the U.S. government had tracked the Japanese Fleet, the *Kido Butai* in its voyage across the Pacific. Some people accepted Toland's claims, but others challenged them, leading to further books and articles on the subject.

Toland reasoned that the official statements of the events in Washington on the sixth and seventh of December, 1941 were false. He reasoned that the President would have summoned his Army and Navy commanders to the White House after receiving the first thirteen parts of the reply. The official statements showed that Roosevelt did not do this, but Toland discovered a letter written by a close friend of Henry Knox. In this correspondence, Knox told the friend that "he, Stimson, Marshall, Stark and Harry Hopkins had spent most of the night of December 6th at the White House with the President." Toland revealed that Stimson's military aide, Major Harrison, claimed that he saw Marshall at Stimson's office at ten o'clock on the morning of the seventh, not on horseback.³ Toland also questioned Marshall's decision not to use the scrambler phone.

Stanley Weintraub disagreed with Toland. His 1991 work, *Long Day's Journey Into War*, was an hour by hour account of what was happening all over the world on December 7th, 1941. In it, Weintraub described Marshall's horseback ride on the morning of the

seventh and defended Marshall for getting to the office as quickly as possible once he was contacted.⁴ He also added support for Marshall's conviction that the scrambler phone was considered unsafe by recounting the comments of Rear Admiral Claude Block, the Commandant of the Hawaiian Naval District. Block spoke with Admiral Stark over the scrambler phone after the attack, but when Stark asked for damage estimates, Block was afraid the line was unsafe.⁵

Toland also revived the controversy over the Winds Message. Believing that the witnesses who changed their testimonies were part of a cover-up and recognizing Laurance Safford's conviction that the United States did intercept a Winds Execute Message, Toland felt the subject warranted further investigation. He found support for Safford in an interview with Chief Warrant Officer Ralph T. Briggs. In this interview, conducted in 1977, Briggs claimed that he was the person on duty when the winds message was received and that he was forbidden to testify in support of Captain Safford.⁶

The 1977 interview of Briggs by a naval historian supported Toland's claim. Briggs had been a naval intercept operator assigned to the Naval Communications Station in Cheltenham, Maryland. Briggs declared that on December 4th, 1941 he intercepted a message which said, "*Higashi No Kazeame.*" This translated to East Winds Rain, the code words for a break in relations with the United States. After receiving the message he sent the original and the copies to OP-20-G in Washington where it was disseminated.⁷ Briggs claimed that a number of officers were informed of the message including Captain Kramer, Admiral Noyes, Admiral Turner, Admiral Stark, Colonel Sadtler, Colonel Bratton and General Miles.⁸ All of these men testified to Congress that they had not seen a Winds Message.

Briggs himself was never called before Congress. He said that he met with Safford and agreed to testify at the Congressional hearings. However, his commander, Captain John

Harper, ordered him to neither testify nor contact Safford without his approval. Harper told Briggs that "too much has been revealed already" and that he could not explain the orders at that point in time.⁹ Briggs believed that someone with authority over Captain Harper applied pressure to prevent his testimony.¹⁰ Thus, thirty-six years after Safford's claims before Congress, another witness finally supported his testimony.

As with Safford, not everyone believed Briggs and Toland. Admiral Edwin T. Layton was skeptical of Brigg's statements. Layton had been the Pacific Fleet's intelligence officer in 1941. In 1985, Roger Pineau and John Costello completed Layton's book, *And I Was There*, in which he questioned Toland's conclusions. Briggs claimed to have recorded the dispatch on December 4, just as Safford had said. Layton pointed out that the duty log showed Briggs on duty on December 2, not December 4. Layton also argued that without the actual document, one could not prove the Winds Message was received. However, he did admit that there was substantial evidence of the existence of such a document. Layton also agreed with Toland that there was evidence that the British and the Dutch picked up such a signal; he believed as well that pressure was used to have some witnesses change their testimony.¹¹

Robert William Love, Jr., a professor of Naval History at the United States Naval Academy, attacked Toland's conclusions and argued against the existence of a conspiracy. He stressed the Japanese denial of sending a Winds Message prior to the attack. Furthermore, he supported earlier assertions that even if a Winds Message was transmitted, received and distributed to military officials, it still only meant a break in relations, not necessarily war.¹²

Even more controversial than Toland's information about the Winds Message was his assertion that the American government tracked the fleet that attacked Pearl Harbor, the *Kido Butai*. Toland recorded incidents in which people located the fleet and sent the information to Washington, but other writers disputed his information. At the center of

the dispute was Toland's "Seaman Z" who allegedly told Toland that he had picked up the radio signals of the Fleet as it crossed the Pacific and located it east of the International Date Line.¹³

After the identification of "Seaman Z," other writers challenged Toland's argument. *The New York Times* reported on December 4th, 1983 that "Seaman Z" had been identified as Robert D. Ogg and repeated Ogg's claim that the information was sent to the White House.¹⁴ The next spring Telford Taylor, former General Consul to the F.C.C. and Nuremburg prosecutor, wrote a critical piece about Toland for the *Times*. Taylor studied Ogg's statement to Retired Navy Commander I. G. Neuman in which Ogg admitted that he only spoke with Toland at the request of Admiral Kimmel's son. Ogg revealed he had no personal knowledge of the radio transmissions, only that his superior had told him that they came from the Japanese fleet. He did not know how the signals had been identified, thus refuting Toland's claim that he had identified them as carriers. For all Ogg knew, the signals could have come from fishing boats.¹⁵ Taylor also discredited Toland's claim that Ogg's commander, Captain Richard McCulloch, contacted Roosevelt personally with the information. Taylor checked with Roosevelt's private secretary who assured him that McCulloch could not have personally contacted the President without her knowledge and she could not remember the man.¹⁶

Alvin Coox, the Director of the Japanese Studies Institute at San Diego State University, criticized another piece of Toland's evidence. Toland studied the diary of the Dutch naval attache to Washington, Captain Johan E. Meijer Ranneft. According to Toland, the diary showed that Naval Intelligence detected two Japanese carriers heading toward Pearl Harbor. Coox argued that the diary only noted two carriers heading east from Japan. There was no word about an attack on Hawaii, but there was an assumption that the carriers were in position to observe American moves.¹⁷

Stanley Weintraub and Gordon Prange approached the issue from another direction. They argued that the United States could not possibly have detected radio emissions from

the invading force, because the Japanese did not break radio silence. Weintraub credited the Japanese with actually removing the transmitting tubes and locking the keys. He wrote that even the radios of the aircraft on board the ships were inoperable until just prior to the attack.¹⁸

Prange was the chief civilian historian attached to General MacArthur's headquarters and had access to Japanese documents and officials. After his death, Donald Goldstein and Katherine Dillon finished his book, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*. Based on the diaries of Japanese officers and reports of Japanese investigations, Prange argued that radio silence was maintained. The transmitting keys were actually sealed to prevent accidental transmissions. Prange contradicted Toland's charge that a radio officer in San Francisco picked up the signals. He quoted a former Japanese officer who pointed out the technical impossibility of picking up VHF radio signals in San Francisco, four thousand miles from their source.¹⁹

In 1993, Dillon and Goldstein published some of Prange's evidence in *Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans*. The commanders of a Japanese destroyer and a Japanese submarine wrote of the importance of secrecy and that the fleet did not break radio silence.²⁰ A Japanese study of the operation disclosed that the fuses had been taken out of the radios and the transmitting keys sealed.²¹ It also pointed out that when communication was broken by a submarine on the return trip, the Americans acted immediately.²²

Other information in *The Pearl Harbor Papers* provided a better understanding of the extent of Japanese efforts to maintain secrecy in the planning and execution of the attack. Minoru Genda, who drafted the operational plan of attack, related the difficulty in planning the operation when only a few high ranking naval officers knew the details of the plan.²³ He reported that the men involved could only guess at the target of the attack for which they were training and that most did not believe it would be Hawaii.²⁴

In the 1940's, Americans, believing in Japanese inferiority, were quick to assume that Japan could not possibly have achieved complete surprise. However, the information uncovered by Prange, Dillon and Goldstein added to the earlier statements of Togo and others, showed that the Japanese put tremendous effort into shrouding their plans and actions. Many of the works of the 1980's and 1990's emphasized the aspect of Japanese secrecy. In contrast to earlier writers, the majority of writers in recent decades believe that Roosevelt neither had information of the Japanese Fleet nor had learned of the attack through Magic. They moved away from the old revisionist theories.

A Different Conspiracy

James Rusbridger and Eric Nave agreed that the *Kido Butai* maintained radio silence and that decrypts of the diplomatic traffic gave no warning of the attack. They argued that the conspiracy theories involving the President were illogical and lacked proof. However, the author's did believe that the Japanese revealed their plans and that both the British including Winston Churchill and some members of the United States Navy knew it. In *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into World War II*, Rusbridger and Nave argued that both the British and the American navies had broken the Japanese Naval Code, JN-25, and thus decoded the final commands from Tokyo to the Japanese Fleet.

Eric Nave was an Australian cryptologist who broke the JN-25 code for the British. He claimed that the British were reading the messages from Tokyo to their ships from 1939 onward.²⁵ Thus, the British read Isoruku Yamamoto's message to the *Kido Butai* to depart on November 26th and arrive at the refueling point by December fourth. Nave said that he and the other British intelligence officers figured that Pearl Harbor was the only possible target for this action.²⁶ The authors said that if Churchill told Roosevelt about this message, it would explain the President's abandonment of the *Modus Vivendi* in late November. However, they argued that Churchill never told Roosevelt in order to keep

the President from warning Hawaii and thus ensuring American entry into the war.²⁷

Nave said that the British also intercepted the message from Yamamoto that gave the date of the attack.²⁸

Like previous conspiracy writers, Rusbridger and Nave could not produce proof of Churchill's actions but relied on circumstantial evidence. They had Nave's recollections that the British intercepted the messages and sent the information to Churchill. They also highlighted suspicious actions by the British government. It would not release the JN-25 decrypts and had refused to allow its intelligence officers to testify at the Congressional hearings.²⁹

Rusbridger and Nave also believed but could not prove that the United States Navy intercepted the same messages and decoded them. They pointed to four primary sources that revealed that some JN-25 messages were read between June, 1939 and Pearl Harbor. However, in their search for these messages, they were told by the U.S. Naval Security Group that the messages could not be located. The authors argued that the Navy had decoded Yamamoto's commands to the fleet but concealed the information after Pearl Harbor after realizing that they had failed to correctly interpret the information. Rusbridger and Nave blamed Admiral Richmond Turner for not getting the information to the President and for orchestrating the cover-up.³⁰

After the publication of *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor* in 1991, more information surfaced that gave support to the allegations in the book. In the preface of the second edition in 1992, Rusbridger and Nave noted that the wife of Commander Malcolm Burnett of the British Navy, insisted that her husband had personally advised Churchill that the Japanese force was heading toward Pearl Harbor.³¹ They also wrote that on December 8, 1991 the National Security Agency admitted for the first time that both British and American codebreakers had broken the JN-25 code prior to Pearl Harbor.³² *The New York Times* reported in August of 1991 that the British Ministry of Defense had tried to convince Nave not to cooperate with Rusbridger and put pressure on the publishers.³³

More Debate About Admiral Kimmel

One subject that Rusbridger and Nave did not cover was the responsibilities of the Hawaiian commanders, but others continued this aspect of the debate. As in the 1940's and 1950's, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel continued to be part of the controversy in the 1980's and 1990's. Admiral Layton for years buried his anger over what he felt was an injustice done to Admiral Kimmel. With the release of top secret documents from the National Archives, he decided to tell his side of the story. Exonerating Kimmel, Layton placed the blame on "internal feuding in the Naval Department that limited Washington's ability to evaluate and disseminate intelligence."³⁴ In particular, Layton blamed Admiral Richmond K. Turner for taking over the responsibility of disseminating intelligence and then not getting the information to Kimmel. Vice Admiral David C. Richardson supported this assessment, denouncing the turf battle between the Naval Intelligence, Naval Communications and Naval War Plans Divisions over the responsibility to distribute intelligence.³⁵

Henry Clausen's book, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgement*, charged Turner with culpability but also attributed liability to Kimmel and Layton as well. Clausen conducted the Clausen Investigation during World War II. Henry Stimson assigned him to further investigate the conclusions of the Army Pearl Harbor Board, and Clausen traveled around the world interviewing 92 people.³⁶ His 1992 book put the chief blame on Kimmel and General Short for failing to provide each other with information and to prepare Pearl Harbor for attack.³⁷ He derided Layton for not informing the Army of the war warning. He also charged Turner with causing problems by trying to take over the Navy Department and insisting on interpreting the intelligence.³⁸

The main point of *Final Judgement* was not assessing individual blame but to look at what Clausen considered the real problem. He insisted that the reason for Pearl Harbor was that the system failed. Describing the problems of split commands, lack of integration of the intelligence services, lack of understanding of the importance of intelligence and

lack of communication, he argued that the main lesson of Pearl Harbor was that the system needed to be fixed, so that individuals would not fail as easily.³⁹

Edward L. Beach, in *Scapegoats: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor*, directed the blame back to the administration. Beach labeled himself a "second-class revisionist" in the book, meaning that he believed that Roosevelt wanted to get the United States into the war, but did not believe that Roosevelt had knowledge of the Japanese intentions to bomb Pearl Harbor. Beach claimed, without proof, that Roosevelt met with his chief advisors on the eve of the attack. He asserted that Roosevelt and his advisors guessed that there would be an attack, but underestimated the capability of the Japanese and did not realize that the attack would come at Pearl Harbor. Beach blamed Roosevelt for failing to correctly interpret the information and then using Kimmel and Short as scapegoats to cover up the mistakes made in Washington. Beach did not claim that there was a major conspiracy, only that mistakes were made and the wrong people were blamed for those mistakes.

Overconfidence

Many other writers of the past decade focused on broader explanations for the Pearl Harbor disaster. Like Beach, many argued that overconfidence and mistakes caused the debacle. Major Claude Sasso wrote in 1983 that the overconfidence of U.S. military and civilian authorities in both Pearl Harbor and Washington led them to underestimate the Japanese capabilities. This in turn allowed them to miss the warnings they had.⁴⁰

Thurston Clark's 1991 book *Pearl Harbor Ghosts: A Journey to Pearl Harbor Then and Now* expanded on this issue. He cited reports in newspapers that called the U.S. Navy the greatest in the world, speeches in Congress portraying America's superiority over Japan and jingoist accounts of Hawaii's impregnability. According to Clark, the prevailing attitude at the time was that a Japanese attack on Hawaii was a big joke.⁴¹ Weintraub

reported that Kimmel told a newspaper reporter on December 6, that the Japanese would not risk a war with the United States.⁴²

Another piece in *Pearl Harbor Papers* revealed that the Japanese may have suffered from the same problem. This was essay written after the war by Musutaka Chihaya in which he criticized the plan to attack Hawaii. He blamed the Japanese for overestimating their abilities as fighters and convincing themselves that Americans were weak and lazy.⁴³ He criticized the Japanese Army for not studying the American Army and denounced the Japanese Navy for imagining it could win the war in one decisive victory.⁴⁴ He argued that if the Japanese had not held this false confidence and had actually studied America, they would have avoided war.

Seth Feldman combined both the American and Japanese faults in a 1992 article. Feldman accused each side of being racially motivated. He argued that because of racial stereotypes, the two adversaries did not understand each other. The belief of both sides in their own superiority hampered negotiations. Feldman extended his point to the nineties, arguing that both sides continued to misread each other, which allowed for the danger of a misunderstanding.⁴⁵

Conclusion

As happened in earlier decades the controversy flourished in the 1980's and 1990's, because new information evoked support, challenges and doubts. Toland, Rusbridger and Nave took the same basic approach as previous revisionists did. They combined witnesses, questions about missing evidence and titillating explanations of what might have occurred to create a believable argument. Other writers challenged much of Toland's argument and successfully attacked his evidence but only by studying it extensively and bringing forth more information. Rusbridger and Nave's assertions were more difficult to discredit. They made a convincing claim that the evidence to support their argument

was either destroyed by the British and American governments or kept classified. They created doubt about the official statements. Rusbridger and Nave could not prove their theory without the information; yet, as long as people believe that either the evidence may exist or may have existed, their theory will not be totally discredited.

One interesting facet of the controversy in recent years was the absence of political motives. Historians, political scientists, former intelligence officers, and others debated the topic. Congress had other scandals to investigate. Even those who supported conspiracy theories did so without the larger implications of an attack on interventionism. The politics were gone. The fight continued because the history had not been resolved.

The most important effect of the renewal of the Pearl Harbor debate over the past twelve years was that it allowed for more information and a better understanding of what happened. The accusations and counter charges extended the interest in the event. This provoked the participants to come forth and tell their stories and the researchers to delve deeper and write more books and articles. Although writers in the eighties and nineties did not produce a work that closed the debate once and for all, they did provide a better understanding of what happened before and during the attack on Pearl Harbor. From the American side to the Japanese side, from Washington to Hawaii, from the covert to the overt, recent works revealed that there was still more to tell.

CONCLUSION

Without the doubters; the revisionists, the isolationists, the Congressional Republicans, those pushing agendas and those seeking the truth; without the challenges to the official record of what happened at Pearl Harbor, there would not have been a controversy. These people made the charges that forced further investigation either in defense of the administration or in the attempt to prove various revisionist arguments. In the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the American people rallied behind the President. Those who did not believe or support the President were seen as disloyal; yet, some continued to doubt and to search. The critics pursued the story, pushing for more information about what had happened. Their actions resulted in various official investigations, the release of more data and reams of sometimes questionable testimony. The doubts were supposed to end with the conclusions of the Congressional Investigation, but post-war revisionists and more recent writers have maintained their questions and the pressure to "uncover" the "true" story. They have succeeded not in answering the questions but in fostering a controversy that may never be settled. Although there has never been closure to the debate, the controversy has resulted in a plethora of information about which opinions can be made.

The heart of the revisionist argument was that Roosevelt wanted war with Japan. In the least, the revisionists showed that Roosevelt did not do everything within his power to avoid war with Japan. Members of the administration explained at various times that the administration had wanted to refrain from conflict with Japan and the possibility of a two front war. However, it seems likely that the desire to get into the war with Germany outweighed this. Roosevelt had been helping the British by trading destroyers for bases,

lend-lease and support for the convoys, but the British needed more assistance.

Roosevelt, hampered by his campaign promise to keep America out of "foreign wars," could not initiate the war with Germany but wanted to get into it.

Morgenstern claimed that Roosevelt wanted to get America into the war for egocentric motives: a place in history and control over the nation. Although this criticism was unfounded, Roosevelt's actions showed that he did want war with Germany. In the fall of 1941, the Navy was pushing a confrontation with the Germans, but Hitler refused to take the bait. Another way to become involved was through a war with Japan. In the summer and fall of 1941, the option of war with Japan, Germany's ally, was certainly becoming more likely. The United States cut off oil to Japan and demanded a cessation of Japanese aggression. The pressure mounted into late November of 1941. Due to British secrecy, it is still unknown what Churchill told Roosevelt in his November 25th note. Perhaps he put more pressure on Roosevelt to enter the war. The following day Roosevelt rejected the "modus vivendi" and had Cordell Hull present the plan that the Japanese would later call an ultimatum. Many have argued that it was not an ultimatum, but Roosevelt's diplomacy called for Japan to make concessions it was unlikely to make. Roosevelt did not start the war with Japan; however, his insistence on the hard line in the face of Japanese goals provided little hope for a diplomatic resolution to the problem. By late November, 1941 the administration certainly knew that war with Japan was imminent, and it waited for Japan to make a move.

Roosevelt had to know that war was coming. However, the real controversy is whether or not he knew the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor and allowed it to happen or possibly manipulated events to make sure that it happened. Critics claimed that Roosevelt set up the fleet as a target, knew the Japanese were going to attack it and knew the location of the attacking force. They claimed that he kept the Hawaiian commanders from preparing for the attack in order to achieve the devastation necessary to shock the nation into the war. Despite tremendous efforts, these allegations were never proven.

It was ridiculous to assume that Roosevelt engineered the attack. The Japanese planned the operation for close to a year. Roosevelt wanted war and refused to appease Japanese aggression, but he was incapable of manipulating Japanese plans. He also did not know the details of these plans.

On the morning of December 7th, Roosevelt and his advisors did suspect that the Japanese were, in the words of Henry Stimson, "up to some devilry." They knew of Japan's negative and caustic reply to their proposal and when its reply would be delivered to the American government. They also knew the Japanese were burning documents at their embassy in Washington and Japan's history of surprise attacks. With the "bomb plot messages" American intelligence even had ample information to suspect an attack on Pearl Harbor. However, as Roberta Wohlstetter argued, ample intelligence did not mean that the data had been properly analyzed and disseminated. The administration misread the dangers, expecting the attacks on the Philippines and Indo-China. In simple terms, the government was caught looking in the wrong direction.

Roosevelt's critics could not prove the accusations to the contrary. Their claims that Magic pinpointed the Japanese plans were wrong, regardless of what they tried to read into the intercepted messages with hindsight. The Japanese foreign minister, the man sending the messages, claimed not to have known, and it would be ridiculous to suggest that he was part of the conspiracy. John Toland made the best argument that the United States tracked the *Kido Butai*, but he could not prove it. Japanese documentation insisted that the fleet maintained its secrecy. Nobody has ever produced the supposedly incriminating JN-25 messages or the Winds Execute. In any case, the latter would have been irrelevant as American intelligence already knew, through the Japanese reply, that Japan had decided to break off diplomatic relations. Roosevelt did not know that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor.

Saying that Roosevelt did not know of the attack did not absolve the administration of any blame in the debacle. The administration made mistakes. They failed to communicate

effectively. The President did not tell the American people or the Congress exactly what the situation was. This may have been good for getting involved in the war with Germany, but it was not honest. If honesty is what the American people expected of their leaders, they were let down.

The administration was guilty of other failures of communication. The strangely worded war warnings of late November and the neglect to send additional messages based on new information did not prove that the administration purposefully set up the disaster at Pearl Harbor. However, they are the administration's fault. It failed to see to its obligations. The war warnings sent to Hawaii in late November were inadequate. Regardless of their intent, the warnings were ambiguous enough to confuse two able commanders. Some of the blame should fall on General Short and Admiral Kimmel who could have spoken more to each other and left less to assumption. At the same time, those who sent the messages should have acknowledged that as additional data accumulated and the situation grew worse, they needed to keep the field commanders abreast of the situation.

At least the administration should have sent another warning on the morning of the seventh. Admiral Stark had hours to do so. He was at fault for not acting immediately and alerting the Hawaiian commanders. By not being in his office on the morning of December 7th, at a time when intelligence demonstrated that something critical was about to happen, by not using the scrambler phone to call General Short, Marshall failed to get the warning to Hawaii on time. Whether an additional warning, received a few hours before the attack would have made a significant difference in the outcome was irrelevant; leaders in Washington could have done more to prepare the defenses but did not.

In not foreseeing the attack and effectively communicating the situation to the commanders in Hawaii, the administration failed. However, this was a failure of the administration not the actions of a conspiracy. Blame or more accurately credit for the success of the attack is due to the brilliance and daring of the Japanese military as well

as its ability to maintain secrecy and carry out the operation. On the other hand, too much emphasis on secrecy hurt the United States. The military was so concerned with maintaining the secrecy of Magic that it did not effectively utilize the information which Magic provided. The administration also underestimated Japanese capabilities. The disaster at Pearl Harbor occurred because of American mistakes and Japanese success. The administration did not initiate the disaster but it did fail to own up to its mistakes which did foster the ensuing controversy.

It is the controversy itself which is the main point of this work. None of the preceding conclusions offer any startling new evidence that will settle the controversy once and for all, but that is not the point. The emphasis of this paper is that, after reading through the reports of the official investigations, the testimonies and private papers of those involved and numerous works on the subject, one cannot find any proof of a conspiracy, yet the controversy still exists. After all the investigations and findings, the issue will not go away.

The controversy developed and grew because of a failure on the part of the administration to admit its mistakes; a need to protect precious sources of intelligence; politics; and the public's desire to know the truth. In not admitting its mistakes, the administration struggled with a common dilemma involved with secret information. Although rumors surfaced about the administration's prior knowledge, to preserve its secrets, the administration had to deny, had to lie. They could not quell the rumors with the truth, so the rumors grew, and the administration appeared devious. When the truth of the denials was revealed after the war, it only fed the fires of the administration's critics. Revisionists insisted there was more to be revealed and convinced many people that they were right.

This would continue to have an effect on the actions of future presidents and the public's views of their government in the post-war period. Presidents did not always tell

Congress or the public everything. They hid behind the veil of national security secrets, sometimes abusing this veil. In the case of Pearl Harbor, the government had a legitimate reason to withhold certain information, particularly information pertaining to its code-breaking activities. However, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. pointed out in *The Imperial Presidency*, later presidents manipulated the secrecy system to prevent Congress from checking its powers in foreign affairs. Those presidents learned to use the Pearl Harbor example to further their agendas, but this only eroded the people's trust in the American government.¹

Of course, politics had a large impact on the controversy. It was the Republicans in Congress, looking for a weakness to exploit, who kept the issue alive. In speeches Congressional Republicans speculated about American code-breaking activities. Republicans called for additional investigations and put hard questions to administration officials who testified. It was Owen Brewster and Homer Ferguson, Congressional Republicans, who clouded the report of the Joint Congressional Committee by issuing their own minority views. Other Republicans called for a second Congressional Investigation. Their motives were clear. They hoped to reveal information which would damage the popularity of Roosevelt and the Democrats and allow them to gain control over the government.

In addition to and part of the Republican-Democrat struggle, there was the struggle over American foreign policy. Many of the post-war revisionists hoped to utilize the controversy as a forum to rebuke Roosevelt's internationalist dreams and push the nation's course back to one of isolationism. Charles Beard, Henry Elmer Barnes and others formed many of the most convincing arguments about Roosevelt's "Pearl Harbor Conspiracy" in the efforts to change American foreign policy. They did not achieve their goals, but they did stimulate the controversy over Pearl Harbor.

In the post-watergate years, it was not politics that fueled the works on Pearl Harbor but a determination to learn the truth. If anything, distrust in the government was higher

in recent years than ever before. This distrust in government, not the isolationist debate, kept the controversy alive until more information was released. New information in recent years gave rise to more suspicions and desire to know the truth. Ralph Briggs corroborated Safford's testimony three decades after the Congressional hearings. Robert Ogg claimed that the United States had tracked the *Kido Butai*. Eric Nave said the British intercepted Yamamoto's orders to the fleet. This and other information nourished the dispute.

The controversy began and continues, because people believed and still believe that information that would prove the conspiracy theories has been withheld. Unless there is information proving the conspiracy in the millions of secret documents recently released by the Clinton administration, the controversy will continue. The lesson is clear. When the American government withholds information from the public and attempts to hide its failures, it will always remain suspect and open to charges of wrongful actions. Its name may never be cleared.

APPENDIX I

Key People Involved in the Pearl Harbor Controversy

The President and his Close Advisors

Franklin Roosevelt	President of the United States
Cordell Hull	Secretary of State
Henry Stimson	Secretary of War
Frank Knox	Secretary of the Navy
Harry Hopkins	President's advisor and confidant

Naval Department in Washington

Admiral Harold Stark	Chief of Naval Operations
Rear Admiral Richmond Turner	Chief of Naval War Plans Division
Rear Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson	Chief of Naval Intelligence Div.
Commander Laurance Safford	Chief of Security Intelligence Communications (OP-20-G)
Lt. Commander Alwin Kramer	Chief Translator, OP-20-G

War Department in Washington

General George Marshall	Chief of Staff
Brig. General Leonard Gerow	Chief, War Plans Division
Brig. General Sherman Miles	Chief of Intelligence
Colonel Rufus S. Bratton	Chief, Far East Intelligence
Colonel Otis K. Sadtler	Chief, Signals Intelligence
William Friedman	Chief Cryptographer
Ralph T. Briggs	Senior Radio Operator, Cheltenham Intercept Station

In Hawaii

Lt. General Walter Short	Commanding General
Admiral Husband E. Kimmel	Commander in Chief United States Pacific Fleet
Lt. Commander Edwin Layton	Fleet Intelligence Officer
Admiral J. O. Richardson	Kimmel's Predecessor as Commander in Chief of Pacific Fleet
Rear Admiral Claude C. Block	Commander Hawaiian Naval District

Key Japanese

Shigenori Togo	Foreign Minister
Kichisaburo Nomura	Ambassador to the U.S.
Saburo Kuruso	Special Envoy to the U.S.
Isoroku Yamamoto	Commander of Combined Fleet
Minoru Genda	Developed Pearl Harbor Operational Plan

AttackThe Members of the Joint Congressional Committee for the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor

Senator Alben Barkley	Democrat from Kentucky
Rep. J. Bayard Clark	Democrat from North Carolina
Rep. Jere Cooper	Democrat from Tennessee
Senator Walter F. George	Democrat from Georgia
Senator Scott W. Lucas	Democrat from Illinois
Rep. John W. Murphy	Democrat from Pennsylvania
Senator Owen Brewster	Republican from Maine
Senator Homer Ferguson	Republican from Michigan
Rep. Beartrand W. Gearhart	Republican from California
Rep. Frank B. Keefe	Republican from Wisconsin

Others

Winston Churchill	British Prime Minister
Thomas E. Dewey	Governor of New York, Republican Presidential Nominee, 1944
James Forrestal	Secretary of the Navy after Knox
Joseph Grew	Ambassador to Japan
Owen Roberts	Supreme Court Justice, Head of the Roberts Commission
Charles Rugg	Kimmel's attorney
Robert Ogg	Toland's "Seaman Z"
Captain Richard McCullough	Ogg's Commander
Captain Johan E. Meijer Ranneft	Dutch naval attache in Washington

Key Writers Supporting a Conspiracy

Henry Elmer Barnes	Charles Beard
William Henry Chamberlin	John T. Flynn
Percy Greaves	Admiral Husband E. Kimmel
George Morgenstern	Eric Nave
James Rusbridger	Charles Tansill
Admiral Robert A. Theobald	John Toland

Key Writers Opposing a Conspiracy

Henry Clausen	John Costello
Alvin Coox	Katherin Dillon
Herbert Feis	Robert Ferrel
Donald Goldstein	Admiral Edwin T. Layton
Samuel Eliot Morison	Roger Pinot
Gordon Prange	Basil Rauch
Stanley Weintraub	Roberta Wohlstetter

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