

Events parallel those of 50 years ago

By Sabine Goerke-Shrode

Sunday, September 23, 2001

I had originally intended this article to be used at the end of November around Pearl Harbor Day. But with events unfolding now, the attack in the USA by terrorists, perhaps a look at six months of news editorial excerpts 50 years ago will give a little insight as to how we got here.

What I found were many parallels of current events and a peek at some history repeating itself.

Many of the following excerpts from local newspaper editorials give the impression they could have been written in the recent past with just a few minor changes. See what you think.

June 6, 1941 - "BOMBS MAY FALL ON US TOMORROW." "Read this thoughtfully! It isn't careless talk or hysteria or an irresponsible warning!" The article went on to say, "German 'tourists' in the United States are this very hour devising ways of destroying our airplane factories in the East and West.

Our small towns, where vast quantities of vital aircraft accessories and parts are now under manufacture, are also of special interest to these Nazi 'tourists.' Tomorrow German bombs may crash on Main street, America!"

7/3/1941 - "This Is Our Last Independence Day If We Go To War!" In this editorial, Charles Lindberg and President Herbert Hoover were quoted as saying, "This generation will never again see freedom if we go to war." The editorial ended with, "We celebrate our Independence Day, technically at peace, in a world aflame. But we have never deluded ourselves, and we must not now. Actually, we are near war!"

7/10/1941 - "NATIONAL DEFENSE BLUNDERING!" "After two months of secret investigation, the House Military Affairs Committee has submitted a blistering report to Congress, charging short-sightedness, costly blundering, lack of capacity and lack of coordination in the handling of the national defense program.

"The caustic report spares no one. It raps the President, Congress, the Defense Advisory Commission and the Office of Production Management with equal vigor. It criticizes the Army, Navy, Treasury Maritime Commission and the State Department, and it takes an unusually heavy slap at Secretary of Interior Ickes for spending his time

hating business, instead of cooperating with it to speed production.

“In another chapter, the report charges that emphasis over the past few years has been put on social reform rather than national security, and warned: “As a Nation we seem to have forgotten that without national security, social reform might well prove meaningless.”

9/25/1941 - “IMPREGNABLE FOR HOW LONG? ” . . . we can't help remembering that the Maginot Line promised to make France impregnable. That Gibraltar was considered impregnable once. That while Britain, further fortifying it against assault, still believes it is, Germany thinks otherwise. Time and a Nazi attack will tell.

“Often when a nation thinks it has perfected the weapon to silence all other weapons or prepared the defense to stop all comers, somebody else devises a deadlier weapon yet, or a way of cracking impregnable defenses wide open.

“The laymen can know little about weapons or war strategies. He can only hope that while locking the storm shutters against possible sea invasion the military men will leave no gates jar in any other phase of practical defense.”

10/16/1941 - “MIGHT STILL ISN'T RIGHT.” “Here we have stated, once again, the ancient, discredited creed that MIGHT is RIGHT. That creed has brought more sorrow to the world we live in than any other ever ventured. If we needed any spur to our defense program of aid to Britain and all the other countries fighting Hitlerism - this revealing statement should provide it. In America, we still believe in human rights; we still believe that right is mightier than might. That, it seems is the issue.”

10/16/1941 - “WAR HOVERS NEAR.” “We are not at war, not yet - not in the sense of a formal declaration. But we are awfully near. That no one can dispute. We have declared our intention to sink any U-boat or raider found hovering in our waters. Politics, as such, is out until the troubled waters of the world are becalmed. All parties, creeds, faiths and factions must now line up squarely beside our President, for the good of our people and the preservation of our nation.”

12/7/1941 - As we all know, Pearl Harbor was bombed on this day. On December 11, 1941, the editorial read as follows: IT'S ONLY A WAR - KEEP COOL.

“When the first bomb dropped on Honolulu last Sunday morning, two political parties were wiped out - the Democrat and Republican. Today there is but one party in this Nation and that is the American Party. Let any color but the Red, White and Blue present itself from here out and it is suicidal.

“. . . such things in a graduated scale, have been going on since the first cave man rolled the boulder down the side of the mountain upon his enemies. War is not a new thing, and its problems can and will be met as they come.

“The best way to help win this war is to keep cool - to go right along in the customary work-a-day fashion - taking care of the farm, the ranch, the business and the household - keeping eyes and ears open - and mouth shut. All alien nationals have been taken care of, or instructed as to their mode of procedure. Many of our young citizens, who are of a different race, are placed in an embarrassing situation through no fault of their own. Let us be tolerant toward them - let us be Americans.

“Those who thought America did not WANT war judged us correctly. But those who thought Americans would not FIGHT in defense of their honor, their liberty and their free soil, must now feel the weight of America’s wrath and America’s unconquerable arms.

“The President of the United States has spoken: No matter how long it may take us, the American people in their righteous might will win through to ABSOLUTE VICTORY. We will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.”

Does any of this sound familiar? Why haven’t we learned anything from the past?

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/88>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/88/>