

HOW WAR CAME

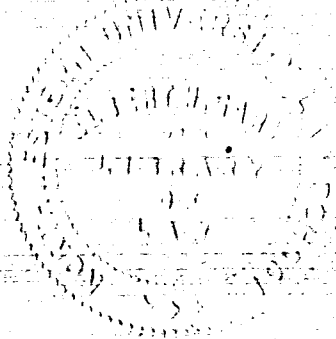
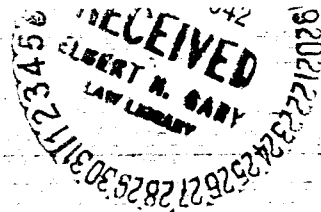
An American White Paper;
From the Fall of France
to Pearl Harbor

BY
FORREST DAVIS
AND
ERNEST K. LINDLEY



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all morning. Shortly before one o'clock he went to his quarters at Fort Myer and was at dinner when he was called to the telephone by Lieutenant Colonel (now Colonel) John R. Deane, then assistant secretary of the War Department General Staff. A messenger from the Navy Department had just handed Deane a penciled note, apparently a brief bulletin from the Navy radio operator at Pearl Harbor, stating that an attack was in progress. General Marshall directed that all the key officers of the War Department be informed. He immediately returned to his office. Soon afterward, a second message came from the Navy Department. This one was typed and of a more formal character than the first, although it contained little additional information.

Halifax, the stooped, bony, melancholy, and conscientiously useful British Ambassador, was reading in the library of the huge Georgian Embassy building on Massachusetts Avenue. With the Ambassador were William Hayter, first secretary of legation, and Angus Malcolm, His Lordship's private secretary. After talking sympathetically with the President, Halifax directed Hayter to put in a call for London and himself began telephoning ranking officers of the Embassy and other leading Britons in Washington that America, at long last, was in the war. In an admirable demonstration of British composure, Malcolm continued at the stint he had set himself for that afternoon, addressing Christmas cards to catch a pouch for London.

The London connection could not be had until about three o'clock (9:00 P.M., London wartime). It being Sunday night, a lone duty clerk at the Foreign Office received the news and at once telephoned it to Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, and Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary. Meanwhile, the radio had carried the news to America, and a pickup by the British Broadcasting Corporation had beaten the telephone report to the Prime Minister.

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A little later the President made a historic call to Mr. Churchill at the country place where he week-ends in wartime, a spot unidentifiable because of the war. The President said that he would ask Congress for a declaration of a state of war on Monday; Mr. Churchill volunteered to obtain a like pronouncement from his Cabinet on the same day in fulfillment of the pledge of war "within the hour" he had voiced publicly upon returning from the Atlantic Conference the preceding August. Neither statesman knew as they spoke that Hirohito was at about that time announcing war with both Britain and the United States. Actually, because of the time difference, the British declaration preceded the one in Washington.

The transatlantic exchange of views reminded the President of a difference over Far Eastern policy that had developed between him and the Prime Minister when they met in a "Newfoundland blight" for the Atlantic Conference. In July, the United States had frozen Japanese funds, inducing an embargo on shipments to Japan, its possessions, and its subjugated territories. This Government, moreover, knew from sources of proved reliability that Hitler at the moment was pressing the Japanese with all vigor to validate a secret protocol of the Axis pact of September, 1940, calling for war on the English-speaking Powers under specified circumstances. Consequently, anxiety over the Far Eastern prospects weighted the sessions on the American cruiser *Augusta* and the *Prince of Wales*.

Churchill wished to meet the issue head on. He asked the President (as the Australians, the Dutch, and his own people had repeatedly besought his own Government) to join in an ultimative declaration to Japan. For some time the other Pacific powers had sought to establish a dead line in the Far East, serving notice on Nippon that so far, and no farther, might they go: a dead line political as well as geographical,

setting bounds to pressure on other States as well as to the enlargement of Japanese forces in Indo-China. While such a move entailed the risk of war, Churchill, mistrusting further procrastination, believed it might cause the Japanese to halt further aggression. In any case, it should, in his opinion, retain the initiative in the hands of the Western powers. Disregardful of Japanese "face," that Asiatic procedure for conserving self-esteem, the Prime Minister advocated making the admonition public.

Unlike the Prime Minister, Mr. Roosevelt lacked the Constitutional capacity to make a commitment involving the possibility of automatic hostilities. Only Congress can declare war, nor can the President decree a war if, as, and when. There were, moreover, other considerations. Mr. Roosevelt feared in August that war in the Pacific was a matter of weeks or months. Yet he knew the country's unreadiness, he was under solicitation from the armed forces for "more time," and, besides, he felt that every day of peace was a day gained to American concentration on supplying the British, Russians, and Chinese. Actually, on December 7, this Government by emergency order canceled shipping orders for six hundred out of eight hundred airplanes consigned at the moment to the British, the orders later being restored. Parenthetically, up to that date only two hundred of the several thousand aircraft shipped the British had gone forward under lend-lease, the others being purchases.

Back in August, therefore, the President had temporized.

"Wouldn't we be better off in three months?" he asked. Churchill agreed, still doubting, however, that the respite would be forthcoming without immediate concerted action.

"Leave that to me," said the President. "I think I can baby them along for three months." *

* The verb "to baby" often is used by the President to mean to pacify or to nurse. By the quotation given here, the President did not imply that he had given up all hope of more than a respite in the Pacific.

striking directly at Japan herself. Forced to abandon that line, both because of the divided fleet and the rising menace of aircraft to surface vessels, the American strategists, consulting with their British and Dutch opposite numbers in the summer and fall of 1941, envisaged the defense of southeastern Asia and the Indies chiefly from the air, with bombers capable of harassing the Japanese fleet and rendering the South China Sea between Manila and Hong Kong untenable for the enemy. This was to be a containing strategy, calculated to hold the enemy at bay until sufficient power could be mustered in the south and west (India and China) to propel a vast and irresistible offensive which would roll the Japanese back on their home islands. This was called the "rainbow plan," for the long, looping arcs of transport and logistics involved.

In September, a large number of flying fortresses went to the Philippines by a new, southern route, partly in the hope of escaping Japanese observation but also for the sake of opening an alternate way. The planes flew from Hawaii to Rabaul, New Britain, where the Australians had prepared a landing field, and from there to Port Darwin, which was being developed by the Australians, under American direction, for the use of American planes, with shops, gasoline stores, and spare parts. The Army had established fuel depots at both points.

From Port Darwin the flying fortresses flew up the islands to the Philippines. Later flights brought the flying fortresses' strength at Clark Field, near Manila, to thirty-five as of November 15, with others on the way. In addition, there were present at Manila some old medium bombers, a number of PBY naval patrol ships, and a group of recent pursuits.

As the Pacific skies darkened in October and November, General Marshall also dispatched to the Philippines ground re-enforcements. These included a National Guard tank battalion, a brigade of artillery, all the self-propelled 75's the American Army had at that time, and some antiaircraft units. These detachments were docked and disembarked by General

MacArthur under cover of night and the strictest censorship, but the Army intelligence had little doubt the Japanese were aware of the arrivals. By mid-November, there were about ten thousand United States troops in the Philippines. It should be remembered that on the near-by island of Formosa, General Homma had at least 150,000 men who had been undergoing intensive training for fifteen months in how to storm and take Luzon and Manila.

At this point, General Marshall notified Secretary Hull that if hostilities could be fended off until December 10 the Philippines would be in shape to make a successful conquest not only costly but hazardous. The Chief of Staff had, it is fair to say, told the Secretary and others that his force in the Philippines would be merely skeletal by the 10th: he hoped things could be kept from popping until spring, when a really strong force might be assembled in the islands.

When the Japanese struck three days ahead of General Marshall's time limit, certain of his re-enforcements were still at sea. On the day after Pearl Harbor a transport carrying pilots and ground crews for several squadrons of dive bombers and fighters arrived in Manila and were safely disembarked. However, their planes, which had been shipped separately in two freighters, failed to reach Manila. One supply ship was sunk while trying to run for Australia; the other safely reached an Australian port. A small contingent of troops that the war had caught in the mid-Pacific likewise reached a haven in Australia.

The flying fortresses in the Philippines were intended, of course, not only to prey on Japanese shipping in the South China Sea, but also to carry the attack to Japanese bases in Formosa and elsewhere. Although the actual flight from Clark Field to Japan proper with a bomb load is a bit beyond the maximum range of the fortresses, Army authorities had contemplated the possibility of shuttle flights to Siberian bases, should these be made available. A crisscrossing of air power

between the Philippines, Malaya, and Borneo was also included in the plans of the ABCD Powers.

A considerable number of new airfields had been built or were under construction in the Philippines in the late fall. A few additional weeks, allowing for the arrival of more flying fortresses, dive bombers, and pursuits, with their complements, might, as Marshall supposed, have importantly altered the defense picture in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the British likewise were adding to their strength at Hong Kong and Singapore. Farther south, the resolute Hollanders on Java were disposing their inadequate resources for war. The total armed forces available to the ABCD Powers, scattered, insufficiently trained, and under-equipped, appeared somehow formidable to observers in distant Washington that fall. One reads with a pang the confident assertions of public men and journalists back in October and November to the effect that the ABCD had a safe preponderance in sea and air power in the far Pacific. Not only were the tough, hardened, jungle-trained troops of Hainan and Formosa and Indo-China, with the Japanese air force and surface strength, overlooked and underestimated during those last weeks of wishful thinking, but the military power at the disposal of the Western Powers was consistently overrated.

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If the fall was a difficult time for Washington, it was likewise far from easy for Tojo and the uniformed bandits of the Kwantung clique, who now had full power over the destinies of Japan. Hard decisions had to be made—decisions in line with Japanese interest and not with the will of distant Berlin. The pathway ahead, the way of *Hakko Ichiu*, the “eight corners of the world under one roof” pattern of conquest bequeathed by the Emperor Jimmu, was by no means clear. In November, Tojo publicly reflected that Japan's situation was

grave indeed, the country being "at the crossroads of a rise or fall" such as it had not encountered "in all its twenty-six hundred years of history." This was more than rhetoric. There were reasons for putting off Nazi Ambassador Eugen Ott and for agreeing to strike at Siberia only if, as, and when the Nazis reached the Volga; there were reasons, likewise, for stalling the United States until the final word could be spoken.

It had been something of a mystery why the Japanese continued to insist on pursuing the meaningless Hull-Nomura conversations into the fall, why Konoye proposed his face-to-face conference with the President, and especially why Saburo Kurusu was flown to this country in November to protract negotiations. Mysterious also was Japan's opening of the Pacific front on December 7, nine days after Marshal Semyon Timoshenko's capture of Rostov signaled the Nazi failure to break Russia in the fall of 1941. In the light of the bargain of July 2, why didn't the Nipponese go to the rescue of their Axis partner, mortally engaged with Russia? Also, why did Japan dare to strike at the Western powers with Germany "bogged" in Russia and unable to lend powerful diversionary aid, at least, in the west?

The answers to these questions are by no means clear. There are gaps, discrepancies, and contradictions, but as nearly as the design of Japanese intentions can be reconstructed from the varied and voluminous advices in the possession of this Government, received before and after Pearl Harbor, the behind-the-scenes story in Tokyo and Berlin in the fall of 1941—a catalogue of probabilities rather than of certainties—went something like this:

Since the summer of 1940, the Japanese had been pointing their military energies for a swoop on southeastern Asia, Malaya, and the Dutch Indies, striking a glancing blow at the Philippines on the way. To that end, they had established the huge training centers on Hainan and Formosa and had encroached, according to plan, on Indo-China. As a part of

far as their strength permitted, to meet any contingency. The defenses of the Philippines were known to be weak—although it was not anticipated that the Japanese would succeed in destroying two thirds of our air forces there on the ground in one afternoon, hours after the assault on Oahu. In the Hawaiian Islands, our naval and air and ground forces were ample to throw back any attack which the Japanese could launch.

The first bombers over Pearl Harbor caught more than the military and naval establishments at Hawaii off guard. They caught the entire United States napping. Why were the Japanese able to perpetrate so immense and crushing a surprise? The answers, being largely subjective, will be endlessly debated. There are, of course, all the surface reasons set forth in the Roberts report.

Yet, the fundamental reasons for our trancelike unawareness of peril must lie deeper. They bear on the all but universal feeling that the Japanese would not dare strike at the United States, an underrating of the enemy's might that gave rise to the confidently widespread assertion in the first days after Pearl Harbor that the Nipponese had committed hara-kiri by their presumptuous act. This attitude may be attributed to a national sense of sufficiency, a smugness based upon a continental state of mind, an indifference to and ignorance of the world about us, as well as to a consciousness of the rectitude of our own intentions toward other peoples.

There is an additional reason, simple, kindly, and going to the heart of the American character. In one of his books, Hermann Rauschning, apostate Nazi, Junker intellectual, and former President of the Danzig Senate, notes that the Anglo-Saxon peoples have, unlike continental Europeans, striven hard to exorcise evil *qua* evil. Those peoples, American and British, which have during long generations enjoyed, above all others, the blessings of the earth, have likewise, Rauschning postulates, sought to banish the ancient concept of abstract