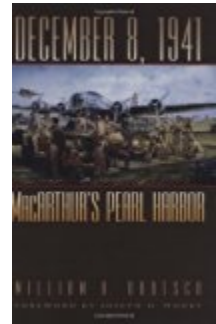




William H. Bartsch. *December 8, 1941: MacArthur's Pearl Harbor*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003. vii + 557 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-58544-246-1.

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Flawed General: Douglas MacArthur and the Japanese Attack on the Philippine Islands, December 8, 1941

As a result of the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of the Philippine Islands from Spain in 1898, the United States extended its influence nearly 7,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean and only 600 miles from the Asian continent. Maintaining a civilian administrative and military presence in the islands was a difficult task since the Philippines were situated more than 4,500 miles from Hawaii, the nearest American operational base. The difficulties of defending the Philippines were significant since the archipelago consists of over 7,000 islands stretching more than 1,100 miles north and south and maximally 600 miles east to west. The Philippine land mass is greater than that of the British Isles and nearly the same as Japan. Nonetheless, during the subsequent four decades, the Commonwealth of the Philippines developed close economic, political and sentimental ties with the United States and had a liberal constitution modeled after the American document.

Military security in the Philippines depended upon a small contingent of American army and naval forces and the native Philippine defense force, developed under retired General Douglas MacArthur, a former United States Army Chief of Staff who had been appointed by the Commonwealth as Field Marshal of the Philippines. This small American military presence and the under-equipped and inadequately trained Philippine forces were deficient to meet the growing threat of a powerful and aggressive Japanese nation. Therefore, when the Japanese seized bases in French Indochina in July 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt could no longer ignore this new aggression and recalled General Douglas

MacArthur to active duty on July 26, placing him in command of all American and Filipino military forces in the Philippines. Appointed as Major General in command of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFEF), MacArthur was promoted to Lieutenant General the following day (and subsequently became General on December 18th). The Philippine Islands were in proximity to Japanese air and sea routes to the Dutch East Indies and British Malaysia which had vital raw materials and foodstuffs that the Japanese regarded essential for their national survival since the proclamation of American oil and scrap metal embargoes. Oil, the "lifeblood of naval ships," was especially critical to the Imperial Japanese Navy. In *Southeast Asian Raw Materials and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Jonathan Marshall provides a comprehensive assessment of this issue of a "resource war." [1] He takes the position that the struggle for access to Southeast Asia's commodities (especially oil, rubber, and tin) drew the United States into the conflict. Like Bartsch, Marshall examines the political landscape of the era and extensively employs archival documents and previously ignored studies that document the dilemmas of the Roosevelt administration which hoped to avoid conflict with Japan but, following numerous diplomatic overtures, came to see war as inevitable (the reader will see relevance to Vietnam and Persian Gulf conflicts in this competition for essential commodities).

Manila, capital of the Philippines, was located 2,000 miles from Tokyo, but only 500 miles from Japanese airbases situated on the Japanese-held island of Formosa. In the American war plan, American and Filipino troops

stationed on the main island of Luzon would retreat to the Bataan Peninsula and the island of Corregidor which guards the entrance to Manila Bay. Hence, the Army would attempt to deny the Japanese access to one of the best harbors in the Far East, but the plan was too defensive for MacArthur who wanted to fight any invaders on the beaches with his American and Philippine troops. However, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall encouraged MacArthur to have faith in B-17 "Flying Fortress" bombers which the United States began rushing to the Philippines. The American plan was that the B-17s could devastate Japan's "paper cities" and bomb any Japanese invasion fleets. December 7, 1941 (December 8 in Japan), the "date that will live in infamy," saw the Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor and the disabling of the American Pacific Fleet—19 warships sunk or damaged, 340 naval and army aircraft destroyed or damaged, and 2,400 military personnel and civilian deaths. Another element of the Pearl Harbor attack was the Japanese plan to attack the Philippines and destroy the American air and naval defenses that MacArthur had been able to assemble.[2] This second devastating assault, which took place ten hours after the Pearl Harbor strike, began on December 8th at 12:35 p.m. when 196 Japanese Navy bombers and fighters crippled the largest force of Boeing four-engine B-17 "Flying Fortress" bombers (models C and D) outside the United States and destroyed their protective Curtis P-40E fighter plane interceptors and outmoded P-35A aircraft at Clark and Iba Fields. The former airfield also had its SCR-270B radar units put out of action. This sudden traumatic swift blow would establish Japanese reign over the Philippine skies and removed a significant barrier that stood between them and their conquest of Southeast Asia. Was this another "sneak attack" as at Pearl Harbor? The Japanese plan was for the Philippine attack to commence within three and one-half hours after the assault on Pearl so as to deny strategic time for MacArthur's command to be alerted. But the planned early morning attack which was to occur three and one-half hours after the Pearl Harbor strike became a mid-day attack some ten hours afterward. In the interim, MacArthur's B-17s had scrambled to avoid an anticipated attack but had landed to refuel and were devastated by bombers and fighters from Japanese bases on the island of Formosa.

The story of how General Douglas MacArthur could have been caught with nearly all of his bombers and fighters on the ground is a part of this illuminating volume. MacArthur had, of course, been informed of the Pearl Harbor attack and warned of the possibility of

a Japanese strike on his military bases. These issues are the subject of this fascinating, meticulously detailed, well-documented, yet provocative book by William H. Bartsch. The writer holds a doctorate in economic development from the University of London and has written or co-authored six books and numerous articles on diverse topics including petroleum, agricultural economics, and Iran, as well as the history of the Pacific war. Among the latter is *Doomed at the Start: American Pursuit Pilots in the Philippines, 1941-1942* which is still in print.[3] Bartsch's current work is an effort encompassing 25 years of research in American and Japanese diplomatic and military documents augmented by recently released archival materials and oral interviews with Japanese and American participants in the attack. He writes that his interest was stimulated initially by a volume authored by Walter D. Edmonds, better known as a prolific fiction and nonfiction writer of the upstate New York colonial era. Edmonds's monumental (xxiii + 532-page) *They Fought with What They Had: The Story of the Army Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific, 1941-1942*, which has an introduction by George C. Kenney, has been reprinted three times by other publishers.[4]

It is surprising that, given the importance of the Japanese success in attacking the Philippines on December 8th, there has not been a book-length treatment of this topic.

Edwin Layton and John Costello discuss the Philippine attack but only as a part of the Pearl Harbor strike.[5] Early assessments of the assault on Pearl Harbor—for example, those by Robert Theobald, Roberta Wohlstetter, and Ladislav Farago—as well as the so-called classic works by Gordon Prange, and the revisionist histories (Robert Stinnett), do not provide adequate assessments of background, planning, execution, and results of the Philippine strike.[6] Hence, Bartsch's volume fills a gap in our knowledge about this significant event.

Bartsch begins his narrative on September 1, 1939 and ends after December 8, 1941. His foreword, preface, and acknowledgments precede a carefully prepared prologue, "Seize This Golden Opportunity" (pp. 15-31 with 50 endnotes), which supplies appropriate context and essential background. Subsequently, the book is divided into four parts (each also have a lengthy essay that precedes the individual groups of chapters). Part 1, "By God, It is Destiny that Brings Me Here!" (chapters 1-2, pp. 33-89 with 39 endnotes and 6 images) covers the period from September 1940 to June 1941 and devotes particular attention to diplomatic and military activities in Washington, Tokyo,

Manila, and Singapore. With part 2, "If We Make Our Attack Now, the War IS Not Hopeless" (chapters 4-6, pp. 91-177 with 229 endnotes and 18 illustrations), the focus is on the period from June through October 1941 and events in Tokyo, Washington, and Manila. In part 3, "The Inability of an Enemy to Launch His Air Attack on These Islands Gives Us Our Greatest Security" (chapters 7-8, pp. 178-254 with 169 endnotes and 9 illustrations), Bartsch covers the period from November to December 7, 1941, emphasizing events in Tokyo, Washington, Manila, and Takao.

With part 4, "I Shall Die Only for the Emperor, I Shall Never Look Back" (chapters 9-14, 255-408, with 291 endnotes and 9 images [including one map]), Bartsch concentrates on the events of December 7 and 8 in Washington, Pearl Harbor, Tokyo, Manila, and at Iba and Clark Fields. Traditional information on the Pearl Harbor attack is recounted briefly before a detailed account of the Japanese attack on Philippine bases. Although the attack and aftermath at Iba (Zambales) and Clark Fields on Luzon are well documented in Bartsch's narrative, he also recounts what took place at Del Carmen, Rosales, Nichols, Nielson, and Murphy airfields (all on Luzon), Del Monte Field on Mindanao, and at Fort McKinley near Manila. Critical to the events were "Hap" Arnold's warning message to MacArthur that went unanswered for two days, a delay in authorizing a B-17 strike against Japanese airbases in Formosa, MacArthur's lack of consultation with his air chief (General Lewis H. Brereton), and the non-receipt of teletype messages. The result was the destruction of or severe damage to 15 of 19 B-17s and 34 of the P-40E fighters, plus 55 military personnel killed and 110 wounded at Clark. Most of the aircraft at Iba (24 P-40E, 4 P-35A, and 1 A-27) were rendered inoperable and 21 military personnel were killed and 38 wounded. The numbers of casualties and aircraft losses are not well documented in the original sources.

A valuable epilogue (pp. 409-424 with 21 endnotes and one image) concludes the narrative. Ten appendices (pp. 425-443) augment the narrative: Appendix A, "Japanese Naval Air Strength for the Philippines Operation, December 8, 1941"; Appendix B, "Japanese Army Air Strength for the Philippines Operation, December 8, 1941"; Appendix C, "Far East Air Force Strength on the Philippines, December 8, 1941"; Appendix D, "Order of Battle, Tainan K? k? tai, Taiman, Formosa, December 8, 1941"; Appendix E, "Order of Battle, 3d K? k? tai, Takao, Formosa, December 8, 1941"; Appendix F, "Officers of the 24th Pursuit Group, December 8, 1941"; Appendix G, "Officers of the 19th Bomb Group (Heavy), December 8,

1941"; Appendix H, "Far East Air Force Personnel Killed in Action, December 8, 1941"; Appendix I, "B-17s of the 19th Bomb Group (Heavy), December 8, 1941"; and Appendix J, "Japanese Naval Terminology."

The scholarly nature of this volume may be seen in the quality of the source materials that Bartsch employs and in his citations. There are 899 endnotes (pp. 445-503) and 609 bibliographic and other sources (pp. 505-531). Among these are 107 Oral Histories, including those [Created] By the Author, Walter D. Edmonds Collection (AFHRA), AAF Historians, William Priestly, John Toland, Miscellaneous, Telephone Interviews by the Author, Taped Narratives Provided to the Author, Taped Narratives Provided to Others, and U.S. Air Force Oral Histories. There are 143 items of correspondence listed, among them PD/USAFFE; Other U.S. Government Correspondence: Imperial Japanese Navy Correspondence: FEAF Officers and Enlisted Men to Families: FEAF Officers and Enlisted Men to Author; Japanese Naval Air Officers to the Author; Other USAFFE Personnel to the Author; Other Persons to the Author; and Other Correspondence. Among the 177 listed items of Unpublished Materials there are categories of Reports and Statements; Unit and Office Diaries and Official Narratives; Official Japanese Navy Unit Records; Personal Diaries and Journals of FEAF Personnel; Personal Diaries and Logs of Others; Personal Narratives of FEAF Personnel Provided to the Author; Other Personal Narratives and Memoirs of USAFFE Personnel; Admiral Hart's Personal Papers; War Department Memoranda; Other War Department Documents; Philippine Department and USAFFE Memoranda; USAFFE General, Field, and Special Orders; Army Air Force Orders; Imperial Japanese Army Directives; War Department Philippine Department and USAFFE Radiograms/Cablegrams/Telegrams; Translations of Intercepted Japanese Naval Radio Messages; and Other Documents. Lastly, the Published Materials (Newspapers, Magazine and Newspaper Articles, Books and Chapters/Sections of Books) comprise 182 items. The detailed double-column conflated index (pp. 533-557) includes topical and proper noun entries.

Bartsch was not trained as an historian or political scientist, but his meticulous, admirably documented narrative and illuminating appendices should be the envy of any social scientist or humanities scholar. One can easily get back to the original source materials because of his citations and comprehensive notes. This documentation is a model worthy of emulation.

In his groundbreaking volume, Bartsch goes beyond

Paul Rogers's *The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland*, which documents the relationship between MacArthur and his Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Richard Sutherland for the period prior to and the beginning of World War II (July 1941 to December 1942).[7] The detail in Bartsch's volume illuminates Rogers's rather brief narrative on the December 8th attacks. Likewise, *December 8, 1941* provides additional insight to military historian Richard Connaughton's splendid compendium, *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*.[8]

The commanders caught unprepared at Pearl Harbor—Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and General Walter C. Short—were cashiered, but MacArthur was not. Short, who died in 1949, had his detractors, most recently John Lambert and Norman Polmar, but the late Charles R. Anderson provides a balanced biography with context and documented details that suggest that Short's superiors in Washington worked very hard to shift blame from Washington to the Army command in Hawaii.[9] Admiral Kimmel, who died in 1968, wrote his own account of the events and both Kimmel and Short have been defended by Ned Beach.[10] Michael Gannon takes an intermediate position.[11]

Nine Pearl Harbor hearings or investigations were ultimately convened but not a single one on the attack on the Philippines. Unlike Pearl Harbor, no official investigation was convened to determine the causes and allocate responsibility for the Japanese attacks on Clark and Iba Fields. Bartsch concludes that by 1945 as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, it was "politically impossible" to hold MacArthur accountable. John Dower provides a valuable assessment of this period.[12] Bartsch lays some blame for the fiasco in the Philippines on Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson (who had served as Governor-General of the Philippines from 1927 to 1929), Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, and Army Air Force Major General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, among others. Primary blame is attributed to Major Orrin Grover (24th Group Operations). Even after the war, MacArthur continued to shift blame for the delay in authorizing an air strike against Japanese air field on Formosa to General Brereton.

Nonetheless, Douglas MacArthur (January 26, 1880 - April 5, 1964), the favored son of a general, and who graduated at the top of his West Point class in 1904, was arrogant, vain, devious, brash, and supremely confident of his own powers. He survived the December 8, 1941 debacle very likely because America needed a hero after Pearl Harbor, and due to the Republic Party's es-

teem for MacArthur as a viable candidate for the presidency versus FDR. Michael Schaller, in "General Douglas MacArthur and the Politics of the Pacific War" (1997) attributes much of MacArthur's success to his "public relations abilities" rather than to military aptitude.[13] MacArthur would go on to become the liberator of the Philippines, shogun of occupied Japan, the mastermind of the invasion at Inchon, and an admired national hero who was relieved of his command by President Harry S. Truman.

William Bartsch has provided the reader with a significant evaluation of a critical episode in military history that has been ignored by scholars for too long. His use of primary source materials, older oral histories, and newly released archival material provides us with a delightful, well-written compendium that will be a landmark for many years to come.

Notes

[1]. Jonathan Marshall, *Southeast Asian Raw Materials and the Origins of the Pacific War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[2]. Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, eds., *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (Washington, D.C. and London: Brassey's, 1999).

[3]. William H. Bartsch, *Doomed at the Start: American Pursuit Pilots in the Philippines, 1941-1942* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1992).

[4]. Walter D. Edmonds, *They Fought with What They Had: The Story of the Army Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific, 1941-1942* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., 1982; Washington, D.C.: Center for Air Force History, 1992; and Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1993).

[5]. Edwin T. Layton with Roger Pineau and John Costello, *"And I was there": Pearl Harbor and Midway—Breaking the Secrets* (New York: William Morrow, 1985); John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill, the Shocking Truth Revealed: How their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines* (New York: Pocketbooks, 1994).

[6]. Robert A. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Devlin-Adair Co., 1954); Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Ladislav Farago, *The Broken Seal: The Story of "Operation Magic" and*

the Pearl Harbor Disaster (New York: Random House, 1967); Gordon W. Prange in collaboration with Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), *December 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988); Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

[7]. Paul Rogers, *The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1990).

[8]. Richard M. Connaughton, *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines* (New York: Overlook Press, 2001).

[9]. John W. Lambert and Norman Polmar, *Defenseless: Command Failure at Pearl Harbor* (St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing Co., 2003); Charles R. Anderson, *Day of Lightning, Years of Scorn: Walter C. Short and the Attack on*

Pearl Harbor (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

[10]. Husband E. Kimmel, *Admiral Kimmel's Story* (Chicago: Henry Regnery and Co., 1955); Edward L. Beach, *Scapegoats: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

[11]. Michael Gannon, *Pearl Harbor Betrayed: The True Story of a Man and a Nation under Attack* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001).

[12]. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York and London: The New Press, 1999).

[13]. Michael Schaller, "General Douglas MacArthur and the Politics of the Pacific War," in *The Pacific War Revisited*, ed. Gunther Bischof and Robert L. Dupont (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), pp. 17-20.

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