

Proceedings and Debates of the 77th Congress, Second session.

Some questions about Pearl Harbor.

Remarks of Hon. Jeannette Rankins, of Montana in the House of Rep. 12/8/42

Miss Rankin of Montana. Mr. Speaker, we have been at war a year. During the time of American people have had abundant opportunity to take stock of the Nation's situation and to raise a large number of pertinent questions, not out of any spirit of disunity but in a firm belief that the Nation's welfare requires a vigilant exercise of the traditional American right of free inquiry.

As a member of Congress who voted against the declaration of war on December 8, 1942, I wish to take advantage of this anniversary occasion to insert into the Record a number of historically significant documents bearing upon the hitherto obscure antecedents of the Pearl Harbor attack and to raise a few questions of my own as to the meaning of certain activities which led up to that attack.

Pearl Harbor was the greatest thunderbolt in American history. It is proper to inquire, indeed, whether any responsible American source foresaw the Japanese attack. In this regard, I wish to present the following remarkable statement, amounting to a prediction, from the Christian magazine of November 19, 1941--3 weeks prior to the Japanese attack--1433;

It is no secret that the whole colonial structure of the white empires is threatening to fall apart unless we intervene in Asia. Many British leaders would welcome American involvement with Japan-----So the thesis of Sidney Rogerson's pre-war book Propaganda in the Next War--that the surest way Britain can bring the United States to her aid will be to involve us in a war with Japan---is being validated by events.

"Show me the motive, and I'll show you the criminal," was a favorite saying of Sherlock Holmes. Here we have an apparently well-defined motive and also a suggestion as to the intended method of realization.

What does Mr. Rogerson, who is an English author, have to say specifically about the plans of the British imperialists? His book propaganda in the Next War, published in London in 1938 as one of a series of books on the Next War edited by the well-known writer, Capt. Liddell Hart, was banned from export to America by the British censorship in 1939. A copy has been secured earlier at the Library of Congress, however, and now reposes in the rare-book room. On page 148 Mr. Rogerson makes this admission as to the plans of the British imperialists;

To persuade her----

The United States---to take our part will be much more difficult. Then in 1914---so difficult as to be unlikely to succeed. It will need a definite threat to America; A threat, moreover, which will have to be brought home by propaganda to every external quarrel. The position will naturally be considerably eased if Japan were involved and this might and probably would bring America in without further ado. At any rate, it would be a natural and obvious object of our propagandists to achieve this, just as during the Great War they succeeded in embroiling the United States with Germany.

In other words, 3 years before Pearl Harbor, Britain's imperialist had figured out just how to bring the United States once more to their aid.

But exactly how was Japan to be embroiled with the United States? There is no better way of goading a nation into war than by imposing economic sanctions,

especially in the case of nations devoid of essential raw material. Indeed, at the very time Mr. Rogerson was writing this revealing book, the phrase "economic sanctions mean war"--and echo from the League of Nations' threat to Italy in 1937--was still on everybody's lips. If Britian were merely to induce the United States to sever commercial relations with Japan, who was extremely dependent upon imports of raw materials in exchange for silk and manufactures for the continuance of her economic life, would not that suffice?

Is there any evidence of any specific occasion on which the British Government sold this policy of economic sanctions against Japan at the Roosevelt Administration? In the Ladies Home Journal of July 1942, page 17, in an article entitled "How War Came," Forrest Davis and Ernest K. Lindley--an intimate friend of the President--make the following significant revelation:

When they---President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met in a Newfoundland bright for the Atlantic conference, Churchill wished to meet the issue head-on. He asked the President--as the British, Austrailians, and Dutch repeatedly had besought this Government before --to join in an ultimative declaration to Japan.

Now, an ultimatum is a demand accomplished by a threat. It set up a dilemma: "Do so and so--or else." In this case the punitive alternative to be offered to Japan was to consist, as we shall see, of an economic blockade--in other words, sanctions--and admitted provocation to war. But of what demand was the ultimatum itself--the first horn of the dilemma to be offered to Japan--to consist? And what evidence do we have that President Roosevelt actually accepted Mr. Churchill's Atlantic conference request that such an ultimatum be sent?

There seems to be excellent evidence that such an ultimatum was sent by President Roosevelt. No less an apologist for the administration's foreign policy than Mr. Henry Luce, editor of Time, Life, and Fortune, has admitted both that President Roosevelt served such an ultimatum on Japan, and that it was the sending of this ultimatum which resulted in the Pearl Harbor attack. Mr. Luce alleges that the ultimatum was sent out of American's love for China, but inasmuch as it was sent at Mr. Churchill's instigation at a time when Britian desperately need an ally in Europe as well as in the Orient and not at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, during which indeed we continually sent to Japan both oil and scrap iron may not the American public wonder whether it was the interests of the British Empire in the Orient which were primarily at stake? Here is Mr. Luce's historic admission, as found in Life magazine for July 20, 1942, page 30:

The Chinese, for whom the United States had delivered the ultimatum that brought on Pearl Harbor--expected large lend-lease shipments, and so forth.

Just what was the wording of the ultimatum, then since its existence is admitted?

A perusal of the Department of State bulletins covering the period from Atlantic Conference of August 12, 1941, to the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, discloses only a single item relating to Japan--a brief mention of repatriation of American and Japanese nationals in the bulleting of October 11, 1941 page 276--though this weekly journal of the State Department was replete with even trivialities regarding other countries during this period, thus indicating that the American people were not being fully informed as to the negotiating with Japan. On December 15, 1941, a week after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt released a message to Congress purporting to cover the negotiations with Japan.

While candid admission that any of the communications sent Japan constituted an ultimatum is not made, the requirement made on September 3, 1941, that Japan accept the principle of "non-disturbance of the status quo in the Pacific as detailed in the Digest of the Roosevelt administration's

detailed in the Digest of the Roosevelt administration's demands.

This requirement was the equivalent of asking Japan to guarantee the inviolateness of the white empires in the Orient, of which the British Empire compressed approximately 90 per cent in both area and population. The American people would have been gratified had President Roosevelt demanded assurance that Japan respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines to whom we had agreed to grant independence in 1946, but the American public may well wonder where President Roosevelt got the authority to conduct our foreign affairs "as if Congress did not exist"--to quote one of my colleague--and to commit American lives fortune, and prestige to securing a guaranty for British and Dutch imperial interest in the Orient--irrespective of the merits of those interest.

Later more specific guarantees were demanded of Japan as to China, Indo-China, and so forth.

Concurrently, Japan was presented with the other horn of the dilemma hatched at the Atlantic conference; namely economic sanctions of ever-increasing severity.

What is the evidence that the Roosevelt administration which had frozen Japanese assets in this country as early as July 25, 1941 rapidly accelerated its economic strangulation of Japan following the Atlantic conference?

To secure an accurate statistical answer, I applied to both the Department of State and the Department of Commerce, asking for month-by-month figures on American exports to Japan in 1941. To my surprise, I received from both Departments an identical response: "Because of a special Executive order, statistics on trade with Japan beginning with April 1941 are not being given out."

Inasmuch as the Japanese certainly know what they received in the way of goods from the United States throughout 1941, it becomes proper to inquire, "From whom are these statistics being concealed?"

As a member of Congress, I was, of course, able to exercise my congressional prerogative of securing this data from an administrative department. Because of its allegedly confidential nature, I cannot, however, reveal it at this time.

However, a perusal of other sources throws considerable light upon the extent to which the Roosevelt administration invoked economic sanctions against Japan in the month between Atlantic Conference and the attack upon Pearl Harbor. For instance, in the New York Times of August 17, 1941, page 7, we read:

Vice President Wallace, the chairman----

(Of the Economic Defense Board-----

today confirmed reports that this group was already working on projects for exerting trade pressure on Japan.

In other words, in less than a week after the Atlantic Conference the machinery of economic sanctions was getting under way.

Six weeks later the economic stringency in Japan had become acute, as we read in the New York Times of October 24, 1941, page 36:

Japan's raw material shortage has been sharply aggravated and her industrial activity seriously disrupted by the cessation of her trade with important foreign countries, the Department of Commerce reported today.

Ship movements and trade between Japan and the United States, the British Empire, and the Netherland Indies, it is pointed out, have become virtually non-existent.

By December 2, 1941,---5 days before Pearl Harbor---we read in the New York Times of that date, page 6:

Japan has been cut off from about 75 per cent of her normal imports as a result of the Allied Blockade, the National Industrial Conference Board reported today. In an analysis entitled "The effects of the Allied Economic Blockade on Japan," the Board asserted that despite the drastic restrictions imposed by the Government to stretch out available supplies the blockade may ultimately prove disastrous.

"Premier Hideki Tojo of Japan dispatched the Kurusu mission to Washington

because Japan today is on the verge of economic collapse." Contemporary China, for nightly digest of the Chinese News Service, Incl. stated yesterday.

A week before the attack on Pearl Harbor I asked a prominent non-Japanese-Oriental:

Is the situation in the Pacific as serious as it appears?

Yes--he replied, it is serious. Japan has no choice but to go to war or to submit to economic slavery for the rest of her existence.

The question remains,- Did President Roosevelt realize that "economic sanctions means war" at the time he appears to have adopted Mr. Churchill's suggestion to impose them as the punitive alternative for his ultimatum to Japan?

It is hard to see how he could have failed to realize this, inasmuch as he himself had made the following statement to the Volunteer Participation Committee on July 24, 1941, as reported in the Department of State Bulletin of July 26, 1941, page 72, and also in the Saturday Evening Post of February 7, 1942, page 26:

Now, if we cut the oil off, they---the Japanese---probably would have gone to the Dutch East Indies a year ago, and you would have had war.

Whereupon, immediately after the Atlantic Conference of two weeks later, Mr. Roosevelt proceeded to invoke these self-acknowledged war-producing sanctions.

Was it not strange that Mr. Roosevelt, who, by refusing for years to enforce the Neutrality Act of 1936 to prevent shipment of war supplies to Japan despite popular demand, had largely contributed to supplying that nation with the raw materials for armament now being used against our own troops, after the Atlantic Conference when an incident with Japan seems to have been desired, suddenly changed his policy and not only cut off war supplies but virtually everything required by the civilian population of Japan as well?

As a member of the President's own party, Congressman Hatton W. Summers, of Texas, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, remarked in a letter to the Saturday Evening Post, published in that periodical on April 4, 1942, page 26:

We have been a very foolish people which has made it possible for---politicians to get away with murder. This blaming the Pearl Harbor tragedy on the treachery of the Japs is like the fellow who had been tickling the hind leg of a mule trying to explain his bungled-up condition by blaming the mule for having violated his confidence.

Astounding as the Pearl Harbor attack was to the American public as a whole, if it was anticipated by the administration why did the President permit our forces at Pearl Harbor to be taken by surprise? Even if a Japanese attack was desired, certainly no one desired a successful attack.

The answer seems to be that everything possible was done to warn our forces at Pearl Harbor for the extreme likelihood of attack. According to the report of the Roberts commission on the facts of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Admiral Kimmel and Lieutenant Short, who were in charge of the Hawaiian area, were sent repeated warnings by the War and Navy Departments.

Thus we read in the text of the Roberts report, as given in Senate Document N. 159, pages 6-9, and also in the New York Times of January 25, 1942 page 30, that-----

On October 16, 1941, the commanding general, Hawaiian department and the Commander in Chief of the fleet were advised by the War and Navy Departments of the possibility of an attack by Japan.

Another warning was sent on November 24, 1941.

The Roberts report continues:

On November 27, 1941, the Chief of the Staff of the Army informed the Commanding General, Hawaiian department, that---hostilities on the part of Japan were momentarily possible---on the same day--November 27, 1941, the Chief of Naval operations sent a message to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, which stated in substance that the dispatch was to be considered the war warning--that Japan was expected to make an aggressive move in the next few days.

Additional warning were sent November 28, November 29, November 30,

December 1, December 3, December 4, December 6, and December 7,--- the last one arriving in Hawaii after the Japanese onslaught had begun.

Thus we see that for 2 weeks prior to the Pearl Harbor attack almost daily warnings had been sent, not to mention less frequent precautionary dispatches earlier. What more could have been done in the way of warnings is hard to see. Indeed, do not the frequency, urgency, the very wording of these warnings, indicate in themselves that the Pearl Harbor, attack came as no surprise whatever to the President?

Why, then, were our forces taken unaware December 7 1941? Apparently simply because a deep--rooted and traditional sense of over-confidence insulted our pacific commanders from taking these warnings seriously.

Has Prime Minister Churchill ever admitted attempting to get the United States into this war?

Yes; quite frankly--after we were in. Why was it that previously he said he wanted only the "tools". In February 1942, in a speech delivered before the House of Commons in an effort to save his administration at the time of the fall of Singapore, this boast was wrung from him--as reported in the New York Times of February 16, 1942, page 6.

When I survey and compute the power of the United States and its vast sources and feel that they are now in it with us, with it lasts, till death or victory, I cannot believe that there is any other fact in the whole world which can compare with that. This is what I have dreamed of, aimed at, and worked for, and now it has come to pass.

A blunt acknowledgement surely.

Has either Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt ever acknowledge that the Atlantic Conference was the specific occasion of their efforts to get the United States into the war by embroiling us with Japan?

It is hard to see what else the following admission from Mr. Churchill's speech in parliament, January 28, 1942---as reported in the New York Times of that date, page 10, can be called:

It has been the policy of the Cabinet at almost all costs to avoid embroilment with Japan until we are sure that the United States would also be engaged.

On the other hand, the Probability since the Atlantic Conference, at which I discussed these matters with President Roosevelt, that the United States, even if not herself attacked, would come into the war in the Far East and thus make the final victory assured, seemed to allay some of these anxieties, and that expectation has not been falsified by the events.

This would seem to indicate that not only did President Roosevelt accede to Churchill's pressure to send an ultimatum to, and impose sanctions upon, Japan but made a blanket commitment to bring American into the war even if Japan did not attack.

A very curious piece of evidence appeared in the Saturday Evening Post of October 10, 1942, page 9, in an article by Lt. Clarence E. Dickinson, United States Navy, entitled "I Fly for Vengeance." Lieutenant Dickinson relates:

On this cruise we had sailed from Pearl Harbor on November 28, 1941, under absolute war orders. Vice Admiral Wm. F. Halsey, Jr. the commander of the aircraft battle force, had given instructions that the secrecy of our mission was to be protected at all costs. We were to shoot down anything we saw in the sky and to bomb anything we saw on the sea. In that way, there could be no leak to the Japs.

Could such orders have been issued by Vice Admiral Halsey except by specific direction from the Commander in Chief, namely the President of the United States?

In other words, if Lieutenant Dickinson's account is true, did not the President at least 9 days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, without a declaration of war, authorize an identical attack upon the Japanese--also without a declaration of war?

Today approximately 1,000,000 American boys are fighting from three to eight thousand miles away from home. The American people are willing to struggle for the "Four Freedoms" but we realize that we must retain them at home if we are going to give them to others. Exercising our traditional right for free speech and free inquiry, we are going to continue to ask and seek answers to all questions as they arise.

When are we going to get the full story of what happened at the Atlantic Conference? We asked for it then and ask for it now.

When President Roosevelt had so persistently refused to enforce the Neutrality Act against Japan when public opinion definitely demanded it, why did ye so suddenly change his policy at the Atlantic Conference?

A year ago, one of my congressional colleague, having observed us over closer to the blink of war in the Atlantic only to be seeing fate present the President on December 7, 1941, with a magnificent moral categorical, right out of the blue--a *causus belli* beyond all criticism--exclaimed in despair: "What luck that man has!" But was it luck?