


and ratification that is worth knowing, if only to see how the Constitution's creators pulled the wool over so many people's eyes—and continue to do so today. 

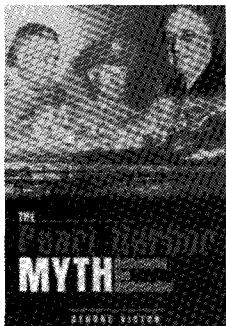
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The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable

by George Victor

Potomac Books • 2007 • 365 pages • \$27.50 hardcover;
\$18.95 paperback

Reviewed by Robert Higgs



Almost from the moment the Japanese bombs began falling on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor, the prime question has been, “What did President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his subordinates know about the impending attack, and when did they know it?” A series of official investigations during and immediately after the war failed to silence the president’s critics or to satisfy those who were skeptical about the official explanations. Even now, the debate continues. George Victor’s *Pearl Harbor Myth* is the latest substantial contribution to this controversy.

Although Victor, a retired psychologist, might seem an unlikely candidate to make an important contribution, and presents no new evidence, he adeptly exploits the relevant official reports and historical literature. He expresses his account in clear, fact-filled prose, highlighting the inconsistencies in various testimonies.

He finds that the Roosevelt administration deliberately provoked the attack, knew it was coming, and did not attempt to stop it. Yet Victor describes himself as an admirer of Roosevelt and declares that “moral and legal judgments are outside the purpose here.” If the president and his lieutenants conspired to bring the United States into the war in Europe through the Pacific “back door,” he concludes, they did only what all governments sometimes do—conspire, blame scapegoats, and then cover up their conspiracies by destroying evi-

dence, coercing witnesses, and lying—and they did it for an excellent reason, to save the world from conquest by Hitler.

The government conducted this Machiavellian maneuvering because the great majority of the populace opposed entry into the war unless the United States were attacked. Hence Roosevelt, who ardently desired (and worked relentlessly) to take the country into the war, needed to incite such an attack to unify the people in support of U.S. entry. “Establishing a record in which the enemy fired the first shot was a theme that ran through Roosevelt’s tactics.” Despite hostile but clandestine U.S. naval actions against German ships and submarines in the North Atlantic in 1941, the Germans refused to take the bait.

On the other side of the world, more than two years of U.S. economic warfare against Japan had placed the Japanese economy in a tightening stranglehold. War was almost inevitable, yet for Roosevelt’s political purposes it remained imperative “that Japan commit the first overt [military] act,” as a dispatch from Washington cautioned General Walter Short, the Army commander in Hawaii. Short and the Navy commander, Admiral Husband Kimmel, were set up as the fall guys to be blamed for lack of preparation when the U.S. forces at Pearl Harbor were caught “by surprise” in a “sneak attack”—such surprise and sneakiness being key elements of the enduring myth that Victor aims to explode.


As Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote two weeks before the Japanese attack, “the question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves.” The attack “was expected to get Congress to declare war on Japan. The crucial needs were to save the Soviet Union [from a Japanese invasion] and have Japan attack in circumstances that would move Congress to declare war on Germany.”

Why didn’t the President instead make a frank, straightforward request that Congress declare war, explaining why he considered U.S. entry into the war to be desirable? Because he thought that approach would fail.

On December 2, 1941, Roosevelt “told a subordinate that he expected to be at war with Japan within a

few days. On December 4 [Secretary of the Navy Frank] Knox told a subordinate the same [thing].” Yet Short and Kimmel were not alerted to the attack that high officials in Washington expected to occur shortly. Mid-level army and navy officers had urgently recommended that the commanders in Hawaii be warned, but their superiors had rejected those pleas.

After news of the attack reached Washington, Roosevelt convened his War Council. According to Harry Hopkins, “[T]he conference met in not too tense an atmosphere because . . . all of us believed that . . . the enemy was Hitler and that he could never be defeated without force of arms; that sooner or later we were bound to be in the war and that Japan had given us an opportunity.”

Although Victor’s apology for the Roosevelt administration’s aggressive, devious actions during the years preceding the attack on Pearl Harbor strikes me as highly problematical, I recommend *The Pearl Harbor Myth* as a thorough, clearly written, and generally even-handed account of the events that led to U.S. engagement in World War II. For the typical American, still clinging to the myth, the book will be a revelation. 

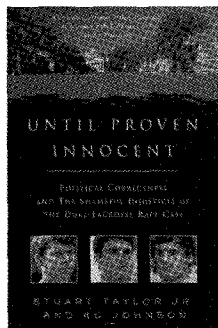
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Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case

by Stuart Taylor Jr. and KC Johnson

Thomas Dunne Books • 2007 • 405 pages • \$26.95

Reviewed by George C. Leef



In an infamous 1931 case, several black youths were arrested in Alabama and charged with raping two white women. Those young men—eventually called the Scottsboro Boys—could have been executed for the crime. Newspapers throughout the south wrote about the case as if the defendants’ innocence was inconceivable. It perfectly fit the reigning

stereotypes—white women were virtuous and black men were vicious sexual predators.

As it turned out, the accusers had lied. The women were sure they could play on the prejudices of law-enforcement officials to cover up their own indiscretions, so they made up a story. Good work by dedicated defense attorneys ripped apart the prosecution’s case and the defendants were freed.

The Duke lacrosse case of 2006–07 mirrored the Scottsboro incident. A black woman, Crystal Mangum, hired as a stripper (almost always referred to in the media as an “exotic dancer”) at a party thrown by the captains of the Duke University lacrosse team, showed up so drunk that she passed out after just a few minutes. Later, to avoid possible legal consequences from her drunkenness—she had two young children—she told a nurse that she had been raped at the party. The nurse, eager to credit the story, said that some of Crystal’s injuries were consistent with rape.

After that, the case grew like a wildly malignant cancer. A police official with an animosity toward Duke students got his hooks into the case and drove it relentlessly, but never with any interest in finding out what actually occurred. Then the district attorney, Mike Nifong, a white man who desperately wanted to win favor with the predominantly black electorate in Durham, seized on the case as his salvation. He never bothered to investigate the accuser’s veracity—she told several different and inconsistent versions of the alleged crime—but instead took to calling her “my victim.” Flagrantly violating prosecutorial rules, he rushed to indict three Duke lacrosse players.

The media had a field day with the case. Story after story in papers ranging from the *New York Times* to the *Durham Herald-Sun* excoriated the accused players with ideologically tendentious pieces that presumed not just guilt but racism. Yet that was nothing compared to the academic left on campus—Duke’s and many others. To leftist professors, the case seemed to be the perfect validation of their worldview that America’s evils stem from oppression on the basis of race, gender, and class. Their speeches and articles seethed with righteous indignation over the alleged crime.

Until Proven Innocent is a thorough recounting of the case by veteran political columnist Stuart Taylor and