

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 354

### “The Fall of Singapore”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

The anchor of British power in the Western Pacific was Singapore, a mighty naval base that controlled the passage from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific and trade routes between Britain and Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania.

But a mighty naval base with no navy isn't so mighty.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 354. The Fall of Singapore.

We concluded last week's episode with the fall of Kuala Lumpur to the Japanese on January 11, 1942. Recall that US President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and their respective military commanders had recently met in Washington and agreed to create a joint ABDA command—that's American-British-Dutch-Australian—headquartered on the island of Java and tasked with organizing Allied defenses in the Southwest Pacific.

The British had been leery of this idea; they figured the Americans would want to appoint an American commander to this new position. Instead, the Americans suggested General Archibald Wavell, the British commander of the Indian Army. We've met Wavell before, when he was head of the British Middle East Command, which put him in charge of the war in North Africa. Well, Churchill became impatient with his performance in that conflict and reassigned him to his current post, commander of the Indian Army. The previous commander of the Indian Army, Claude Auchinleck, got Wavell's old job at Middle East Command. In other words, they swapped jobs.

We need to get caught up on events in North Africa, don't we? And events in Europe. We'll circle back to that theater of operations beginning next week, but for today I want to continue with the Japanese offensive in the Pacific.

Wavell's new assignment was not an easy one. If Churchill had intended to move Wavell to someplace where he wouldn't be commanding forces in direct contact with the enemy, his plan fell apart once the Japanese declared war. Now Wavell was leading more military forces than ever before: British and Indian units were defending Malaya, the Dutch and Australians the East Indies, and the Americans and Filipinos the Philippines.

Still, there was little to no prospect of moving units from one front to another, which left the new supreme commander with very few options for adjusting or improving Allied defenses.

Wavell flew to Singapore and drove north to inspect the Malayan front personally. He arrived to find the Indian 11<sup>th</sup> division all but destroyed. He ordered Indian and British units to retreat and link up with newly arrived elements of the Australian 8<sup>th</sup> Division, which engaged the Japanese for the first time on January 14.

The Japanese had wrong-footed the British-led forces in Malaya and forced them to begin a retreat, but the Japanese kept advancing on their bicycles, harrying their foes as they withdrew and preventing the British from reorganizing their defenses. The Japanese did not rest; they did not resupply; they did not pause to consolidate their gains. They just kept coming. When the British blew up bridges, the Japanese infantry waded across the river, bicycles raised above their heads.

The British had never expected anything like this. Until the invasion of Malaya, the British Army regarded themselves as the world's premier jungle fighters, with nearly a century of experience in places like Malaya and East Africa under their belts. The Japanese Army had zero experience in jungle warfare, and had struggled to keep up the fight against the poorly trained and underequipped Chinese Army. Most Westerners would have expected that British jungle tactics would grind the Japanese advance to a halt. Now it was clear that it was the British who were outmatched.

After his visit to the front lines, Wavell inspected the defenses of Singapore and learned the awful truth: The mighty batteries on the south side of the island were fearsome, but they could not be moved or turned around, while there were no defenses whatsoever on the north shore of the island and no one had even done any planning for a possible attack from that direction. General Arthur Percival, commander of the Singapore garrison, clung to his stubborn belief that defensive works were bad for morale.

When the Japanese met the fresh Australian units, they were initially stymied, but they fell back on their favorite tactic: using the superior mobility of their bicycle infantry to outflank the enemy. Indian and Australian units were cut off and had to wage desperate combat to make their way south to rejoin other British forces. They were compelled to leave some 150 Indian and Australian wounded behind to be captured by the Japanese. These prisoners were tortured and killed. Japanese soldiers were taught it was weak and cowardly to surrender, which led them to view enemy prisoners with contempt.

Meanwhile, in the city of Singapore, dinner dances for British Army officers and their wives were still a regular feature at the upscale Raffles Hotel, because it was thought that to suspend them would be bad for morale. Officers who had been on the front lines marveled at the incongruity, as if Singapore and Malaya were different worlds.

On January 27, Wavell ordered a full withdrawal of all forces in Malaya to the island of Singapore. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, engineers blew up the causeway between Singapore and the mainland. At this point, General Percival, the commander who would lead the defense of the island, believed the numbers favored him. He had some 80,000 soldiers on the island, against an estimated 60,000 Japanese.

In fact, British intelligence had way overestimated that latter number. There were in truth only half as many Japanese, that is, just 30,000. Incredibly, the Japanese in Malaya had been facing an enemy force more than twice their size and had humbled it in less than two months, taking 50,000 British, Indian, Australian, and Malay prisoners in the process.

The Japanese began the attack on Singapore on February 7 with a heavy artillery bombardment. Japanese attackers brushed past the island's hastily constructed shore defenses and within two days, 20,000 Japanese soldiers had crossed the strait and were on the island. Wavell reminded the Singapore defenders that the Americans were still holding out at Bataan, the Russians were bearing the full brunt of the Wehrmacht, and the Chinese were holding their own against 80% of the Japanese Army. The honor of the British Empire and the reputation of the British Army were on the line.

But appeals to British honor carried little weight. Morale on Singapore was plummeting. Indian and Australian soldiers were abandoning the front and pouring into the city of Singapore, located on the south side of the island. Percival was under orders to fight to the end, but his subordinates insisted the fight was hopeless. They wanted to surrender.

On the Japanese side, they had worries of their own. The Japanese were running out of artillery shells, while the British seemed to have an endless supply. The Japanese commander, General Yamashita Tomoyuki, was being told by his subordinates that it would take weeks of bloody fighting to take the city, assuming it could be taken at all against a numerically superior defender. Some advised withdrawal from the island to regroup.

But on the morning of February 15, Percival met with his commanders and they told him that his own forces were nearly out of gasoline and ammunition. The Japanese had captured the city's reservoirs and soon there would be no water either. That was enough for Percival. He sought and received permission from Wavell to surrender. The British offered their surrender, and Yamashita hurriedly accepted it before the British side found out how badly the Japanese were outnumbered.

In a controversial move, General Gordon Bennett, the commander of the Australian 8<sup>th</sup> division, transferred command of his unit to a subordinate and escaped by sea back to Australia. He justified this action by claiming he had valuable experience fighting the Japanese and felt obligated to share this information with the rest of the Australian Army.

Singapore was now in Japanese hands, at a cost to the Japanese of 3,500 killed and 6,000 wounded. Allied numbers of killed and wounded were comparable, but 50,000 Allied soldiers were taken prisoner in Malaya and a further 85,000 in Singapore, including those soldiers of the Australian 8<sup>th</sup> division, who had only arrived in Malaya three weeks ago. About half of those taken prisoner were Indian soldiers.

The capture of Singapore was the greatest victory in the history of the Japanese Army, and the biggest defeat in the history of the British Army. In Tokyo, the Army declared that victory in the war was now assured. The Japanese government celebrated by giving two bottles of beer to every Japanese household and a box of candy to every Japanese child under the age of thirteen.

The prisoners were force-marched north through Malaya in conditions of appalling cruelty and misery. They were denied adequate food and water. The thousands who succumbed to disease were denied medical treatment. Prisoners were regularly tortured and brutalized. Many of them ended up doing forced labor for the notorious Japanese Burma Railway project.

About a third of prisoners taken died in Japanese custody, and it should be noted that conditions were no better, and often worse, for Asian soldiers and civilians used by the Japanese for forced labor, particularly the Chinese.

The seat of British power in the Far East was now in Japanese hands. The Japanese controlled passage between the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The Royal Navy could no longer reach the Pacific, and Australia found itself cut off from the mother country and with the Japanese military on its doorstep.

[music: Respighi, *The Pines of Rome*]

When the Japanese declared war on the UK and the US, they did not include the Netherlands. The Japanese military fully intended to seize the Dutch East Indies, but felt it prudent to hold off on a declaration of war until after the British and Americans had been dealt with. This would give the Dutch less time to destroy the oil fields before Japan could take them.

But the Dutch government in exile was under no illusions concerning Japanese intentions. They themselves declared war on Japan on December 10, two days after Pearl Harbor. By the start of the new year, 1942, it had become apparent to the Japanese that the campaigns in the Philippines and Malaya were going better than expected, which made it possible to move up the timetable for the next phase of the Japanese advance: the East Indies.

The East Indies were central to the Japanese war plan, because of their vital production of tin, tungsten, rubber, and especially oil. The East Indies were at the time one of the world's leading petroleum exporters.

The Japanese advance across the archipelago proceeded quickly and methodically. Air superiority had been key to the sinking of *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* at sea, and also to the land campaign in Malaya. So the Japanese leapfrogged across the East Indies in jumps of about 600 kilometers, because that was the range of their fighters. Capture an airfield, then use it to provide air support for the capture of the next airfield. Rinse and repeat. When it was necessary to take a longer leap, the Japanese relied on air cover from their six aircraft carriers, returned from Pearl Harbor and now operating in the Southwest Pacific.

One such longer leap was to the town of Rabaul on the island of New Britain. Rabaul had once been the capital of German New Guinea and then capital of the Australian mandate, the Territory of New Guinea, after the last war. In 1937, a volcanic eruption destroyed the town; the Australians decided to move the territorial capital to Lae, a port town on New Guinea proper. The Japanese would build Rabaul into their most important military base in the region, hosting large numbers of soldiers, ships, and aircraft.

Sadly, in June 1942, a Japanese merchant ship transporting over a thousand Australian, New Zealander, and Norwegian prisoners captured at Rabaul was mistakenly torpedoed and sunk by an American submarine, USS *Sturgeon*. Most of the Japanese crew and all of the prisoners died.

Further west, the Japanese campaign into the East Indies began with landings on the British-controlled northwestern coast of Borneo in December and early January. By the end of January, Japanese forces operating from Mindanao in the Philippines had taken the key ports on the eastern, or Dutch, side of the island. A second Japanese force, also launched from Mindanao, captured ports on the island of Celebes in January and by the end of February had seized the islands of Ceram, Timor, and Bali. On February 14, the day before Singapore surrendered, the Japanese were landing on the island of Sumatra.

ABDACOM, the joint Allied command led by General Wavell, was located on the island of Java, also home to more than half the population of the Dutch East Indies and its capital, the city of Batavia, and surely the next target of the Japanese advance.

ABDA's naval force was led by US Admiral Thomas Hart, also commander of the US Asiatic Fleet, which had fled Manila before the Japanese captured that city and was now operating in the waters of the East Indies. Perhaps the word "operating" is a bit of a stretch. The Asiatic Fleet had shied away from confronting the enemy, much to the puzzlement of the Japanese and the frustration of the Dutch.

But on January 24, four American destroyers ambushed Japanese transports on their way to land at the port of Balikpapan, site of an oil refinery on the island of Borneo. The Americans sank

three Japanese transports, in the first US Navy surface action in the Pacific since Pearl Harbor. Unfortunately for the Allies, this was not enough to prevent the capture of Balikpapan.

The inevitable happened on February 27, 1942, when the ABDA fleet, such as it was, intercepted a convoy of Japanese troop transports headed for Java. This was the last stand. It was do or die. The Japanese convoy was escorted by two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 14 destroyers. The Allied force consisted of two heavy cruisers, one British and one American, three light cruisers, two Dutch and one Australian, and nine destroyers, three British, two Dutch, and four American, commanded by Dutch Admiral Karel Doorman.

This battle will be known to history as the Battle of the Java Sea. On paper, the two forces look close to evenly matched, but the Japanese ships had bigger guns and better torpedoes, and Japanese sailors outfought the Allies, costing them two of their light cruisers and three destroyers; 2,300 Allied sailors died in the battle, including Admiral Doorman. The Japanese lost just 36 sailors. Japanese troops landed on Java on February 28; the Dutch East Indies surrendered to Japan on March 7, a week later.

That was the end of ABDACOM. General Wavell returned to India to resume his post as commander of the Indian Army. Surviving ships of the ABDA fleet fled to Ceylon or Australia, pursued by Japanese air and naval attacks. Sunk before they could reach safe harbors were the British heavy cruiser, HMS *Exeter*, one British destroyer, three American destroyers, and two Dutch destroyers. That makes a total of ten Allied ships sunk in the waters of the East Indies, against zero Japanese ships.

You'll recall that when the Japanese began their offensive in Malaya, they also landed ground forces in southern Thailand without the permission of the Thai government. After briefly resisting the invaders, the Thai government agreed to an armistice. On December 21, 1941, Thailand and Japan signed an alliance agreement, which permitted the Japanese Army, Navy, and Air Force the use of Thai military facilities and transit rights through the country.

Two days later, Japanese planes bombed Rangoon, the capital of Burma. On January 18, Japanese ground forces invaded Burma through Thailand. This action was a high priority for Japanese Army commanders, because Burma was the last remaining route through which the Allies were able to ship military aid to the Chinese. The Japanese advanced toward Rangoon, while the British made a fighting withdrawal.

Initially, the Japanese plan was merely to capture southern Burma and shut off the flow of supplies and equipment to China. But by this time, their dramatic successes in Malaya, Singapore, and the East Indies persuaded Japanese military leaders to press forward and occupy all of Burma. Once the port of Rangoon fell, it was a simple matter for the Japanese to send reinforcements directly to Burma by sea. British and Chinese forces together made a stand in northern Burma, but once again the Japanese and their Thai allies were able to outmaneuver the

Allies in the jungle. The Allied forces also had to deal with pro-Japanese Burmese guerilla fighters behind their lines.

By May 1942, the Allies had been driven almost entirely out of Burma and back into India and China. Japanese units advancing from Burma even occupied some territory in China's Yunnan province. Then in May, Mother Nature achieved what the Allies could not. That month marked the beginning of the monsoon season and forced an end to the Japanese offensive.

In late March, a Japanese naval task force, including five aircraft carriers, entered the Indian Ocean to attack the British Eastern Fleet, now based in Ceylon. The British commander, Admiral Sir James Somerville, received intelligence reports suggesting that a Japanese force was on the way, but the information erred in two important respects: it was believed the attack would come on April 1, four days early, and British intelligence was only aware of two aircraft carriers in the Japanese force.

Somerville believed his own ships, consisting of the aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes* and a collection of cruisers and destroyers, along with land-based air squadrons, to be a match for the approaching Japanese and set out to sea on March 30 to intercept them. But alas, he went to sea too early. The Royal Navy force searched for the Japanese but found nothing. The ships dispersed, with the carrier *Hermes* sent to dock at Trincomalee, while the heavy cruisers HMS *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire* returned to Colombo.

On April 5, which was Easter Sunday that year, the Japanese struck. Air units from the five Japanese carriers, *Soryu*, *Hiryu*, *Akagi*, *Shokaku*, and *Zuikaku*, struck Colombo. After Pearl Harbor, the Royal Navy perceived that Colombo might be vulnerable to the same sort of attack and responded by stationing additional fighter aircraft, installing over a hundred anti-aircraft guns, and setting up a radar installation, which began operations on March 28, just a week before the Japanese attack.

Despite these precautions, the Japanese strike caught the naval base at Colombo entirely by surprise. The radar failed to detect the approaching planes—inexperienced operators was the official explanation. British fighters were still on the ground when the attack began. The two cruisers, *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, were sunk. A subsequent attack on Trincomalee sank the carrier *Hermes*. In addition five smaller warships and nearly two dozen merchant ships were sunk in the two attacks. The Japanese lost some twenty aircraft.

Still, most of the Eastern Fleet was at sea when the Japanese attacked. Those ships survived. They were temporarily redeployed to Kenya and Bombay, which meant the British effectively ceded control of the eastern Indian Ocean, as they prepared for a possible Japanese invasion of Ceylon.

As it happened, that invasion never came. Intelligence reports soon showed that the Japanese carriers had returned to the Pacific, where the Japanese had bigger fish to fry.

[music: Respighi, *The Pines of Rome*]

The fall of Singapore had huge repercussions in Australia.

Australia entered the war when Britain did, in September 1939. In those simpler days, the war was a distant conflict, one that threatened Britain but was far removed from the Australian homeland. Australians generally took it as their nation's duty to aid the mother country when it was threatened; Australia had answered the call in the last war, and it answered the call in this one.

In the last war, the Australian Army served mostly on the Western Front and at Gallipoli. In the first years of the Second World War, Australians mostly served in the Middle East, in the campaigns in Syria and principally in North Africa. Then, in spring of 1941, as you know, Australian units participated in the defense of Greece, which wasn't exactly another Gallipoli, but more than 2,000 Australians were taken prisoner during the fall of Greece, with an additional 3,000 taken prisoner after the Germans seized the island of Crete.

These setbacks did not go down well in Australia. They led to the resignation of the prime minister, Robert Menzies. In October 1941, the Labor Party took control of the government, with John Curtin as prime minister.

In late 1941, with the situation in Malaya in doubt, Curtin was already reaching out to US President Franklin Roosevelt to discuss a joint US-Australian command in the Southwest Pacific. On December 28, Curtin released a controversial statement in which he declared, "The Australian Government therefore regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the Democracies' fighting plan. Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom."

Those comments drew criticism and some accused the prime minister of abandoning Britain, but the fall of Singapore shone a whole new light on Curtin's position. With Singapore lost, Australia was practically cut off from Europe. And not just from Europe. The Australian Army's best units were in the Middle East, and now the Japanese Navy was between them and their homeland. Fifteen thousand Australian soldiers had been taken prisoner.

Four days after the fall of Singapore, on February 19, 1942, Japanese carrier planes and land-based bombers attacked the Australian port of Darwin, on the northern coast of the country, doing serious damage to the port and to the nearby Royal Australian Air Force base. Australian and US ships and aircraft were destroyed or damaged, as were a number of merchant ships in the harbor. About 250 people were killed and hundreds more wounded.

This was the first time in Australian history that a hostile foreign power directly attacked the Australian mainland. The intent of the Japanese was to deny the Allies the use of the port of



Darwin to assist in the defense of the Dutch East Indies. In that regard, the bombing was a success, but it also underscored for Australians that the war was no longer principally about supporting Britain in a faraway conflict. Australia itself was now in danger, and after the Japanese seized the East Indies, it seemed all too likely that an invasion of Australia would soon follow.

With lines of supply and transport between Australia and Britain all but cut off, Australia's primary link to the Allies was now across the Pacific to the United States. Prime Minister Curtin's comments of last December now began to sound prophetic. The British were in no position to render aid to Australia against attacks from Japan; only the United States could fill that role.

The US began sending air, land, and sea forces to Australia in 1942, both for the defense of Australia and as a base from which to begin operations against Japanese forces in the East Indies.

With the dissolution of ABDACOM, and with Britain essentially out of the picture, the Australians wanted a new joint command for American and Australian forces, along with what was left of the Dutch military, and also New Zealand, which was in the same position as Australia: cut off from Britain and with its best military units in the Middle East.

The logical person to take this new South West Pacific Command was the American general Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur was still in the Philippines, headed the dogged defense of Bataan.

Recall that MacArthur had ordered the withdrawal of some 15,000 American and 65,000 Filipino soldiers to the peninsula of Bataan, where they meant to hold at least that sliver of Philippine territory, along with the fortified island of Corregidor, which sat at a strategic location at the mouth of Manila Bay. The hope was that an enemy force holding out in the Philippines would slow the Japanese advance into the East Indies.

Their biggest problem was a lack of supplies. There was only enough to feed this force for about a month; the Bataan defenders were on half-rations from day one. Nevertheless, they put up a spirited defense. A Japanese offensive in January pushed the Allies back, but heavy casualties forced the Japanese commander to suspend the offensive until reinforcements could arrive. Japanese attempts to land soldiers by sea behind Allied lines failed.

With each Japanese defeat, morale rose among the defenders, despite sickness, starvation, and the knowledge they could not hope for relief or rescue. After the fall of Singapore, the dogged resistance on Bataan became a source of inspiration in the Allied countries.

Many of the soldiers on Bataan resented Douglas MacArthur, who was urging them to fight on from the relative safety and comfort of the fortified island of Corregidor. Some referred to him

dismissively as “Dugout Doug.” Still, MacArthur vowed that he and his family would stay in the Philippines until the bitter end.

It didn’t come to that. President Roosevelt personally ordered MacArthur to evacuate the Philippines for Australia, along with Philippine President Manuel Quezon, the Vice President, and their families. They left Corregidor on March 12.

On April 3, the Japanese began a last offensive against the defenders of Bataan. By this time, only about a quarter of the defenders were fit to fight. On April 9, Bataan surrendered. On May 5, following a campaign of bombing and shelling, Japanese troops seized Corregidor.

The roughly 75,000 Filipino and American soldiers taken prisoner were force marched over 100 kilometers from Bataan to the US Army’s Camp O’Donnell, now a POW camp. Again, the prisoners were brutalized, tortured, and often killed by Japanese soldiers, many of whom held a grudge over the fierce resistance they had had to face. Paradoxically, Japanese soldiers held those who surrendered in contempt, but also exacted retribution against those who fought them to the bitter end. Some 600 Americans and perhaps 10,000 Filipinos died on what history remembers as the Bataan Death March.

Japan’s offensive in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific stands as one of the most remarkable operations in military history. Between December 1941 and April 1942, Japan extended its reach through the Philippines to Malaya, Singapore, and the East Indies; through Indochina, Thailand, and Burma, and on to the frontier of India; and from its Pacific island bases to Wake Island, the Bismarck Islands, the Solomon Islands, and New Guinea, and on to the doorstep of Australia. Along the way, the Japanese Navy and Air Force had neutralized their two biggest rivals, the Royal Navy and the United States Navy, rendering them all but powerless in the Western Pacific.

By the end of April 1942, Japan had extended its control to an astonishing 20,000,000 additional square kilometers of land and sea in the Western Pacific. No military in history ever seized control over such a large portion of the surface of our planet. Japan was able to accomplish this feat by moving naval and air forces rapidly and stealthily across the region. In 1942, the use of radar in naval actions was still relatively new and untried. In our time, radar is much farther advanced and today’s militaries have access to other sophisticated tools to detect military movements of an enemy or a potential enemy, not least of which is surveillance satellites. In our world, no military power could possibly achieve surprise, not just once, but over and over, as the Japanese did, nor conduct a comparably swift and decisive offensive and it seems likely that no military will ever be able to match what Japan accomplished in 1942.

The most crucial lesson learned, at great cost to the Americans and the British, was how important air power had become in naval actions. Aircraft played an important role in the sinking of *Bismarck*, but it was Royal Navy battleships that finished it off. Taranto was a surprise attack on ships at anchor; so was Pearl Harbor, and in the latter case most of the ships damaged or sunk

were near obsolescence. The sinking of *Prince of Wales*, on the other hand, marked the first sinking of a modern battleship under way at speed and armed with state-of-the-art anti-aircraft defenses, entirely by enemy air attacks.

You could hardly imagine a clearer demonstration of the power of naval air and the new vulnerability of dreadnought battleships, until now regarded as the mightiest and most fearsome weapons of war in a nation's arsenal.

It is often said that this moment marks the end of the battleship; it is no longer viable in naval combat. There is truth in this, but the claim is usually overstated. Battleships will still play an important role in the Second World War, primarily to defend carrier task forces and in shore bombardment in support of amphibious landings. Still, the end of the war will mark the end of the battleship. In our time, no navy has them; no navy wants them.

The aircraft carrier will now replace the battleship as the primary capital ship in naval warfare. The Japanese offensives of December 1941 through April 1942 demonstrate that the Japanese were coming to understand the power of naval aviation. It is sometimes said that the Pearl Harbor attack was a blessing in disguise for the US Navy, as circumstances would now force the Americans to rely primarily on their own carriers.

Aircraft carriers were initially seen as useful primarily for reconnaissance. Their aircraft could find and identify enemy naval units long before they became visible to surface ships. By 1942, it was clear that the aircraft carrier was much more than that. It was a powerful offensive force, capable of attacking and destroying enemy ships while remaining distant and unseen, as had happened at Pearl Harbor. Navies in the Pacific would not be organized primarily by squadrons or fleets, but by task forces, mixed naval formations that might include several ship types, but often centered on one or more aircraft carriers.

And speaking of amphibious landings, the success of the Japanese offensive can also be attributed to Japan's ability to make successful amphibious landings, lots of them, leapfrogging across the Pacific. Every Japanese naval landing during the offensive was a success, with the sole exception of the first assault on Wake Island. This was great for the Japanese, but it also contains within it, the seeds of Japan's downfall.

For military planners of this time, the epitome of an amphibious assault on territory contested by an enemy military was the 1915 Gallipoli campaign. The lesson taken from Gallipoli was that amphibious invasions were difficult and bloody, and that success was by no means assured. The Japanese have now demonstrated that is not true, at least not in 1941.

With their initial expansion mostly completed, Japanese strategy will soon shift to a defensive one. The Japanese will hunker down in their island empire and dare the Allies to take it away from them in a campaign that will surely require one bloody and costly amphibious landing after

another, because the Japanese are gambling that the Americans and the British will come to the negotiating table, rather than pay that terrible price.

Only, the Japanese themselves have shown that amphibious invasions need not be so costly after all.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Carol for her kind donation, and thank you to Weston for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Carol and Weston 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](http://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 return to Europe. With the Battle of Britain over and the Luftwaffe mostly engaged in the East, the British RAF Bomber Command attempts to turn the tables on the Germans. They sowed the wind, and now they will Reap the Whirlwind. That's next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. You may recall me talking about the Statute of Westminster, enacted by the British Parliament in 1931, in which authority to pass legislation in the Dominions was ceded almost entirely to their own parliaments.

The Statute came into effect with regard to Canada, South Africa, and Ireland without need for any kind of ratification, but in the cases of Australia and New Zealand, their parliaments would have to affirmatively adopt the provisions of the Statute. Neither nation's parliament took any action. They went to war along with the United Kingdom against Germany, and then against Japan.

In October 1942, the Australian Parliament enacted the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act and made it official, and the timing was no coincidence. After the Fall of Singapore, Australia wanted—Australia needed—the authority to conduct its own foreign relations and its own war independent of the UK. Not that the British government was likely to interfere with the Australian war effort, but even so, the Act was a declaration to the other Allied nations and to the

world at large that henceforth the Australian Parliament and government meant to run their own affairs.

New Zealand did not follow suit, even though its war situation was similar to Australia's. Adoption of the Statute remained a controversial topic in that country and was tabled for the duration of the war. After the war, New Zealand passed its own Adoption Act, in 1947.

[music: Closing War Theme]