

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 353

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

The attack on Pearl Harbor transformed American politics in an instant. The interventionist and the America Firster no longer had anything to argue about. On December 8, everyone in America was on the same page: defeat Japan.

But the Japanese were hardly resting on their laurels. Japanese land and naval forces were attacking across the Pacific, from Malaya to Midway.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 353. A Date Which Will Live in Infamy.

The afternoon of December 7, Franklin Roosevelt met with his military leaders to discuss putting America's Army and Navy onto a wartime footing. Secretary of State Hull was directed to reach out to the governments of the Latin American nations to ask for their support and cooperation. He directed the Army to provide protection for the Japanese embassy in Washington and Japan's consulates across the United States.

At 5:00, he called in his secretary and dictated to her the address he planned to give before Congress tomorrow. It was surprisingly short, about 500 words.

Roosevelt's Cabinet met at 8:30 that evening. Roosevelt began the meeting by telling the members this would be the most important American Cabinet meeting since 1861. He directed Navy Secretary Knox to investigate why Pearl Harbor had been caught off guard.

Roosevelt would later relieve Admiral Kimmel, the commander of the Pacific Fleet and Admiral Stark, chief of naval operations and force their retirements. Roosevelt would appoint the commander of the Navy's Bureau of Navigation, Admiral Chester Nimitz, to command the Pacific Fleet, while Admiral Ernest King, commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet, would replace Stark as Chief of Naval Operations.

At 10:00 that night, leaders of both parties in the US Senate and House of Representatives joined the meeting. They reacted with horror as Roosevelt described the attack. They agreed to allow Roosevelt to address Congress at 12:30 the following afternoon. Senate Minority Leader Charles McNary told the President the Republicans in the Senate would do whatever Roosevelt asked. House Minority Leader Joe Martin told Roosevelt that when the honor of the Nation is at stake, there is only one party.

Roosevelt went to the Capitol the following afternoon, accompanied by his wife, Eleanor, and Edith Wilson, widow of Woodrow Wilson. There he addressed Congress:

[sound recording: Roosevelt's speech of December 8, 1941.]

That was a condensed version of the speech. The full speech lasted eight minutes, consisted of 25 sentences, and was interrupted by applause twelve times.

Half an hour later, Congress declared war on Japan. In the Senate, the vote was unanimous. In the House, there was one dissenting vote: Jeannette Rankin, Republican from Montana and pacifist. Rankin had been the first woman elected to Congress and had also cast a dissenting vote when Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany in 1917. That time, she had not been the only dissenter; this time she was. She declined a suggestion to change her vote to an abstention, so that the declaration would be unanimous in both chambers; her vote ended her political career.

Three days later, as you already know, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States in support of Japan. They did not ask Japan to reciprocate by declaring war on the Soviet Union. This time, Roosevelt did not bother to address Congress; he simply sent a written message requesting declarations of war against the two countries. The House and Senate obliged him. This time both votes were unanimous, as Jeannette Rankin abstained.

The public rage against Japan was overwhelming. Japan's ugly war against the Chinese, its ugly sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, coupled with Japan's status as a member of the Tripartite Pact and the willingness of Germany and Italy to rush to support Japan convinced most people that Japan was also a fascist state. Like Germany and Italy, it attacked brutally and without warning. Though there was no leading political figure in Japan you could compare to Mussolini or Hitler, most Americans quickly concluded that Germany, Italy, and Japan were three peas in a pod.

Information on the damage the Navy sustained at Pearl Harbor was kept secret, and most Americans believed that an American naval counterstrike against the Japanese was coming any day now. But as they waited, weeks and months passed with no American victories, only report after report of new Japanese gains.

You already know about the Japanese attacks on the Philippines and its troop landings in Malaya. You know about the sinkings of HMS *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*. But there's more.

Midway Island is the westernmost island in the Hawaiian archipelago and claimed by the United States, although it was not officially part of the Territory of Hawaii. In the early twentieth century, it was used as a connection point for trans-Pacific telegraph cables. A small number of US Marines were stationed on the island to defend the American claim. With the rise of commercial passenger air travel, Midway became an important stopover for trans-Pacific trips. For a time the island even hosted a small hotel.

Similarly, Midway was militarily valuable as a stopover for US Navy ships and planes. When tensions with the Japanese began to rise, Midway was seen as an important defensive position, guarding approaches to the US West Coast. The airstrip was improved and gun emplacements built on the island.

On December 7, 1941, the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack, two Japanese destroyers bombarded Midway. The Marines on the island returned fire with the island's guns, damaging one of the destroyers and forcing the Japanese to withdraw, but don't expect them to give up.

That same day, Japanese bombers attacked Wake Island, succeeding in destroying eight of the twelve American fighters stationed there on the ground. The other four were patrolling at the time. On December 11, the Japanese attempted to land soldiers on Wake, but the island's US Marine garrison fired its guns at the approaching Japanese ships, while the four surviving fighters dropped bombs on them. Two Japanese destroyers and one submarine were sunk, killing 340 Japanese sailors. The invasion force withdrew, but don't expect the Japanese to give up here, either.

That same day, Japanese aircraft operating from the island of Saipan began bombing the US-controlled island of Guam. Guam, unlike Wake or Midway, had an actual civilian population living on it and the US military judged it unsuitable as a defensive location. On December 10, Japanese soldiers landed on the island; its small American garrison surrendered.

On December 8, the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack and the attack on Clark Field, Japanese ground units landed on some small islands north of Luzon. Douglas MacArthur correctly guessed this was a diversion, meant to tempt him to divide his force, so he kept his army intact in Manila and refused the bait.

On December 10, the Japanese bombed the US naval base at Cavite, near Manila, and Japanese soldiers made their first landings on the northern shore of Luzon itself. Naval command in Washington judged that the Asiatic Fleet was at risk, and ordered it to withdraw south, to the Dutch East Indies. Only the base's 27 submarines remained to contest Japanese control of Philippine waters. Alas, over the entire Philippines campaign, these submarines were unable to sink a single Japanese ship.

On December 12, reports came of a major Japanese invasion at Lingayen Gulf, on the Philippine island of Luzon, north of Manila. A Philippine Army division had fought off a major Japanese

landing attempt, destroying dozens of Japanese transports and killing hundreds of Japanese soldiers. Not a single Japanese survived long enough to set foot on Philippine soil.

A *Life* magazine photographer traveled to the site to get photographs, but found only Philippine soldiers relaxing on the beach. No trace of combat, no Japanese bodies to be seen anywhere. What had actually happened was an unidentified boat had wandered into the Gulf and was fired upon by the many shore guns placed there. The pilot of the boat wisely turned tail and fled when the shooting began.

Back in Manila, Major LeGrande Diller, Douglas MacArthur's press officer, was handing out statements proclaiming that a major enemy invasion attempt had been repelled. After the rest of the reporters left to file their stories, the *Life* photographer spoke privately with Diller and told him he had been up to the beach at Lingayen and found no signs of battle. Had this invasion attempt actually taken place? Diller pointed to his own press release and said, of course it had. It says so right here. *The New York Times* ran a banner headline announcing: JAPANESE FORCES WIPED OUT IN WESTERN LUZON.

In a similar vein, the Associated Press correspondent in Manila sent home reports deriding the combat effectiveness of the Japanese Army. The Japanese Navy might be something, the AP allowed, but the Japanese Army "is an ill-uniformed, untrained mass of young boys between fifteen and eighteen years old, equipped with small-caliber guns and driven forward by desperate determination to advance or die." If the AP had an explanation for how this untrained mob of teenagers was able to invade and occupy half of China, they kept it to themselves.

In fact, that unidentified boat that had turned up at the Gulf of Lingayen was a Japanese reconnaissance boat testing the Philippine coastal defenses.

As the American public was being lulled by reassuring stories of the ineptitude of the Japanese Army, the Japanese Army made a second landing on Luzon, this one at the far southern end of the island. Their strategy was now clear; they were going to march on Manila from both the north and the south. On December 19, Japanese soldiers landed unopposed on the Philippines' second-largest island, Mindanao.

On December 11, Japanese units entering Malaya from Thailand attacked the town of Jitra in the northwest of the country and forced its Indian Army defenders to retreat. The Japanese were now free to march down both coasts of Malaya, while the British were forced to withdraw their air units to Singapore. On December 17, British command ordered the evacuation of all Europeans from the island of Penang, off the west coast of Malaya. The native Malaysians, most of whom were employees or servants of the white residents, were left behind. One can only imagine the mix of emotions they must have felt as they watched the Europeans leave. A certain degree of relief at the sight of a British withdrawal perhaps, mingled with a wrenching sense of betrayal, along with a looming dread of what a Japanese occupation might mean.

[music: Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 4*]

As the Japanese were advancing in the Philippines and in Malaya, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was in Moscow to consult with Joseph Stalin concerning the Japanese attacks in the East and what they might mean. What Eden wanted most was to persuade Stalin to declare war on Japan in solidarity with the Western Allies, but Stalin declined. He had just been forced to transfer his best units from the Far East to reinforce the defense of Moscow and it would be next summer before he could even think of sending them back. To declare war on the Japanese before then would be madness.

Additionally, Stalin noted that the Soviet public would have difficulty understanding why the Red Army would choose to pick a fight with Japan at the same time that large swaths of the European motherland were under German occupation. In a strange way, it would be better if the Japanese attacked first. In Stalin's view, that was bound to happen eventually, and once it did, the USSR would merely be defending itself in the east as it was in the west, an action anyone would understand.

Stalin, like most everyone else in Europe and North America, was inclined to dismiss the Japanese military as hopelessly inferior to their Western counterparts, and he floated a strange theory to Eden: that the Germans had secretly smuggled some 1500 of their best pilots to Japan, and it was these German pilots who were responsible for Japan's remarkable accomplishments in aerial warfare. Eden replied politely that yes, the British had also noticed that Japanese pilots were more skillful than they had expected.

Eden then told Stalin apologetically that the ten squadrons of airplanes Britain had promised the USSR had to be diverted to defend Singapore. Stalin replied that he understood the British position. "We too have had our difficult periods."

Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill began asking for a second personal meeting with President Roosevelt to discuss joint strategy as full allies, now that the United States was at war. Roosevelt at first resisted the suggestion. He felt the US military needed time to get onto a full war footing, and holding such discussions now would be premature. But Churchill persisted, and on December 10, Roosevelt agreed to the meeting.

On December 13, Churchill and his military chiefs left from Scotland aboard the newly commissioned HMS *Duke of York*, sister ship to *Prince of Wales*, which the Japanese had sunk three days earlier. Rough weather delayed the crossing, but Churchill reached the White House on December 22. Eleanor Roosevelt had had the Monroe Room set up as a map room, where the President and the prime minister could discuss strategy. She wanted to put Churchill up in the Lincoln Bedroom, but Churchill disliked the bed. He went around the second floor of the White House testing beds until he settled on the Rose Bedroom.

Everyone at the White House was astonished at how much Churchill ate, and even more so, how much he drank, and yet always he remained coherent. Eleanor worried to Franklin that Churchill might prove a bad influence on him; he reminded her that it was her side of the family that had a drinking problem.

The British prime minister had long been in the habit of dictating to his secretary from the bathtub, and even after climbing out of the tub and wearing nothing more than a towel. He continued this practice in the White House. He was doing exactly this one morning, pacing the room in a towel whilst dictating, when the towel slipped off and, as luck would have it, President Roosevelt entered the room at that exact moment. An embarrassed Roosevelt muttered an apology and made to turn his wheelchair about, but Churchill was completely unruffled and said, "You see, Mr. President, I have nothing to conceal from you."

Churchill accompanied Roosevelt to a White House press conference and handled the American press admirably. When a reporter asked him how long it would take to defeat the Axis, he replied, "If we manage it well, it will only take half as long as if we manage it badly," to laughter all around.

On Boxing Day, Churchill spoke before the US Congress, the first foreigner granted that privilege since the Marquis de Lafayette, the hero of two worlds, in 1824.

Churchill named this meeting the Arcadia Conference. He and his military chiefs had come to Washington expecting, as two-year veterans of this war, to have the leading voice in devising the Allies' joint strategy: Germany was the primary enemy, and only the minimum force necessary to defend against Italy and Japan should be employed until after Germany was beaten. The Americans, however, though they accepted the principle that Germany was the primary enemy, rejected what they saw as the British strategy of chipping away at the edges of Fortress Europa. The Americans wanted to take out the Germans in one decisive frontal attack. British Field Marshal Sir John Dill grumbled that the Americans had no idea what they were up against.

With a certain amount of reluctance, the American side accepted a British proposal for a joint Anglo-American invasion of North Africa before the end of 1942. The British accepted an American proposal that there be in each theater of war a single supreme commander, who would hold authority over all air, land, and sea forces of all nations in that theater. General Sir Archibald Wavell, until recently the commander of the British Middle East Command, was appointed the first supreme commander, over Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific. His command was designated ABDA, for American, British, Dutch, and Australian.

The British and Americans agreed to a Combined Chiefs of Staff, a committee composed of the Army, Navy, and Air Force chiefs of staff of both nations. Roosevelt insisted it meet in Washington. Since it was impractical to keep the British commanders in North America, Field Marshall Dill would remain in Washington to represent them.

At the beginning of the new year, 1942, 26 nations signed a joint declaration pledging to oppose the Axis powers, not to enter into any separate peace, and to uphold the principles of the Atlantic Charter in the postwar world. These nations were: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, four British Dominions, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the government of India, eight governments in exile, those of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, and Greece, and nine other American republics: Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. Together these 26 nations declared themselves for the first time the “United Nations.” Franklin Roosevelt coined the name.

A few days later, Roosevelt appeared before Congress for his State of the Union address. He told Congress, “The militarists of Berlin and Tokyo started this war, but the massed, angered forces of humanity will finish it.” He then laid down an ambitious, if not incredible, set of production goals for the United States in 1942: 60,000 airplanes, 45,000 tanks, 20,000 anti-aircraft guns, and six million tons of merchant shipping. To applause and cheers, Roosevelt declared, “These figures will give the Japanese and the Nazis a little idea of just what they accomplished at Pearl Harbor.”

But even as the leaders gathered in Washington to proclaim the resolve of the United Nations, the situation in the Pacific went from bad to worse.

[music: Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 4*]

On the same day Churchill arrived in Washington, 85 Japanese transports carrying over 40,000 Japanese soldiers approached the Gulf of Lingayen in the Philippines. That reconnaissance boat the Filipinos had fired upon a week ago had done its work; the Japanese invaders knew to avoid the heavily defended southern coast of the gulf. The Filipino battalion on the coast where they did land offered a spirited defense, but was overwhelmed. By afternoon, the Japanese had reached Route 3, the paved road that ran down the coast to Manila.

In Manila, Douglas MacArthur cabled General Marshall to ask for carrier air cover. Marshall told him that was impossible. The four working B-17 bombers at Clark Field flew to the gulf and bombed the Japanese landing site. Then they turned away and headed for Australia.

The next day, the Japanese were marching south toward Manila, brushing aside the hastily dispatched and poorly trained Filipino units that tried to stop them.

With no air force, no navy, and insufficient ground forces, MacArthur had no choice but to pull out War Plan Orange-3, the Army’s plan of last resort to hold the Philippines. It called for all US and Filipino Army units to withdraw to the Bataan Peninsula. There they would be able to put up a defensive line along the neck of the peninsula and hold the enemy at bay for as long as six months, giving the Navy time to ship in reinforcements.

MacArthur hated the plan. It sounded defeatist. But what other choice was there? He issued the order to put WPO-3 into effect.

Overnight the Japanese landed an additional ten thousand soldiers south of Manila. They meant to trap MacArthur's forces in Manila in a pincer movement.

At Malacañan Palace, Manuel Quezon, now President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, met with the Mayor of Manila, Jorge Vargas and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court José Laurel. The President told them that he and the Vice President were going to retreat to Corregidor along with MacArthur, but requested that they remain behind to represent the Filipino people to the Japanese occupation force. He also asked them never to reveal that he had made this request. Laurel objected that in that case, everyone would think he was a collaborator. Quezon told him, "Someone has to protect the people from the Japanese."

On Christmas Eve, MacArthur and his staff boarded the steamer that would take them on the 30-mile trip across Manila Bay to Corregidor. The island's guns controlled the entrance to Manila Bay, and beneath them, carved into the rock, was a bombproof underground headquarters that included storerooms and a hospital.

In Manila, the streets were gridlocked with military and civilian vehicles. Every driver had the same destination in mind: Bataan. On the map, the route was simple enough: north on Route 3 for forty miles until you reach the town of San Fernando, then a left turn onto the road that ran west, then south into the peninsula. But everywhere the roads were choked with traffic, not only from Manila, but retreating American and Filipino units from the north and thousands of terrified Filipino civilians in cars, oxcarts, or on foot.

Plan WPO-3 called for Bataan to hold out for six months, but just now there was barely a month's worth of food. Supplies were coming into Bataan by land and sea, but how long would it be before the Japanese isolated the peninsula?

Seven hundred miles, or eleven hundred kilometers, north of Manila lay the British colony of Hong Kong. For the past four years, Hong Kong had sat in a position of uneasy neutrality as the war between Japan and China raged all around it. With the Japanese in control of nearby Canton and Taiwan and Indochina, Hong Kong was all but surrounded even before the Japanese attacked.

Civilian Japanese in Hong Kong, as elsewhere, had passed detailed information on the island's strengths and weaknesses to the Japanese military. In Hong Kong, the British elite didn't trust Hong Kong's own native Chinese enough to arm them. They weren't even sure they could trust the Indian Army soldiers stationed there. Instead, they relied on the colony's British and Commonwealth defenders, as well as the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, a unit made up almost entirely of expatriate Europeans.

In November, just before the war, Churchill had succumbed to American pressure and shipped an additional 2,000 Canadian soldiers to beef up Hong Kong's defenses. It was meant to be a show of solidarity with the American plan to reinforce the garrison in the Philippines. The Canadians, who could read maps as well as anyone else, had little enthusiasm for their new assignment.

On the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese planes bombed the Hong Kong airport, destroying all five of Hong Kong's military aircraft and a number of civilian planes, including Pan American Airlines' *Hong Kong Clipper*.

Japanese soldiers crossed the border into the New Territories on the same day. British forces fell back to the so-called "Gin Drinkers' Line," a defensive line built in the Thirties and nicknamed "The Oriental Maginot Line." The line was intended to hold off an invader for weeks or months, but the British commander at Hong Kong only provided a skeleton force to garrison the line, keeping most of his soldiers in reserve on Hong Kong Island. When word came of the sinkings of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, morale in Hong Kong plummeted, as it was now clear no relief could be expected.

On December 11, commanders evacuated the mainland and concentrated on the defense of Hong Kong Island and the harbor. The Japanese subjected the island to artillery bombardment. On December 17, four Japanese soldiers swam to Hong Kong Island undetected, revealing a gap in the defenses. The next day, 4,000 Japanese soldiers landed on the island at the same point.

Chinese police abandoned their posts and their uniforms. So did many Indian soldiers and police, swayed by Japanese propaganda that claimed the fall of Hong Kong would be the first step toward the liberation of India.

On December 21, the Governor of Hong Kong, Mark Young, plagued by the thought that he was about to become the first Briton to surrender a British colony since Cornwallis, sent a message to London requesting permission to negotiate with the Japanese. Churchill told him surrender was unthinkable, and that every day Hong Kong held out, the Allied cause around the world would be strengthened.

With combat across the island, with no water and fires breaking out everywhere, on the afternoon of Christmas Day, the governor agreed to surrender. For the next 24 hours, looting and chaos reigned in Hong Kong. Despite being ordered to treat the enemy well, Japanese soldiers raped European women, bayoneted wounded enemy soldiers, and killed prisoners.

But this was as nothing compared to the savagery committed against Chinese civilians. Thousands of them were killed and many more raped or tortured, despite Japanese claims that they had come to liberate the Chinese from British rule.

Over on Wake Island, the only Allied position where a Japanese attack was actually beaten back, the US Marines on the island found themselves isolated. The US Navy sent a task force led by the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* to bring them ammunition, fighter planes, and reinforcements, until it was ordered to withdraw short of its destination on reports that two Japanese aircraft carriers were approaching.

Those Japanese carriers were escorting the original force sent to capture Wake, along with 2,500 reinforcements and two heavy cruisers to bombard the island. The defenders were hopelessly outgunned and Wake surrendered on December 23.

In Malaya, the Japanese continued to advance south, down the peninsula. They made use of the roads that ran down both coasts, moving down them in formations led by tanks that were ready to fire on any British defenses, many of which were held by Indian soldiers who had never seen a tank before, let alone been instructed on how to fight one. When the Japanese came up against a fortified position that threatened to stall their offensive, here is where the Japanese employed their bicycle infantry to move inland through the jungle and circle behind the enemy defenders. These bicycle units could move faster through jungle than British and Indian units could march along open road and often outran and trapped even a retreating enemy force. The Japanese had air superiority and naval superiority, making it possible for them to land soldiers by sea behind particularly stubborn enemy positions.

The Japanese offensive was assisted by the peculiar views of the British commander in Malaya, General Arthur Percival. Percival refused to approve the construction of prepared defenses behind the front line, as he believed they were bad for morale and encouraged retreat. Morale was bad and his soldiers were retreating anyway, but his policy meant they had no place to retreat to. None of this spurred him to rethink his strategy.

He would not even consider strengthening the defenses on the northern coast of Singapore Island. The Japanese had already realized that Singapore had formidable sea defenses but little to nothing in the way of land defenses, hence their strategy of landing in northern Malaya and approaching Singapore overland, but Percival was either unable to perceive the Japanese plan or didn't think it mattered.

On January 11, 1942, the Japanese took the Malayan city of Kuala Lumpur in central Malaya, Malaya's commercial hub and the center of the Malayan rubber trade. More than ten thousand members of the city's substantial Chinese community were killed, tortured, or raped in the early days of its occupation. Ethnic Indians were sent into forced labor to work on the notorious Burma Railway, where many of them died. The Japanese treated the ethnic Malays much better and sought their assistance in administering Malaya with promises of independence after the war.

With the fall of Kuala Lumpur, the Japanese Army was now barely 300 kilometers from Singapore.

This is, of course, not the end of the story, but merely the beginning. Alas, even so, we'll have to stop here for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Larry and Antonio for their kind donations, and thank you to Riley for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Larry, Antonio, and Riley help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we continue the story of the Japanese advance through the Southwest Pacific, including the greatest British military disaster of the war. The Fall of Singapore, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. I'd like to tell you a little bit about Homer Lea. He was an American, born in Denver in 1876. He seemed a healthy baby until he was dropped on a stone floor. Yikes. He would grow up a hunchback, less than five feet tall, and less than 100 pounds, which is 45 kilos. His physical abnormalities were attributed to his being dropped as an infant.

In spite of these conditions, Homer was physically active as a child and teenager. He dreamed of being a soldier and even wrangled an appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point, but there he was dismissed, due to his health problems.

He retained an interest in the military and in military history and also developed an interest in China. When the Boxer Uprising began, the 23-year-old Lea traveled to China and offered to command a force loyal to the Guangxu Emperor. They made him a general and gave him a volunteer force to command, but that didn't work out so well. Longtime listeners know that the Dowager Empress held the Emperor in something like house arrest. She put a price on the head of this presumptuous foreigner, but he made it to Beijing just in time to meet up with the international force that had occupied the city.

He next went to Japan, where he became a supporter of Sun Yat-sen, but had to return to the US because of his poor health. He observed the Russo-Japanese War and came to the conclusion that Japan was an expansionist power, while US defenses on the West Coast and in the Pacific were dangerously under strength. He felt that American civilian and military leaders were overlooking the threat Japan posed, so he wrote a book outlining the danger and suggesting how the Japanese

might use their Army and Navy to take control of key points across the Pacific Ocean, even invade western North America.

His book was titled *The Valor of Ignorance: The Inevitable Japanese-American War*. His book was widely dismissed in the United States, although a few American military leaders read it and took it seriously. One of those was Douglas MacArthur; when he became superintendent at West Point, MacArthur tried unsuccessfully to add *The Valor of Ignorance* to the required reading list.

On the other hand, the book became a bestseller in Japan, where it was advertised as “[e]xcellent reading matter for all red-blooded Asians.” It became required reading in the Japanese military.

Another military leader who took notice of Lea’s book was Lord Roberts, who commanded the British Army in South Africa during the Second Anglo-Boer War. Lord Roberts commissioned Lea to come to Britain and write a companion work on the foreign threats facing the United Kingdom. He accepted, traveled to London, and then to Germany.

The German military leadership were happy to share their views with Lea and even invited him to observe German military maneuvers. From this research came his second book, *The Day of the Saxon*, which made the case that Germany was the principal threat in Europe. He predicted a long and bloody industrial-scale war between the two countries, which came to pass as the First World War, but more than that, Lea took note of the German sense of racial superiority, which he compared to the Japanese, and predicted that Germany would expand, swallowing up Austria, and seek to dominate Europe and install puppet regimes in neighboring countries. Britain, he wrote, relied too much on the Royal Navy and had grossly neglected its Army. He warned of dire consequences if this didn’t change.

This second book was also a commercial failure, but one reader who took an interest was the German Army General Karl Haushofer. This is also a name which should ring a bell. After the First World War, Haushofer would become an academic, an expert on international affairs who mentored Rudolf Hess and Adolf Hitler in the early days of the Nazi Party. It was Haushofer who coined the word *Lebensraum*, living space, to describe his views on the necessity of German expansion. The concept, and the word, became a key part of Nazi ideology.

In 1911, Lea was still living in London and reportedly preparing a new book about the geopolitical threat that Russia posed in both Europe and the Far East, titled *The Swarming of the Slav*. Then came the 1911 Revolution in China, which drew Lea back to that country, where he served briefly as a general in the new army of the Republic of China, but suffered a stroke which forced his return to the United States, where he died in 1912, at the age of 35.

Unfortunately, his books were out of print in the Thirties, when they might have done the most good.

[music: Closing War Theme]

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