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# ROOSEVELT'S SECRET WAR



*FDR and World War II Espionage*

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Chapter X



## Catastrophe or Conspiracy

**I**T WAS just past 1:30 P.M. when FDR heard Frank Knox's voice over the phone telling him, "Mr. President, it looks as if the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." Soon a Signal Corps enlisted man was patching a line into the President's phone to take a call from Governor Joseph Poindexter in Honolulu. Listening hard through the static, the President exclaimed, "My God, there's another wave of Japanese over Hawaii right this minute!" A Secret Service man on duty remembered, "His chin stuck out about two feet in front of his knees, and he was the maddest Dutchman anybody ever saw."

A stream of generals, admirals, and aides filed in and out of the office throughout the afternoon. At 8:30 P.M., members of the cabinet, summoned by the President, began arriving as stewards lugged in extra chairs, forming them into a horseshoe around the President's desk. At 9 P.M., FDR met with the leaders of Congress. Through the window facing south over the Ellipse the moon could be glimpsed riding in a haze over a capital that had started the day at peace. In front of the White House, a crowd milled about, the stunned, the curious, and the angry. A stenographer took notes as FDR began addressing the arc of grave faces. At the root of the Japanese attack, the President said, he detected machinations of the Axis partnership: ". . . [W]e received indications from various sources—Europe and Asia—

that the German government was pressing Japan for action under the Tripartite Pact. In other words, an effort to divert the American mind, and the British mind from the European field, and divert American supplies from the European theater to the defense of the East Asia Theater." FDR told his listeners, who leaned forward to catch his somber delivery, that his administration had reluctantly reached the conclusion that the ongoing negotiations with Japan were a sham, particularly the sticking point concerning the U.S. demand for Japan's withdrawal from China. ". . . [T]hey were to agree to cease their acts of aggressions, and that they would try to bring the China war to a close," he said. He returned to the theme of Axis conniving: "And so the thing went along until we believed that under the pressure from Berlin the Japanese were about to do something. . . ." The sneak attack had a historical parallel in the Russo-Japanese war, FDR noted. Pearl Harbor was "equalled only by the Japanese episode of 1904, when two squadrons, cruisers . . . without any warning—I think on a Sunday morning, by the way—Japanese cruisers sank all of them. . . ."

As the President spoke, military aides continued to set fresh bulletins before him. He looked up from one to announce, "It looks as if out of eight battleships, three have been sunk, and possibly a fourth. Two destroyers were blown up while they were in dry-dock. Two of the battleships are badly damaged. Several other smaller vessels have been sunk or destroyed. . . . I have no word on the Navy casualties, which will undoubtedly be very heavy, and the best information is that there have been more than one hundred Army casualties and three hundred men killed and injured." His labor secretary, Frances Perkins, the only woman in the cabinet, recalled, "The President could hardly bring himself" to describe the slaughter and had physical difficulty in getting the words out. Another eyewitness, however, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, observed how FDR "demonstrated that ultimate capacity to dominate and control a supreme emergency which is perhaps the rarest and most valuable characteristic of any statesman."

Senator Tom Connally of Texas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, sat close to the President, his face red with rage as he bellowed, "How did it happen that our warships were caught like lame ducks at Pearl Harbor?" Connally slammed his fist down hard on the President's desk. "How did they catch us with our pants down?" "I don't know, Tom," FDR answered. "I just don't know." After the cabinet and congressional leaders left, Treasury secretary Henry Morgenthau returned to his office and told his staff gathered there, "They will never be able to explain

it." Adolf Berle wrote in his diary: ". . . If there is anyone I would not like to be it is the Chief of Naval Intelligence."

Aides, couriers, and secretaries continued to enter the President's study all evening. At twenty-five minutes past midnight FDR received his last visitors. He had summoned the COI chief, Bill Donovan, and the CBS broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, recently back from covering the war from London, who had been invited for Sunday supper. Earlier that day, Donovan had been at a football game at the Polo Grounds, watching the Brooklyn Dodgers pummel the New York Giants 21 to 7, when a voice announced over a loudspeaker, "Colonel William Donovan, come to the box office at once. There is an important phone message." The message was from the President's son Captain Jimmy Roosevelt, telling Wild Bill that the President needed him in Washington at once.

Now, some eleven hours later, the parade of officials finally ended, Donovan and Murrow found FDR alone sitting in semi-darkness, his face illuminated by a pool of light from a desk lamp. The room was still cluttered with the extra chairs. Stacks of books, piles of yellowed papers tied with string rested alongside the bookcases, and FDR's ship models cast their shadows against the walls. Gathering dust in one corner stood an incongruous pipe organ. Removed from the President's desk were the stamp album, magnifying glass, scissors, and stickers he had been working on when Knox's call turned his world upside down. The reporter in Murrow noted that the President was now wearing a shapeless gray "sack jacket" and munching a sandwich washed down with a beer. FDR's ashen pallor matched the jacket, and he appeared drained of energy. Still, Murrow remembered, "Never have I seen one so calm and so steady." The President asked Murrow about morale in bomb-blasted London. Murrow's response that Britain would hold out clearly pleased FDR. He had received a call earlier from Churchill and told the PM, "We're all in the same boat now."

FDR had before him the latest damage assessments from Pearl Harbor delivered by Admiral Stark. Over 350 Japanese torpedo and dive bombers had struck in three waves. Casualties were heavy and would ultimately total 2,403 Americans dead and 1,178 wounded. Much of the Pacific Fleet lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor or in disemboweled ruin, the decks running red and strewn with bodies. The Navy's losses totaled eighteen vessels, including the battleships *Arizona*, *West Virginia*, and *California* sunk, the *Oklahoma* capsized, and the *Nevada* run aground. The President turned to Donovan, speaking in cold rage, "They caught our ships like lame ducks! Lame ducks, Bill! . . . We told them at Pearl Harbor, and every-

where else, to have the lookouts manned. But they still took us by surprise." The ship losses seemed particularly personal to him. He still liked to refer to his years as assistant secretary as, "When I was in the Navy." The losses suffered by the Air Corps were almost as staggering as the fleet's. Nearly 350 planes had been destroyed or damaged. FDR pounded his fist on the desk. "They caught our planes on the ground, by God, on the ground!"

Pearl Harbor was an intelligence failure of stunning magnitude. Not only naval intelligence but all military intelligence had failed abysmally. The FBI failed. The fledgling Donovan organization failed, though on that night FDR never criticized Donovan's performance. Rather, he told Donovan, "It's a good thing that you got me started on this [intelligence business]. . . ." When, through Magic, the President, the secretaries of war and state, and the service chiefs were able to read what the Japanese ambassador and foreign minister were saying up to the moment the first torpedo struck the first American warship, with broken codes revealing that the Japanese had spies reporting on the fleet's deployment at Pearl Harbor, how could the imminence of the attack have been missed? Why had both signal and human intelligence failed so totally?

The answer can be found only by examining how the intelligence available to the President was used, misused, or unused. In hindsight, a fairly straight line can be traced from clue to clue to an inevitable attack. If one seeks perhaps the earliest warning it was the message Ambassador Joseph Grew transmitted from Tokyo to Secretary Hull on January 27, 1941, over eleven months before the attack. "A member of my Embassy," Grew cabled, "was told by my . . . colleague that from many quarters, including a Japanese one, he heard that a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor was planned by the Japanese military forces, in case of 'trouble' between Japan and the United States. . . . My colleague said that he was prompted to pass this on because it had come to him from many sources, although the plan seemed fantastic." On the other hand, a Magic intercept of a Japanese transmission from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo dated February 15, just nineteen days after Grew's message, predicted an American, not a Japanese threat: "Indications seem to be that the U.S. has decided to declare war on Japan within the next three weeks."

China had continued to remain the sore point between the United States and Japan. The Japanese, as late as September 1941, continued to demand first, that the United States and Britain not increase their military position in the Far East; second, that the United States lift its embargo on oil; and

third, that America stop aiding Chiang Kai-shek. The State Department had advised the administration "that adoption and application of a policy of imposing embargoes upon strategic exports to Japan would be . . . likely to lead to this country's becoming involved in war." War could likely have been averted since the United States could have lifted the oil embargo at no cost to itself. But FDR had stuck to the position that Japan must leave China; and this demand the Japanese could not abide. Thus, something of a diplomatic Kabuki dance leading inexorably toward war had followed.

By November, Japan had two key emissaries in Washington, the regular ambassador, Kichisaburo Nomura, and a special envoy, Saburo Kuruusu. Kuruusu had earlier served in the Japanese consulate in Chicago, where he married an American, Alice Little. At a press conference on his most recent return to the United States, Kuruusu had sought to ingratiate himself with an American audience by saying, "I fully realize the difficulty of my task, making a tight scrum, I wish I could break through the line and make a touchdown." Kuruusu's aide had to explain to baffled American reporters that "scrum" was a rugby term, and that the envoy had meant to say "huddle."

Every communication, however secret, between the two diplomats and Tokyo during the buildup to Pearl Harbor was available to the President. A November 5 message classified "of utmost secrecy," from the foreign office to the Washington embassy carried instructions in the event that a long-shot pending accord between Japan and the United States could be approved. This message, broken and translated the same day, set a suspiciously rigid deadline. "It is absolutely necessary that all arrangements for the signing of this agreement be completed by the 25th of this month," the dispatch read. Behind this message, and unknown even to Nomura and Kuruusu, was a decision reached by the Japanese cabinet, headed now by the tough new premier, General Hideki Tojo, to go to war if the Americans failed to meet the deadline.

FDR might have been warned of what was coming if one of his chief intelligence sources had possessed more imagination. During the late summer of 1941, the FBI chief in New York, Percy E. "Sam" Foxworth, arranged a meeting between his boss, J. Edgar Hoover, and a Yugoslav named Dusko Popov, recently arrived in the United States. Popov came from a wealthy family with far-flung business connections, which allowed him to pursue his burning passion, café society high life. In 1939, Johann Jebsen, with whom Popov had attended school in Germany and who now

worked for the Abwehr, recruited the Yugoslav playboy as an agent. Popov was sent to spy in England, where he promptly revealed his Abwehr role to MI6. The British happily recruited him as a double agent. Abwehr officials were so pleased with the intelligence Popov fed them, fabricated by MI6, that they decided to send him to America to establish a spy network.

Popov arrived in the United States via neutral Portugal aboard a flying boat in August 1941. In order to carry out his double agent role without being arrested as an actual German spy, Popov would have to get Hoover's approval to operate a bogus espionage ring. It was then that Sam Foxworth arranged for Hoover to meet Popov. What Popov had already revealed to Foxworth was extraordinary. He told him that his friend Jebsen and Baron Gronau, the German air attaché in Japan, had escorted Japanese naval officials to Taranto, Italy, to study one of the war's most effective air raids. The Japanese wanted to learn how the British, in November 1940, had practically destroyed the Italian fleet in Taranto harbor by using torpedo planes launched from the aircraft carrier *Illustrious*. If that intelligence did not suggest Japanese interest in Pearl Harbor, Popov had stronger evidence. Before leaving Lisbon, the Abwehr gave him a lengthy list of questions to pursue while he was in America. Much of the questionnaire was general and predictable: He was to report on American troop movements, war production, shipping activity, and military base locations. But his most specific instructions, covering a third of the questionnaire and given "the highest priority," dealt with Pearl Harbor. Popov was to travel to Hawaii to answer these queries: "Details about naval ammunition and mine depot on Isle of Kuschua [Pearl Harbor]. . . . Is the Crater Punch Bowl [Honolulu] being used as an ammunition dump? . . . How far has the dredger work progressed at the entrance and in the east and southeast lock? Depth of water? . . . The pier installations, workshops, petrol installations, situation of dry dock No. 1 and of the new dry dock which is being built. . . . Reports about torpedo protection nets newly introduced in the British and USA Navy." The Abwehr also wanted, clearly at the behest of the Japanese, sketches and the exact location of "Wickham" (Hickam), Wheeler, Luke, and "Kaneche" (Kaneohe) airfields.

J. C. Masterman, who headed the British XX (Double Cross) Committee that handled double agents like Popov, had also been given a copy of the questionnaire. Masterman concluded, ". . . [I]n the event of the United States being at war, Pearl Harbor would be the first point to be attacked. . . ." However, he did not report this conclusion to U.S. authorities

because he did not want to appear to be another Briton nudging America toward war. The Americans, he believed, upon seeing this extraordinary document, would draw their own conclusion.

Just as extraordinary as Popov's instructions was the form in which they had been communicated. The entire questionnaire had been reduced four hundred times normal to the size of a period by the microdot process developed by a German professor, Arnold Zapp.

Prior to meeting with J. Edgar Hoover, Foxworth warned Popov, "Mr. Hoover is a very virtuous man." The New York chief believed the warning necessary because in the weeks that Popov had been waiting to see Hoover, he had used Abwehr money to indulge his pleasures to the hilt. He rented a penthouse apartment on Park Avenue and resumed an affair with the French actress Simone Simon. Another FBI report had Popov with a girlfriend in Florida, where the bureau threatened him with prosecution for violating the Mann Act in taking a woman across state lines for immoral purposes. Popov complained to a British intelligence agent, "If I bend over to smell a bowl of flowers, I scratch my nose on a microphone."

For Hoover the meeting was hate at first sight. He disliked Slavs, along with Jews, Catholics, and blacks. Further, Hoover distrusted double agents. Popov was tall, handsome, suave, glib, high living, flashy, and a foreigner, everything that Hoover detested. The director had been shown the reports of Popov's sexual escapades and, perhaps even more damning, learned that Popov had dared stray into Hoover's favored night spot, the Stork Club in Manhattan. Here was a man who could commit, in Hoover's eyes, the ultimate sin: He might embarrass the bureau. Under no circumstances would Hoover allow Popov to establish even a fake German spy ring in the United States. And he certainly was not going to let the man go to Pearl Harbor. Of all that Popov told him, the only thing that caught Hoover's attention was revelation of the microdot process. The mechanics rather than the substance of Popov's Abwehr instructions seized Hoover's imagination. He cut short the meeting with the Yugoslav and told him, "I can catch spies without your or anyone else's help. . . ." Like all double agents, "you're begging for information to sell to your German friends so that you can make a lot of money and be a playboy." Not only did Hoover dismiss Popov, but the competitive director refused to inform his intelligence rivals, MID, ONI, and COI, of what the Yugoslav had been told to look for at Pearl Harbor.

What Hoover did, on September 3, just days after seeing Popov, was to send a letter marked "strictly confidential," through Pa Watson to FDR. It

began, "I thought the President and you might be interested in the attached photographs which show one of the methods used by the German espionage system in transmitting messages to its agents." Hoover had attached a copy of a telegram with two tiny smudges, which were the microdots. He also provided the President with a sampling of the questions contained in Popov's instructions. Hoover made no mention that Popov had revealed the secret to him, making it appear that the microdot process had been discovered "in connection with a current investigation being made by the FBI." The part of the microdot enlarged and translated for the President included questions about total U.S. monthly production of fighter planes, planes delivered to Britain, even "the air-training plan being followed in Canada." But, astonishingly, Hoover included none of the pointed inquiries about Pearl Harbor, not a word about the numerous specific questions that would have alerted the President that the Japanese had an alarming interest in America's major naval bastion in the Pacific. It was as if a lookout on the *Titanic* had alerted the captain to a rowboat to port while ignoring the iceberg to starboard. As for Dusko Popov, Hoover kicked him out of the country. He was allowed to go to Rio de Janeiro to carry on his double life there for MI6.

Bill Donovan, prior to Pearl Harbor, did forward to the President one item of critical intelligence. Malcolm R. Lovell, one of Donovan's early recruits, reported to his chief a statement made to him by Dr. Hans Thomsen, the German chargé d'affaires in Washington. The diplomat had told Lovell, "If Japan goes to war with the United States, Germany will immediately follow suit." Thomsen also told him, "Japan knows that unless the United States agrees to some reasonable terms in the Far East, Japan must face the threat of strangulation. . . . If Japan waits, it will be comparatively easy for the United States to strangle Japan. Japan is therefore forced to strike now. . . ." On November 13, Donovan had Thomsen's statement hand-delivered to the President. Further evidence of Japan's intent came in a Magic intercept of message Number 812, dated November 22, from Tokyo to Nomura and Kurusu in Washington, noting that the Japanese had extended their deadline for signing the agreement with the United States from November 25 to November 29. The foreign minister added, "The deadline absolutely cannot be changed. After that things are automatically going to happen."

Admiral Stark, the Navy chief, sent a message to the Pacific Fleet on November 24, reading: "A surprise aggressive movement in any direction including attack on Philippines or Guam is a possibility." At noon the next

day, FDR called together his War Council in the Oval Office, including Hull, Stimson, Knox, Marshall, and Stark. The President, according to Stimson's diary, predicted, "We were likely to be attacked perhaps (as soon as) next Monday [December 1], for the Japanese are notorious for making an attack without warning." Stimson's entry went on, "The question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."

Two days later, FDR obtained intelligence that a Japanese fleet was moving south from Shanghai. The same day the President received a memorandum from Admiral Stark classified "Secret" that warned, "Japan may attack: The Burma Road; Thailand; Malaya; the Netherlands East Indies; the Philippines; the Russian Maritime provinces." That same November 27, Stark radioed the Pacific Fleet one of the key messages sent prior to the Pearl Harbor attack: "This dispatch is to be considered a war warning," it read, "an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days. The number and equipment of Japanese troops and the organization of Naval Task Forces indicates an amphibious expedition against either the Philippines, Thai or Kra Peninsula or possibly Borneo."

Along with the near certainty of attack, the American codebreakers now produced proof of breathtaking Japanese duplicity. In a rush translation, Magic revealed that on November 28 the new Japanese foreign minister, Shigenori Togo, was telling his Washington negotiating team, "Well, you two ambassadors have exerted superhuman effort but, in spite of this, the United States has gone ahead and presented this humiliating proposal." Togo referred to a ten-point plan submitted by Stimson that included a Japanese pullout from China. The foreign minister then coached the ambassadors: "However, I do not wish you to give the impression that the negotiations are broken off. Merely say to them that you are awaiting instructions. . . ."

While Japan and America appeared on a collision course, Churchill's communications to Roosevelt indicated clearly that the Prime Minister did not want to see the United States distracted from the conflict in Europe by a diversion in the Pacific. On November 26 he sent a message via their private channel using his favored form of address, "Personal and secret for the President from Former Naval Person," that read: ". . . [W]e certainly do not want an additional war."

On November 30 the President was in Warm Springs, where he had gone to celebrate a belated Thanksgiving with fellow polio victims being treated there. The hiatus was abruptly ended by a desperate call from Stimson. A

Japanese attack seemed imminent, the secretary of war warned. The President should return to Washington at once, which he did on December 1.

On the very day that FDR returned to Washington, Premier Tojo sought an audience with Emperor Hirohito to ask his permission to implement the plan for war against the United States. The emperor nodded his assent. A Japanese task force under radio silence—six aircraft carriers, two battleships, two cruisers, and nine destroyers—had already steamed out of Kure naval base four days before destined for Pearl Harbor with orders, once the emperor's agreement was obtained, to deal the American Pacific Fleet "a mortal blow."

Among the Magic decrypts shown to FDR by his naval aide, Captain Beardall, one particularly captured his interest. The Japanese foreign office had sent Japan's ambassador in Berlin, General Oshima, a message to deliver to Hitler and his foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, that read: ". . . Say very secretly to [the Germans] that there is extreme danger that war may suddenly break out between the Anglo-Saxon nations and Japan through some clash of arms and add that the time of the breaking out of this war may come quicker than anyone dreams. . . ." The usual Magic procedure was for FDR to return decrypts. But a day later, for the first time, the President asked Beardall to retrieve a copy of this transmission for him to keep.

Besides the unmistakable content of the diplomatic traffic, other intelligence sources pointed to a Japanese attack. An eye-opener was a September 24 message from Foreign Minister Togo to the consul general in Honolulu, Nagao Kita, telling him to divide Pearl Harbor into five sectors and report on ship moorings and other activities in each sector. The message went on: "With regard to warships and aircraft carriers, we would like to have you report on those at anchor (these are not so important) tied up at wharves, buoy and in docks."

Kita had a sharp-eyed agent to fulfill Tokyo's requests. Ensign Takeo Yoshikawa had been assigned to Hawaii by the Third Bureau, the intelligence branch of the Japanese Naval General Staff, to serve undercover as vice consul. He had arrived in Honolulu on March 26, 1941. Yoshikawa's assignment was to provide intelligence on U.S. Pacific Fleet activity in Pearl Harbor for Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, then masterminding the strike against this target. Yoshikawa led a deceptively leisurely life. He hung around a Japanese-owned restaurant, the Shunchu-ro, located conveniently on a hill overlooking Pearl Harbor. It had two telescopes for sightseers to enjoy the magnificent view. Yoshikawa took girlfriends on boat

rides around Kaneohe Bay. He rented a Piper Cub at John Rodgers Airport and cruised above the harbor. All the while, this apparently indefatigable tourist was taking pictures, making notes, and preparing reports for Kita to send to Tokyo. He also sent home postcards of aerial views which were used to construct a mock-up of Pearl Harbor to train Japanese torpedo bomber pilots for the strike.

Captain Theodore S. Wilkinson, about to be named as chief of naval intelligence and described as "one of the best brains in the armed forces," huddled with Lieutenant Commander Alwin D. Kramer, the Navy's chief Japanese translator, over the September 24 message dividing Pearl Harbor into sectors. Kramer's responsibility was to choose which messages to distribute to senior officials. The two officers concluded that Togo's interest in ship locations did not mean that the Japanese intended to attack Pearl Harbor; that was too farfetched. Rather, they concluded that the Japanese wanted to know in what order and how quickly American warships might sortie from the harbor to prevent or retaliate against an attack by Japan in Southeast Asia. The significance attached to this message is indicated by the fact that the Army did not translate it for over two weeks. The President was shown only those intercepts deemed worth his attention, and no evidence exists that FDR was shown this particular message which, after the fact, became known as "the bomb-plot message." The decrypt was not even forwarded to Admiral Husband Kimmel, commander of naval forces at Pearl Harbor. In retrospect, Wilkinson and Kramer's misreading of the bomb-plot message appears obtuse. Yet, this particular decrypt would not have stood out as unique at the time. Tokyo was demanding similar information from its agents throughout Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Panama, and even San Francisco, San Diego, Seattle, and Vancouver. On November 19, Tokyo had alerted several diplomatic posts, including Washington, of a special signal to be inserted into the daily radio weather forecast: "In case of emergency (danger of cutting off our diplomatic relations)." If the threatened break involved the United States, the weather report would say, "Higashi No Kazeame," meaning "East Wind Rain." "When this is heard," Tokyo instructed its envoys, "please destroy all code papers, etc."

On December 1, the day FDR returned from Warm Springs, Tokyo told Nomura and Kurusu: "[T]o prevent the United States from becoming unduly suspicious we have been advising the press and others that though there are some wide differences between Japan and the United States, the negotiations are continuing."

The cascade of clues pointing to an imminent attack continued. On December 2, Foreign Minister Togo asked Consul General Kita for more pinpoint intelligence on Pearl Harbor: "... [T]he presence in port of warships, airplane carriers, and cruisers is of utmost importance. . . . [L]et me know day by day. Wire me in each case whether there are any observation balloons above Pearl Harbor. . . . Also advise me whether or not the warships are provided with anti-mine nets." While with hindsight the purpose of this and the preceding requests regarding Pearl Harbor seems glaringly obvious, they were, at the time, not given immediate priority by American codebreakers.

The Japanese had unwitting evidence from Roosevelt himself that their duplicity was working. On the same day that Foreign Minister Togo was asking for more intelligence on Pearl Harbor, FDR received Nomura and Kurusu in the Oval Office. The President's demeanor was cool as he warned them that he possessed information revealing that their country was moving a large expeditionary force south from Shanghai toward Indochina. The Americans evidently still knew nothing of the task force steaming toward Hawaii.

On December 4, Lieutenant Commander Kramer had in hand an intercepted message that informed all recipients to execute the so-called winds message to destroy their ciphers and coding machines. The communication was strong evidence that Japan intended to sever diplomatic relations with the United States, but not a clear war signal, nor was it handled as such.

On December 5, Ensign Yoshikawa again flew a reconnaissance over Pearl Harbor in a Piper Cub enabling him to report to Consul General Kita that nine battleships, three light cruisers, and seventeen destroyers were in the harbor, plus four light cruisers and two destroyers in dry dock. His figures were off by only one light cruiser, two heavy cruisers, and ten destroyers. He could further report that the Americans were not using their new torpedo nets; nor did they have barrage balloons aloft.

The final Japanese diplomatic stall began on Saturday evening, December 6, after a preoccupied FDR left his dinner guests early, skipping the musicale. Grace Tully had thought a long day was finally over when the President unexpectedly summoned her back to his study. He wanted to make one last effort to head off war with Japan through an unprecedented channel, a direct appeal to Emperor Hirohito "to restore traditional amity and prevent further death and destruction in the world." As the President was dictating his message, the first thirteen parts of a fourteen-part Japa-

nese message to the embassy in Washington were being intercepted by a U.S. Navy listening post near Seattle. Though the President had by now put an end to the pointless system of Magic deliveries by the Army in one month and the Navy in the next, codebreaking was still being done on alternate days by the two rival services. Though the Navy had intercepted the multi-part message, December 6 was an Army day to decrypt, and the Navy wasted time sending the intercept to the Army's Signal Intelligence Service. The delay was compounded by the fact that SIS cryptanalysts had already taken off for the weekend. Delivery of one of the most vital communications ever handled in American foreign relations was further delayed as the long message was returned for the Navy to break. An embarrassed SIS officer finally put together an emergency shift to help the Navy, not, however, before the two teams agreed on one final inanity: Any message parts broken by the Army were still to be typed up by the Navy.

While FDR was testing different phrases in his appeal to Hirohito, an overworked Lieutenant Commander Kramer carefully checked the translations of the first thirteen parts of the Japanese message. FDR's appeal to Hirohito was dispatched at 9 P.M. A half hour later Kramer arrived at the White House with his decrypt in a locked pouch. The moment marked the first time that Magic traffic had ever been delivered to the President outside regular office hours. Kramer turned the message over to a young lieutenant, Lester R. Schulz, a naval aide filling in on a Saturday night for Captain Beardall. It was only Schulz's second day on the job when the junior officer hesitantly tapped on the door of the President's study. There he found FDR in somber conversation with his principal confidant and White House boarder, the cadaverous Harry Hopkins, who slouched in an armchair opposite Roosevelt. As Schulz stood by, the President began to read the long dispatch. He read slowly. A good ten minutes passed. Finally, he turned to Hopkins and said, "This means war." Hopkins replied that it was a pity "we could not strike the first blow and prevent any sort of surprise." "No," the President said, "we can't do that. We are a democracy and a peaceful people." The jaw set belligerently as he added, "But we have a good record." Schulz later remembered of FDR and Hopkins's conversation, "The only geographical name I recall was Indo-China. The time at which the war might begin was not discussed . . . there was no indication that tomorrow was necessarily the day." There had been no mention, Schulz was positive, of Pearl Harbor.

In Hawaii, the Army commander, Lieutenant General Walter Short, and the Pearl Harbor fleet commander, Admiral Kimmel, had been in posses-

sion for the previous ten days of Admiral Stark's November 27 "war warning" that "an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days." General Short had contingency plans for three conditions. Number 1 was for "a defense against sabotage, espionage and subversive activities without any threat from the outside." Number 2 was to defend against air, surface, and submarine attack. Number 3 required preparations for "a defense against all-out attack." Short chose number 1, thereby bunching up his aircraft wingtip to wingtip and locking up guns and ammunition to protect the planes and weapons from saboteurs. He chose this level of alert to avoid unnecessarily frightening civilians with scare stories about the Army preparing for attack. For the same reason, Admiral Kimmel, the naval commander, did not increase the state of readiness of his ships in the harbor. The two men cannot be blamed entirely for fearing local saboteurs over foreign attackers. The Navy chief, Admiral Stark, while warning the Pacific Fleet of "hostile action possible at any moment," had added that any measures taken "should be carried out so as not repeat not to alarm civil population. . . ." Stark was reflecting a by now embedded national conviction, fostered in no small measure by the President himself. For the previous two years, Americans had been indoctrinated that subversion from within was the prime threat to their country. Still, the November 27 message and a supplementing War Department message to General Short sent the same day warning of "hostile action possible at any moment," though not mentioning Pearl Harbor, would seem unmistakable calls to gird for an attack from within or without.

One last warning remained. On Sunday morning, December 7, Navy cryptographers were decrypting the last piece of the fourteen-part Japanese message, the so-called Final Memorandum, which declared that Tokyo was breaking off negotiations. At the same time, Army cryptographers were breaking a separate instruction to Ambassador Nomura to submit the long message to the State Department at 1 P.M. Washington time. Colonel Rufus Bratton, the astute head of the Far East section of Army intelligence, was struck by the preciseness of the hour and its unusual Sunday afternoon delivery. To Bratton, this timing signaled a Japanese attack at that hour, probably, he guessed, against the Philippines. Precious time was lost while Bratton tried desperately to locate General Marshall, who was off on his regular Sunday horseback ride. Two and a half hours later, Bratton was finally explaining his interpretation of the 1 P.M. delivery to Marshall. The Army Chief of Staff immediately fired off to commanders in the Pacific a warning that the Japanese had, in effect, presented an ultima-



tum and "to be on the alert accordingly." The message went first to Manila, next to the Panama Canal, and last to Hawaii. "Fired off" is perhaps not the right phrase regarding the Hawaii delivery since the signalmen could not get through on their military circuits, and Marshall's warning of imminent hostilities had to be sent by commercial cable. By the time the warning reached General Short's headquarters, the skies over Pearl Harbor were dotted with Japanese planes. The church bells announcing Sunday services were being drowned out by torpedoes exploding against Kimmel's clustered warships and by bombs destroying Short's bunched-up planes.

The Japanese diplomats had been instructed to deliver the Final Memorandum at 1 P.M., but it was not brought to Secretary of State Hull until 2:20 P.M., with the attack well under way. The delay would later enable Japanese officials, wanting to escape the dishonor of making a sneak attack, to blame the tardy delivery on administrative bungling and on time spent decoding garbles. Subsequent research in the Japanese foreign ministry archives, however, makes manifest that the Japanese never intended a proper declaration of war. An entry in the Japanese war diary dated December 7 reads: "[O]ur deceptive diplomacy is steadily proceeding toward success." On an idyllic Sunday morning, on an island demi-paradise, American blood was copiously spilled, the nation's pride wounded, and anger aroused until retribution became the only tenable response. "No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion," the President told Congress the next day in asking for a declaration of war, "the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory."

That same day Britain declared war on Japan. On December 11, Hitler kept his word to the Japanese and declared war on the United States. Senator Wheeler's leak of Rainbow Five appears to have figured into his decisions since, Hitler said, "... there has now been revealed in America President Roosevelt's plan by which, at the latest in 1943, Germany and Italy are to be attacked in Europe. . . . Germany and Italy have been finally compelled in view of this and in loyalty to the Tripartite Pact, to carry on the struggle against the United States and England jointly and side by side with Japan for the defense, and thus for the maintenance, of liberty and independence of their nations and empires." A leak engineered by isolationists to keep America out of war had helped produce the opposite effect.

Hitler had detailed knowledge of what had been said in the White House on the day of Pearl Harbor. The chain was long, but effective, and the first link was located astonishingly close to the President. The Swiss

minister to the United States, fifty-two-year-old Dr. Charles Bruggmann, had previously served in Washington eighteen years before, when he had met and married Mary Wallace, the sister of FDR's vice president. Through the years, Henry Wallace developed a deep affection for his brother-in-law. They met often, and talked on the phone almost daily. Wallace felt safe in confiding to Bruggmann the most intimate secrets to which his position made him privy. Months before Pearl Harbor, on August 17, 1941, Wallace told Bruggmann about the briefing the President had given the cabinet regarding FDR's meeting on the Atlantic with Churchill. Soon after Pearl Harbor, Wallace told Bruggmann what he had heard and seen on the day of the attack as he sat among those summoned by the President. Whatever his family ties to the Vice President, Bruggmann was first of all a professional diplomat. What Wallace confided to him he cabled back to the Swiss foreign ministry in Bern. What Bruggmann did not know was that a German agent, code-named Habakuk, had penetrated the Swiss foreign ministry and read all of his reports. Thus, soon after Pearl Harbor, Habakuk was able to send a message to Berlin of "precise and reliable information" that Bruggmann had heard "in strictest confidence" from Vice President Wallace. He told his superiors, almost word for word, how FDR had characterized the first gathering as: "The most serious Cabinet session since Lincoln met with the Cabinet at the outbreak of the Civil War." The spy was further able to report the President's revelations of the losses the Japanese had inflicted at Pearl Harbor.

The blame for Pearl Harbor has been the assiduous study of eight official investigations, the most thoroughgoing of which, conducted by Congress after the war, ran to fifteen thousand pages of testimony. With the mass of intelligence available to President Roosevelt, with his capacity to read Japan's most secret communications at almost the same time that Japanese diplomats read them, with the pointed Japanese inquiries about Pearl Harbor's layout, known to American cryptanalysts, with his own admission that the Japanese Final Memorandum "means war," how could the President not have known, almost down to the hour, that Pearl Harbor would be attacked?

His seeming ignorance of the strike must be examined against three possible explanations. One, FDR genuinely did not know that Pearl Harbor was targeted. Two, he knew and deliberately did not act in order, as revisionist historians have claimed, to force America into a war that he believed was just but that most Americans did not want. Three, Prime Minister Churchill possessed intelligence, as again has been argued by re-

visionists, revealing the Japanese attack, but deliberately withheld it in order to see the United States drawn into war on Britain's side.

Choosing the correct one of these three explanations must be prefaced by an overarching question: Why did Japan choose to attack Pearl Harbor in the first place? The strike was intended not to entangle Japan in a protracted war against the United States, but as a knockout punch. It was supposed to eliminate America's floating fortress, the Pacific Fleet, and thus force the United States to withdraw from Southeast Asia and leave Japan free there to work its will. The blow was analogous to having one member of a gang take out the guard so that the rest can then rob the bank unimpeded. The Japanese were well aware that the United States had its attention focused on the war in Europe and that its president wanted to join that fight. They could not imagine that the Americans would undertake two prolonged wars, one across the Atlantic *and* one in the Pacific.

Against this backdrop, the question arises again, given the wealth of intelligence available to him, how could President Roosevelt not have divined that Pearl Harbor was the target? In retrospect, the clues seem to lead to that conclusion like lights on a well-marked runway. The truth, however, is that not one of the 239 messages intercepted between Tokyo and the Japanese envoys in Washington in the six months before December 7 ever mentioned Pearl Harbor. So closely held was the secret that even Nomura and Kurusu were left in the dark that the American base was to be attacked. Though told to wrap up their negotiations by November 25, a deadline extended to the 29th, and though told, "After that things are automatically going to change," the two envoys were never informed precisely of what these "things" were. After the war, Nomura told an interviewer that he had been "the worst-informed ambassador in history."

Magic may actually have contributed to the failure of preparedness at Pearl Harbor. Analysis of Magic intercepts led American military leaders to anticipate a Japanese move, not to the east against Pearl Harbor, but against Southeast Asia. Admiral Stark's "Memorandum for the President," submitted just ten days before the attack, warned of possible Japanese attacks against the Burma Road, Thailand, Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines, and even to the north against the Russian Maritime Provinces, but said nothing about Pearl Harbor. The following day, corroborating intelligence came from the American assistant naval attaché in Shanghai, who reported, "Many transports sighted during the week 19–26 November between Hong Kong and Shanghai heading South. A number of

these transports had troops on board." When, on December 2, Roosevelt received Nomura and Kurusu for the last time, he warned them that he had intelligence of this southerly expedition, but made no mention of Yamamoto's task force approaching Pearl Harbor, which would have been a far sharper rebuke of Japanese duplicity had he known of it.

Some Pearl Harbor researchers have made much of the "winds" messages, which were to be inserted into Japanese weather reports, the implication being that the signal "East Wind Rain" meant that Japan was about to attack the United States. This signal, however, meant only that the designated Japanese embassies were to destroy their codes and coding machines. But what of the decrypted messages from Foreign Minister Togo to Consul General Kita in Honolulu requesting information on facilities and ship movements in Pearl Harbor? The problem with viewing these intercepts as clear indications that the Japanese had targeted Pearl Harbor is that American codebreakers received them among a flood of requests for similar information on nearly a dozen other ports. Further, no evidence exists that any of the decrypts handled at this level were shown to FDR. If any American did have solid evidence in hand that the Japanese were preparing an attack on Pearl Harbor, it was J. Edgar Hoover. Yet, Hoover's visceral dislike of the double agent Dusko Popov and his superficial handling of the microdot questionnaire that Popov carried deprived anyone in the U.S. government, including FDR, of strong evidence that the Japanese had targeted Pearl Harbor.

"The Fog of War" is an apt description of the confusion that obscures what is actually happening in the heat of battle. A corollary phrase, the "Flood of Intelligence," might explain why outcomes look clearer after rather than before the fact. After the fact, the threads connecting A to B to C to Pearl Harbor appear to stand out unmistakably. But that clarity emerges only in retrospect, only after these strands have been teased from a dense bundle of other threads. At the time, the relevant strand stood out no more visibly than hundreds of competing threads—the true, the false, the misleading, the contradictory, the irrelevant.

Physically, what FDR received from his couriers was a decryption form indicating From, To, Date, Time of Transmission, Time of Interception, and Time of Translation. He rarely received any analysis connecting these bits and pieces. In effect, the President and other members of the War Council, including Hull, Stimson, Knox, and Marshall, were delivered raw decrypts and were left to evaluate them, acting as their own intelligence of-

ficer. This situation was best described by the Army's codebreaking genius, William Friedman, who later observed: "[T]here was *nobody* in either the Army or the Navy intelligence staffs in Washington whose most important, if not sole duty, was to study the whole story which the MAGIC messages were unfolding. . . . [N]obody whose responsibility it was to try and put the pieces of the jig-saw puzzle together."

Based on the information FDR had in hand on the eve of Pearl Harbor, if asked if Japan was going to attack the United States, he would certainly have answered "Yes." He made clear this conviction in the War Council meeting of November 25 where, according to Stimson's diary, FDR stated, "We were likely to be attacked perhaps next Monday. . . ." If asked if he knew with certainty where the Japanese would strike, he would have to have answered "No." Given the targets suggested in the Japanese intercepts, if asked if Pearl Harbor was in danger, he likely would have answered, "Probably not." Never in any report or intelligence, whether from agents or broken codes, did FDR ever receive a warning that said Pearl Harbor will be attacked. General Marshall told FDR that the harbor was invincible and a most unlikely target. It was, the general said, ". . . the strongest fortress in the world. . . . Enemy carriers, naval escorts and transports will begin to come under air attack at a distance of approximately 750 miles. This attack will increase in intensity until within 200 miles of the objective, the enemy forces will be subject to all types of bombardment closely supported by our most modern pursuit."

Undeniably, Roosevelt wanted to enter the war, but the war in Europe, which he had all but done in the Atlantic, lacking only a formal declaration. Yet, none of his speeches, warning of Nazi machinations in South America, threats to the Panama Canal, or the alleged unpremeditated U-boat attack against the destroyer *Greer*, had aroused sufficient public ire to lead the nation into that war. If then, a president wants war with Germany, why does he invite an attack on Japan? Put another way, if Tom is itching to fight Dick, why provoke a fight with Harry? Does the intelligence available to the President and his inner circle support the thesis that FDR invited the blow at Pearl Harbor to propel the country into the war?

One argument pressed by revisionists is that the President had prior knowledge of the impending attack through intercepted radio signals from the Japanese task force bound for Pearl Harbor. A corollary claim is that had the President alerted the Pearl Harbor defenders of the approaching

menace, the Japanese fleet would have turned back. A major source supposedly proving this thesis has been identified only as "Seaman Z" who worked in the intelligence branch of the 12th Naval District in San Francisco. One of Z's duties was to plot communications intercepted anywhere in the Pacific, commercial or military. The revisionist claim is that prior to the attack, Z managed to get cross bearings on mysterious signals that could be a missing Japanese carrier force.

Among the documents at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park is the transcript of an interview of Robert D. Ogg conducted by I. G. Newman, a historical consultant and former naval officer. Ogg, it turns out, was Seaman Z. Newman asked Ogg if his superior, Lieutenant Elsworth A. Hosmer, had ever been ordered to relocate a missing Japanese carrier force. Ogg replied, "My comment on that is that in no way was he ordered to do so. . . . I don't think he had any reason to feel from anything that was conveyed to me that they [the Japanese task force] went East, West, South or where." Newman asked Ogg if his plotting of cross bearings led him to tell Hosmer, "It could possibly be the missing task force." Ogg replied, "I never made such mention to Hosmer whatsoever." Ogg further told his interviewer, ". . . [D]uring those four or five days [prior to Pearl Harbor] I certainly had no feeling that an entire Jap fleet . . . was involved. . . ." The airwaves across the Pacific were indeed filled with signals, many emanating from Japanese vessels. But the weight of evidence is that the Japanese task force never broke radio silence, not even from one ship to another; thus there would have been no signals to intercept. This position is supported by Minoru Genda, one of the key architects of the attack, who claims that the Pearl Harbor task force "kept an absolute radio silence." A member of the task force itself, Lieutenant Commander Chuichi Yoshioka, has stated, "[R]adio silence *was* imposed even before the ships assembled in a small bay in Intara Island on November 24th." A recent revisionist, Robert B. Stinnett, claims to have found documentary proof that the Japanese task force did break radio silence, that American monitors intercepted these transmissions, and that they were decrypted and sent to FDR. Thus, Stinnett's word is pitted against those of Japanese who actually participated in the Pearl Harbor attack and who had no motive to protect Franklin Roosevelt's position in history. The revisionist premise is that exposure of the Japanese task force would have forced its leader, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, to turn around and go home. Therefore, FDR said nothing because he wanted the attack to proceed. Yet, while the Japanese

sought the advantage of surprise, it was not indispensable. As Ronald Spector, a well-regarded historian of this period, writes, "Admiral Nagumo and his staff half expected to have to fight their way in." Indeed, encountering opposition was one of the alternatives practiced by the Japanese task force in war-gaming the strike.

The final conspiracy theory to be dealt with from the intelligence standpoint is whether or not Prime Minister Churchill had knowledge of the impending attack on Pearl Harbor from his own sources, and deliberately withheld this information from Roosevelt so that the Japanese would succeed in their attack and thus plunge the United States into the war. As James Rusbridger claims in *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, "Churchill was aware that a task force had sailed from northern Japan in late November 1941, and that one of its likely targets was Pearl Harbor." Rusbridger goes on to say that "Churchill deliberately kept this vital information from Roosevelt, because he realized an attack of this nature, whether on the U.S. Pacific Fleet or the Philippines, was a means of fulfilling his publicly proclaimed desire to get America into the war at any cost." It must be asked whether drawing the United States into a war with Japan was a logical way for Churchill to get FDR into the war in Europe. Churchill was certainly capable of manipulating intelligence to serve his country's ends. He had no qualms about Stephenson's BSC manufacturing stories to feed to Roosevelt that the Nazis were conspiring to invade South America and threaten the Panama Canal. He allowed Roosevelt to continue thinking that Hitler would invade Britain when his own Ultra interceptions made clear that this danger had passed. However, an attack that would have brought America into a war with the Japanese was a risky bet for Churchill. How he viewed his best interests is clear from a five-page report written on November 12, 1941, less than a month before Pearl Harbor, by the American ambassador to Britain, John Winant. Winant had spent three days with Churchill in the country. According to Winant's notes, forwarded to FDR, Churchill set out three positions in which Britain might find itself. The worst-case scenario, which Churchill considered unthinkable, was that Japan would come into the war against Britain and that America would stay out. The next best outcome would be for neither Japan nor America to enter the war. But Churchill's preference, the PM told Winant, was that "the United States enter the war without Japan." With this as his first choice, it hardly seems that Churchill would deliberately enable a Japanese attack on America by withholding intelligence from Roosevelt.

Finally, Churchill possessed no sources of signal intelligence in the Pacific that were not already available to FDR. What the Prime Minister concluded, as late as November 25, was that Japan was irrevocably committed to attack Thailand.

Ironically, in order to get America into the European conflict, Churchill had to depend on Adolf Hitler to declare war on the United States. As expressed by the diplomat and later presidential advisor George Ball, "If Hitler had not made this decision and if he had simply done nothing, there would have been an enormous sentiment in the United States . . . that the Pacific was now our war and the European war was for the Europeans, and we Americans should concentrate all our efforts on Japan." Churchill, with the Ultra secrets at his fingertips, nevertheless learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor just as millions of Britons did. As Captain Malcolm Kennedy, a Japanese linguist at Bletchley, wrote in his diary on December 7, ". . . [T]he news on the 9 P.M. wireless, that Japan had opened hostilities with an air raid on Pearl Harbor, more than 3000 miles out in the Pacific, came as a complete surprise." Winston Churchill had not learned of Pearl Harbor through advance intelligence that he withheld from FDR. He learned about it on the BBC.

The revisionist theory requires a certain path of logic. First, FDR had to know that Pearl Harbor was going to be bombed. His secretaries of state, war, and Navy either did not know or, if they did, they all lied and conspired in the deaths of twenty-four hundred Americans and the near-fatal destruction of the Pacific Fleet. Pearl Harbor is nowhere mentioned in Admiral Stark's November 27 war warning to the fleet, unless, again, we imagine the chief of the American Navy deliberately misleading the defenders of Pearl Harbor and conniving in the mass death of men under him and the destruction of his ships. If Nomura and Kurusu did not know what their government intended, it is difficult to argue that the American President or his chief aides knew. For FDR to fail to alert the defenders of an attack that he knew was coming, we must premise that the President had enlisted men of the stature of Stimson, Hull, Knox, and Marshall in a treasonous conspiracy, or that he had a unique source of information on Japanese fleet movements unknown to anyone else in the government.

The conspiracy theory fails most abysmally in that it would *not* achieve its supposed end. It would not have brought America into the European war. FDR's legendary "day that will live in infamy" speech declared war only on Japan, not Germany. For that war, FDR, too, had to depend on

Adolf Hitler. As he had told Churchill four months before aboard the *Augusta*, a fight with Japan would be “the wrong war in the wrong ocean at the wrong time.”

Why, then, one may wonder, have authors and scholars, some of distinction, embraced the conspiratorial thesis that has led ordinary citizens to ask, “Is it true that FDR knew the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor?” The best answer lies in the fact that dramatically scripted conspiracies provide high theater, while the truth is often messy, random, illogical, even dull. The thesis of a Roosevelt-engineered attack on Pearl Harbor joins the perennially recycled conspiracy theories about the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, which will go on and on and on. The inescapable, if prosaic, truth is that no evidence whatever exists that President Roosevelt wanted a war in the Pacific, and all the evidence demonstrates that he wanted to enter the war in Europe. A monumental distraction from that objective, a war with Japan, was the last thing he needed. All the secrets, the intelligence, the intercepted Japanese codes, the very stuff with which the historian works, support this conclusion: Pearl Harbor was a catastrophe, not a conspiracy.

## Chapter XI



# Secrets of the Map Room

ON THE evening of December 22, 1941, just two weeks after Pearl Harbor, a whirlwind struck the White House. Prime Minister Churchill arrived. The President's sometime speechwriter Robert Sherwood caught the Prime Minister's motive for the trip: “When Churchill and his staff came to Washington in December of 1941,” Sherwood later wrote, “they were prepared for the possibility of an announcement by Roosevelt that due to the rage of the American people against Japan and the imperilled position of American forces in the Philippines and other islands, the war in the Pacific must be given precedence.” This was a strategy that Churchill was determined to derail while at the White House and he expected to pursue his strategic objectives among the comforts to which he had become accustomed. He wanted no talking outside his room, no whistling in the corridors, and his libations were to be served on time. He instructed the White House usher, Alonzo Fields, “I must have a tumbler of sherry in my room before breakfast, a couple glasses of scotch and soda before lunch and French champagne and 90 year old brandy before I go to sleep at night.”

A seventeen-year-old girl, Margaret Hambley, whom FDR regarded as his godchild, has left a vivid picture of Churchill at the White House. “He has,” Hambley wrote, after attending a dinner for the PM, “a very pink