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THE SHADOW OF PEARL HARBOR: Political Controversy over the Surprise Attack, by Martin V. Melosi. Texas A & M University Press, 183 pp., \$10.00.

Covering up Pearl

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THE PEARL HARBOR DISASTER is a trauma that will not disappear from the collective American memory. Only last fall the taped memoirs of John A. Burns, deceased governor of Hawaii, came to the public's attention because they contained the allegation that a week before the Japanese attack, the FBI knew that it was impending and did not inform the commanders in Hawaii. Until the government releases the relevant documents, we will not know what knowledge, if any, J. Edgar Hoover and his associates had of the Japanese plans to attack Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, students of both the Pearl Harbor question and the power of the federal executive would do well to read Martin V. Melosi's fine monographic study of the Roosevelt administration's attempt to minimize the domestic impact of Pearl Harbor and to keep blame away from itself.

Readers should be forewarned that Melosi employs the standard liberal "interventionist vs. isolationist" paradigm as the matrix for his work. The author repeatedly describes opponents of the Roosevelt foreign policy as "isolationists" and supporters of that policy as "interventionists." The term "isolationist" is so loose, however, as to be misleading, and even Melosi himself has trouble with it. Thus he writes that "Bertrand W. Gearhart [R-Calif.] was an anti-New Dealer and an isolationist. The chunky, rather affable Californian did not have a sparkling record in the House; he was best known for his advocacy of Iceland as the forty-ninth state" (p. 128).

This use of the liberal paradigm leads to Melosi's failure to understand the critique of U.S. imperialism by such statesmen as Gerald P. Nye and William Borah. Because he focuses so tightly on the Pearl Harbor attack and its aftermath, he would have the reader believe that the debate over Roose-

velt's foreign policy was something which sprang from that attack. Thus he writes, "At the core of the analysis of Roosevelt's foreign policy was a specific and emotional controversy over responsibility for the disaster, which formed the basis for the postwar historical debate" (p. xi). Of course, the debate over Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy antedated Pearl Harbor. It may, moreover, be viewed as part of the larger debate over U.S. foreign policy that had been going on since the turn of the century, a series of controversies that often centered on what sort of government Americans wanted theirs to be; whether, in particular, they wanted to move toward a global empire.

WHEN HE FOCUSES ON THE domestic political aftermath of the Pearl Harbor defeat and stays away from the larger questions, Melosi usually writes clearly, sometimes elegantly, and often with great subtlety of the persons and issues involved. The reader will find him a competent guide through the maze of the six investigations and the diversionary actions of the Roosevelt administration. The resulting story will hold the attention of all but the most jaded students of the American political scene.

Melosi argues that for two reasons the Roosevelt administration feared public speculation about the causes for the debacle at Pearl Harbor: Such speculation might lead the American people to see the war merely as a reaction to a devastating air raid (thus distracting them from wartime and postwar cooperation with the Allies) and it could lead to criticism of the highest civilian and military officials in the administration.

The second reason for the administra-

tion's fear was by far the stronger. In order to abort any criticism, Secretary of the Navy Knox, a militant nationalist and a central architect of the administration's "defense" program, flew to Pearl Harbor almost immediately after the attack and conducted an investigation, while Roosevelt was fobbing off the press at home. Knox announced that neither of the local commanders, Admiral Kimmel and General Short, had prepared for the type of attack the Japanese launched. Knox and his aggressively nationalistic counterpart in the Department of War, Henry Stimson, decided to blame the disaster on Kimmel and Short and to relieve them of their commands.

The vehicle for the condemnation of Kimmel and Short was the Pearl Harbor board of inquiry, headed by Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, which Roosevelt named on December 16, 1941. The inquiry was meant to stave off a congressional investigation, and so it did.

MELOSI IS INCONSISTENT IN his opinion of the Roberts board of inquiry. At first he argues that it was not the "kangaroo court" which postwar critics alleged it to be; then he admits that "the board members were likely to carry out their instructions literally and also to try to avoid perpetuating a debate over the issue of Pearl Harbor responsibility" (pp. 33-34). Of personal intrusion by Knox and Stimson he writes, "There is little justification to read any sinister or clandestine motives into the encounters between the board members and the army and navy secretaries" (p. 35). Yet further along he concludes, "Given the narrow charge to the board, the close association with the secretaries of war and the navy,



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and the restrictions in witnesses interrogated and documentation examined, it was not surprising that the Roberts commission censured the Hawaiian commanders" (pp. 37-38). Such inconsistency mars the third chapter, and Melosi's apologies for the administration seem feeble and arbitrary.

Melosi argues persuasively that the administration's tactic of blaming the local commanders backfired. If Kimmel and Short were at fault, then certain questions about their superiors inevitably followed. Furthermore, by refusing the disgraced commanders an early public trial (which might have embarrassed the administration) and postponing their courts-martial until after the war, Roosevelt, Stimson, and Knox kept the issue festering.

Melosi skillfully traces the efforts of the administration to fend off a public inquiry. The fear that inspired those efforts grew with time. An internal investigation by Admiral Thomas C. Hart on behalf of the Navy department in early 1944 revealed that that department, for one, had reason to be apprehensive. In mid-1944 congressional critics forced full-scale investigations by both the Army and Navy as a prelude to possible courts-martial. The Army Pearl Harbor Board found that the administration had failed to give adequate warning to General Short at Pearl Harbor. The Navy Court of Inquiry delivered parallel findings.

THE ROOSEVELT AND TRUMAN administrations managed to cover up the damaging reports until after the end of the war. Even after the Truman administration released the Army and Navy reports in late 1945, the public remained suspicious and more prone to blame the politicians than the military men for the defeat at the Pacific outpost.

A joint congressional investigation, from November 15, 1945, to May 31, 1946, did not completely quell the public's suspicions.

That investigation found that officials in both Hawaii and Washington had to bear some responsibility for what had happened. With this finding, the wartime debate over Pearl Harbor came to an end.

Melosi appears surprised that the partisan political setting of the U.S. Congress could yield evenhanded investigative reports on the disaster. Time and again in his narrative one finds outcroppings of the traditional liberal suspicion of partisan politics. And yet, as this study shows so well, it was such politics that forced the Roosevelt and Truman administrations to reveal as much as they did about the defeat.

The breakdown of partisan politics during the election of 1944 made easier the emergence of the national security state. The Roosevelt administration persuaded Thomas Dewey for reasons of "national security" not to reveal that for some time preceding December 1941 the U.S. government had been able to read the coded messages passed between Tokyo and Japanese outposts in Honolulu, Washing-

ton, and elsewhere. The administration did not want the Japanese to learn of this achievement for obvious military reasons; nor did they want the American voters to learn of it, because it might lead the electorate to wonder whether Roosevelt and his advisers hadn't known at some point before December 7 that war, perhaps even the attack on Pearl Harbor, was coming. By acceding to the administration's overtures, Dewey denied the American people the opportunity to pass judgment on the policies that had led to war. He helped also to pave the way for politicians cloaking their machinations with the term "national security," while evoking the memory of Pearl Harbor's twisted hulks. □

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM, 1945-1976: An Insider's View, by Robert Solomon. Harper & Row, 381 pp., \$17.50.

THE ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DISORDER: A Study of United States International Monetary Policy from World War II to the Present, by Fred L. Block. University of California Press, 282 pp., \$14.00.

Monetary nonsense

MURRAY N. ROTHBARD

AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II an all-powerful United States succeeded in imposing on the western world its major economic war aim: the Bretton Woods international monetary system, establishing fixed exchange rates and the dollar as the base of world currencies. That system was thought to be engraved in stone; yet by the end of the 1960s Bretton Woods lay in ruins. But this was only one part of the monetary history of this century. Since World War I the leading nations have been stumbling and bumbling in their approach to international monetary affairs. The world has been pulled in and out of fixed exchange rates, various degrees of fluctuating exchange rates, international collaboration, harsh "beggar thy neighbor" monetary and economic warfare, various forms of partial

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reliance on gold, and different kinds of pound, dollar, and "paper gold" standards. During this same period, the world has suffered from myriad monetary crises; runs on gold, the pound, and the dollar; and jerry-built agreements that are supposedly eternal but that collapse in a few months. (The Smithsonian Agreement of December 1971, which President Nixon hailed as "the greatest monetary agreement of all time," collapsed within a year and a half.)

One would think that being on the inside of many decades of careening one step ahead of monetary chaos might induce a sober, even cynical, spirit; that it might lead the insider to call for keeping one's metaphorical air-raid shelter well-stocked and at the ready. But such is not the case with Dr. Robert Solomon, a Harvard Ph.D., for many years a leading insider as the Federal Reserve Board's chief international economist, and now enjoying R&R at the Brookings Institution. On the contrary, Dr. Solomon's view from the top is almost incredibly benign. Not only is there no sense that any real crises ever took place, but Solomon's book is an outstanding example of what has been called the "Whig theory of history," readily summed up as the thesis that "whatever was, was right." And so, regardless of what flop of a plan was adopted by the United States or the western world, even if it lasted only a few months, it was *right for that time span*. Considering the somber record of international money in this period, "Whig theory of history" is a kindly label; "Pollyanna in the nursery" might be more appropriate.

SOLOMON'S NAIVE APPROACH IS facilitated by the fact that, although an able monetary technician, he shows no sign whatever of economic understanding, of apprehending the causes of the economic situations he and we found ourselves in. One example will suffice: After World War II, the countries of Europe and Asia discovered that they could not find dollars to buy in foreign exchange markets. Hence, establishment economists came up with the idea of a mysterious "dollar shortage," a shortage somehow embedded in the structure of world economies and destined to be quasi-permanent. A few years after the dollar shortage theory was discovered and solemnly intoned, lo and behold! the world began to experience a dollar glut; the world was increasingly awash in dollars. The turning point, in fact, can be pinpointed: 1950. Some of our more perceptive economists have since taken to ridiculing the prophets of the permanent dollar shortage. Not so Dr. Solomon, the quintessence of Establishment Man. No, for Solomon, such a view is unkind; instead, displaying no insight whatever into the causes either of the advent of the shortage or of its reversal, Solomon maintains that the theorists of the dollar shortage were correct for the 1940s and became incorrect only after the shortage disappeared. To Solomon the causes of these changes rested vaguely in production and