

TO BUILD A HERO: DOUGLAS MACARTHUR AND THE WAR THAT WASN'T

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my eighteen-year-old self, who was stupid, proud, and directionless enough to earn himself a foreign adventure with the infantry, to about half of the officers I met during that time, who carried on MacArthur's tradition of throwing other people's bodies at their own glorification, and to the brave and thoughtful grunts who pinned me down when I resolved to opine on the topic.

This is also dedicated to the professors who found me just amusing enough to keep me marginally employed through the completion of this work, to my impossibly patient woman Justine for pretending to listen as I incoherently rambled on about the actions of men who died before she was born, and to my buddy Clementine, who learned the hard way that when the sergeant yells "Duck!" you don't jump up and ask "Where?"

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Douglas MacArthur, General of the Army and Commander in Chief of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area during the Second World War, and those acting under his purview, did knowingly and deliberately engage in a campaign of misinformation – during and after the war – with the intention of enhancing his reputation. The goal of this campaign was twofold: He would secure enough popular support to make him politically unassailable at the time and he would protect his legacy for posterity. Unlike previous surveys, which fail to hold MacArthur accountable for the deep and pervasive vein of propagandistic fallacy which he-and-his inserted into the historical narrative, this study puts lie to the defense that his actions were the innocent idiosyncrasies of a colorful eccentric, the aloofness of an old man, or the fault of loyal but unprompted subordinates.

Thorough examination of contemporary records and accounts are used to establish – beyond a reasonable doubt – that MacArthur understood both the reality of the situations in question and what he stood to gain by reporting otherwise. Analysis of the historiography concerning MacArthur was conducted and is herein summarized to establish both that his efforts were effective, pervasive, and distinct in both quantity and scope from the level of self-aggrandizement undertaken by his peers. As there exists far too much literature, both primary and secondary, on which this study could focus for comprehensive analysis in a work of this type, this study has focused primarily on two periods between December 1941 and May 1942 – the Clark Field Attack and the

Evacuation from Corregidor – to establish a pattern of behavior demonstrative of conscious action, malicious and selfish intent, and tangible benefit. This work aims to serve as a realization – one nearly a century in the making – of the yearning by historians, servicemen, officials, victims, and voyeurs for a time and a method to declare openly that one of America’s most venerated heroes was a fraud.

This work is composed in hope that the glory and acclaim he stole might be returned to those whose blood bought the veneration with which he showered himself. It is written in hope that historians might free themselves from the fear of repercussions implicit in holding a man Franklin Delano Roosevelt once called “The most dangerous man in America” accountable for his lies. And it is published in the hope that the vainglorious denizens of the future may yet come to see Douglas MacArthur as a cautionary tale rather than a figure for emulation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
Accusations	1
Gaming the Dialectic	4
You Miss 100% of the Shots You Don't Take.....	6
Why it Matters	8
Setting the Stage.....	10
On Japanese Otherness.....	10
Economies of Scale make Fools of Us All.....	13
A Pattern of Behavior in Khaki Trousers.....	17
Introducing the Historiography	26
A Brief Exposé on Representative Secondary Literature.....	31
On Paul Rogers	37
On Reminiscences.....	39
Problems, Hurdles, and Avenues of Attack	42
Objectives	45
A CASE IN TWO PARTS	47

MacArthur’s own Pearl Harbor	47
How MacArthur Reported It.....	49
On the Other Hand	55
Later Defense	57
Who Believed It?.....	59
Upshot.....	67
Escape from Corregidor	73
How MacArthur Reported It.....	74
On the Other Hand	75
Further Defense.....	78
Who Believed Him?	81
Upshot.....	82
MacArthur and the Art of Further Control.....	88
Censorship.....	88
TO WHAT END?.....	100
Immediate Gains – Deification or Death.....	101
Legacy	107
President MacArthur	108
MacArthur’s Memory.....	112
Juxtaposition.....	113
CONCLUSION	122
APPENDIX.....	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY	140

“Give a man a reputation as an early riser and he can sleep ‘til noon.” -Mark Twain

INTRODUCTION

Accusations

General Douglas MacArthur begins his memoir *Reminiscences* with a pair of enticingly contradictory statements. He first prefaces his work with the notion that it is neither history nor biography, but rather merely his recollection of events in which he played a part. A few lines down the page he backtracks somewhat by informing the reader that the following pages are filled with information carefully obtained from staff studies, memoranda, and historical work made under his own supervision. The next paragraph is a single standalone sentence in which MacArthur declares an overwhelming desire to recount "... my [MacArthur's] share in the many vital events while not giving my [MacArthur's] own acts an unwarranted prominence." It is a conviction which, while noble in isolation, holds water about as well as a hula hoop when faced with any context. MacArthur clearly states, just three sentences earlier, in just the second sentence of his book, that he had engineered the construction of both historical resources and historical writings discussing the events he involved himself in. As the rest of the memoir leaves in little doubt, MacArthur entertained no doubts about the central – and heroic – role he played.¹

A passing egotism and a bit of false modesty is hardly a scandalous trait in an aged and retired general looking back at a long and incredibly successful life. MacArthur

¹ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1964), v-vi.

was, after all, weeks from death when he completed *Reminiscences*. However, it is the second sentence, again, to which a historian skeptical about MacArthur's energetic tale of dashing heroics and success against the odds is instinctively drawn. The clue that starts the whole treasure hunt, the thread the idle scholar pulls that pulls apart the great tapestry, is given in the last fifteen words of the second sentence – especially the last six. "... a free use of staff studies and historical records made under my direction and supervision." As this study will argue and ultimately demonstrate: MacArthur, and those working at his behest, did not merely record a history of his role in events, but rather deliberately created – in real time – a history that prioritized the painting of MacArthur in the most favorable light above any and all concerns for historical (or contemporary) accuracy.²

This willfully contradictory *yet entirely official* history paints MacArthur's enemies as the villains, his own mistakes as the fault of others, and the success made in spite of MacArthur as his own. Most interestingly, these works are official records – apparently unbiased primary sources – and have therefore been relied upon heavily by historians of every caliber studying the War in the South Pacific.³ The result are two

² Ibid.

³ This work is not intended as an attack on historians who have relied heavily on sources that are today controversial. Many key histories on the subject were published many decades before the time of this writing and information – especially in terms of access – has never been in greater abundance than at present. This work is also not necessarily an attack on MacArthur, at least not directly. Instead, this is an examination of the effects of his historiographical meddling and that done on his behalf. To fault or belittle historians who utilized sources they good reason to believe accurate is not the goal of this paper, nor is the intention to shame them for refusing to make provocative accusations towards one of the most heavily venerated men in American history. The field of Second World War History is surprisingly shallow in terms of primary operational documentation and historians are very dependent on access to these limited sources. Were a historian to alienate others with overt assaults on an American hero, especially in the mid-to-late twentieth century, there is every chance that they would quickly find themselves short on both access to these sources and access to anyone interested in helping them correct that. John McCarten, a respected journalist, created a brief scandal with his January 1944 article criticizing elements of MacArthur's leadership and decrying the MacArthur mythos as an invention of hyper-nationalists. His sentiments were broadly accurate, and had his work been published thirty years later he might have been

subtly, but significantly, contradictory narratives forming a dividing line between historians of the period. In one camp are historians who, deliberately or not, utilize and trust material created by MacArthur and his partisans. In the other are those who are skeptical about these materials and the motivations of their creators. The former camp tends to offer analysis of the War in the Pacific that paints MacArthur in a favorable light, while the latter often find themselves neutral or even outright hostile towards the man. These disparate camps enable the perception of the broad, historical discussion as a debate over interpretation of evidence rather than an investigation of invented evidence which, in turn, lends credibility to the suspect materials.

In a very real respect, this work is a study on the dangers to a historiography posed by a limited pool of primary resources. The documentation produced under the guidance of Douglas MacArthur was, as would be expected of the documentation produced by any large military headquarters, broadly competent in design, logistical in subject, and boring in consummation. It is within this metaphorical sea of dull competence that individual misleading documents lie – like mines waiting to sink an unknowing historian. While the records produced by MacArthur and his headquarters are unavoidable and important primary resources for a historian undertaking a detailed study of the Pacific War, they might be best approached with the healthy skepticism most often afforded memoirs. Indeed, one does not need to look very far to find a military veteran who will happily cast doubt on the infallibility of official military documentation.

considered one of the pioneers of a more balanced view of MacArthur. Instead, he was roundly denigrated, and thereafter found work only as a film and theatre critic.

Perhaps, in this vein, this is a healthy attitude to adopt in all cases where one set of primary sources occupy a position of unavoidability within a field.

Gaming the Dialectic

Few historical figures embody so stark and enduring a split to their memories as Douglas MacArthur. Amongst those who do engender such controversy, fewer still were not themselves the heads of their respective states. Napoleon Bonaparte, for example, attracts a variety of opinions as a historical figure and was no stranger to self-aggrandizement, but even his most ardent partisans accede to the historical consensus that his position and the power it provided enabled (perhaps even demanded) a significant editing of his profile.⁴ Adolf Hitler, another era-defining figure, engaged in numerous campaigns of self-aggrandizement, but one would struggle to find a modern historian who views the myth of Hitler's military genius as anything other than easily debunked propaganda.⁵ These figures also, critically, lost their respective empires at the hands of those with no particular interest in defending their projected images. MacArthur, on the other hand, ostensibly commanded no such imperial propaganda apparatus. He was not an all-powerful unitary executive, but instead himself a subordinate to *at least* two people and, critically, was on the winning side. Either factor in isolation would retard inquisition into his public caricature, but combined they seem to have rendered him, for a time,

⁴ Colin Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 47.

⁵ The contrast with Napoleon and Hitler is intended not to draw untoward parallels with either figure and MacArthur, but rather to emphasize that the powers implicit to their positions encourage a level of historical skepticism often absent from the study of men in "lesser" positions.; German generals wrote at length following the war about Hitler's tendency to intervene in military strategy to the detriment of the war effort. Martin van Creveld, an Israeli military historian and theorist, wrote at length on this theme in a 1988 article. Martin van Creveld, "On Learning from the Wehrmacht and Other Things," *Military Review*, no. 68 (1988): 69-71, 71n9.

nearly unassailable. He therefore elicits two dialectical schools of thought – each dutifully championed by careful and capable historians – which leaves an uncomfortable incongruity in the historical narrative. The man was either a military genius who almost singlehandedly won the Pacific War as he expertly fended off Japanese aggression with one hand and partisan backbiting by embittered rivals with the other *or* he was a cynical, self-aggrandizing buffoon with a penchant for taking credit for the deeds of his subordinates and who grew fat on his father’s name. Primary evidence exists that supports each idea, and each can call among its ranks of defenders respected and capable historians. That a character as grandiose as MacArthur would attract both praise and criticism from historians is not in itself particularly novel. That MacArthur both actively worked to fabricate primary historical evidence bolstering his image and occupied a position which protected him from significant scrutiny on the matter is, on the other hand, quite novel indeed.

As with most cases where a historical figure is plagued by a dialectic narrative, the likeliest truth rests somewhere in the middle. Historical consensus, if there is such a thing, is slowly moving towards the idea that MacArthur was a commander who was neither particularly inspired in his brilliance nor devious in his stupidity, but rather a reasonably adept military and political mind with a calculated and meticulous disinterest in leaving opportunities for the enhancement of his reputation on the metaphorical table. While it is probably accurate to suggest that both his successes and failures were enunciated by his colorful personality, this is not the argument being made here. That a “great” historical figure might attract disparate analysis is neither novel nor shocking. Indeed, a historical figure comprehensively cleared of controversy would be a curiosity in

and of itself. The argument being made in this thesis is that MacArthur, fully understanding the gravity of his place in history and the unique nature of the opportunity presented to him, utilized his position, the assets his position provided, and the media of his time to *deliberately* craft a historical narrative which was both unabashedly favorable towards himself *and academically valid*.

You Miss 100% of the Shots You Don't Take

“Great Men,” to resurrect a somewhat gauche historical moniker, tend to be very cognizant of their place in history. Alexander the Great was supposed to have kept in his travelling party a large number of scribes assigned to record his actions so no part of his “greatness” would be missed by either his subjects or by posterity. Julius Caesar published his accounts of his adventures in Gaul with one eye on raising his profile in Rome and another firmly on cementing his place in history. Kings and Emperors from Solomon to Saddam Hussein took advantage of the media of their day to see that history recorded their accomplishments and a series of writers with a strong, if slightly unprofessional, bias towards keeping their heads attached to their shoulders ensured that the narrative which they produced painted their respective employers in a favorable light.⁶ Douglas MacArthur, however, was neither a King nor an Emperor. As much as he may at times have wished it, he could not have an unfavorable press rounded up and drowned in a lake. He was instead presented with a very specific set of circumstances that allowed him an amount of personal control over a historical narrative almost

⁶ Peter Green, *Alexander the Great and The Hellenistic Age*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), xxii-xxviii.

unprecedented for a man of his position – not the least of which being a position to which such powers are not expected to fall.

The field of history is much like the field of law. Events, at least those involving people, either happen or do not happen and are accordingly recorded with relative ease. There is a similar lack of debate among historians in regard to the, say, founding of Zion National Park in Utah as there would be among crime scene investigators over the existence of a cadaver over which they were standing. There are exceptions and qualifications, there always are, but broadly the question that consumes the bulk of time and energy is one of motivation. In history as in law, motivation is proved most often through analysis of an aggregate collection of factors. Small pieces of evidence are accrued and organized before an argument can then be made and defended. Notes from a murderer detailing their crime, intention, and methodology are somewhat rarer than television would have you believe.

The same is the case in history at large and with this argument in particular. There exists no damning memorandum from Douglas MacArthur in which he orders the blatant falsification of reports – at least none that have yet been discovered. Nor is there much discourse from his sycophants (though there is not none) so much as implies an intention to repackage events in a more favorable manner. It is therefore left to us to engage in a broader survey of both the historiography at large and contemporary reporting and couple our findings with an evident pattern of behavior. Through this wider lens we might discern a pattern of bias, omission, and misrepresentation that through its consistency serves for us the same purpose as the collected evidence of the crime scene investigator.

Why it Matters

There is a temptation to look at the past with a sense of superiority. It is, in fairness, not an entirely unmerited prejudice. The documentation of the lessons learned by and through the failures and discoveries of previous generations is arguably the single greatest utility of the written word. It stands to reason those mistakes, deceptions, and misunderstandings suffered by those who came before, once identified, cannot be repeated. This fallacy is both entirely understandable and extremely dangerous. In the case of Douglas MacArthur, a rare, but not necessarily irreplicable, set of circumstances conspired to protect his legacy from the inquisition usually visited upon those who attempt to rewrite history.

First, and perhaps least intuitively, MacArthur lived for a very long time. Controversial figures of his stature very rarely live long enough to witness the historical discussion of their legacy. George Patton, a man five years younger than MacArthur, was dead within months of the end of the war that etched his name into history. Rommel, Yamamoto, and McNair, to name just a handful of his contemporaries, failed even to survive the war. Other men, among them Eisenhower, Montgomery, Chiang, Zhukov, and Konev, survived the war but continued to act as major figures in the creation of new history for decade. These men – several of whom will be examined in more detail in a later chapter – were, either by disposition, responsibility, or the relative security of their positions, not particularly focused on the careful and curatorial defense of their own histories.⁷ MacArthur, following his escapades in Korea and a final botched attempt at

⁷ Churchill, of course, offers a very plausible exception to this point, but the circumstances and motivations surrounding his retellings of his own history are different enough from MacArthur's own to free him (at least for the purposes of this work) from accusations of a parallel nature. Examination of Churchill's life,

the Republican presidential nomination, lingered for more than a decade – a decade in which he neither held nor was in a position to seek political or military power, but one in which he still wielded a great deal of influence as to how the history of the events in his life could be recorded.

Secondly, and very unusually for a man with superiors, the primary curator of the historical primary sources concerning General Douglas MacArthur was... General Douglas MacArthur. He, as he proudly boasts in his writing, and those in his debt or service created many of the records historians would use to understand and interrogate the events that made him a household name.⁸ As a younger officer, MacArthur had been a pioneer in press relations. As an old general, MacArthur was in his time unrivalled in his ability to treat the press not as an adversary or a neutral institution, but as a tool in one's own arsenal.⁹ He was blessed with such distance from what few forces could practicably supersede his authority that he was able to exert a level of control over the flow of information almost unprecedented for a man of his station.

Finally, MacArthur was an American hero. Whether the deeds that granted him such reverence were real, embellished, or outright fabricated – whether he had achieved such veneration through the excitable enthusiasm of an epic poet or the bitter manipulations of an arch cynic – he was nonetheless a hero to many Americans. Men in positions of significant authority in the military and government owed him significant

actions, and motivations is a task that this author feels, at the moment, is best left to his more than six-hundred biographers. Though there is a dry amusement to be quietly shared here in the reflection that few of those writers would describe the task as anything more than “woefully incomplete.”

⁸ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, v-vi.

⁹ D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur Volume 1, 1880–1941*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 130-135.

debt for their positions – and in some cases lives – and many Americans saw him as the man who had answered when they cried out as a nation for a hero. Any historian who made the decision to attack his legacy, especially during his life, would likely have faced significant backlash both personally and professionally. Even his critics – of which his biographer Arthur Herman (somewhat defensively) notes MacArthur attracted many in the decades since his death – refrain from accusing MacArthur outright of maliciously lying.¹⁰

The time has, however, come to change that. The time of MacArthur and the men working on his behalf is long past and while he still has partisans, they are no longer ubiquitous. It is now, in the clear air offered by eight decades of breathing room, that it must be said openly and without qualification that MacArthur was a hero only to himself. His is a legacy that was invented – and invented for his own aggrandizement. To allow his myth to continue to perpetuate – to allow his legacy to be free of specific judgement – is to establish a precedent for other vain, ambitious men to follow. In a field in which reputations are inextricably linked to credibility, this is unacceptable.

Setting the Stage

On Japanese Otherness

It would be remiss to not mention, at least briefly, the role that race plays in the events discussed herein. While there is no indication that MacArthur was, himself, especially racist (by the admittedly despicable standards of his day) the prevailing racism held by many of his countrymen likely contributed to both increased fear of and decreased sympathy for the forces arrayed against him. The Japanese were felt by many

¹⁰ Arthur Herman, *Douglas MacArthur American Warrior*, (New York: Random House, 2017), 844-847.

Americans at the time to be sub-human and tales of their deaths failed to arouse the same level of sympathy that the killing of white people did. In the ascendancy, however, they were supposed to be unspeakably savage. By the early twentieth century, Japan had a top-class navy and army, an extractive colonial infrastructure, and the begrudging respect of other powerful nations - every trait of a first-rate power of the day.

Perhaps, however, it is more honest to say that Japan had every trait save two, both of which are important factors in the creation of the unique experience of the Pacific War. First, the Japanese were not, and indeed still are not, white. The other major world powers of the age were all Anglo-European, with shared cultural roots and a long history of interconnection. In a world where race was perceived as more important than it is today, and where racialist ideals gained wider acceptance, this made the Japanese an “other” in relation to the rest of the great powers. Make no mistake, a narcissistic delusion of genetic superiority was every bit as pervasive in Japanese society as it was in other cultures at the time, but Westerners with a vested interest in doing so had little trouble painting the Japanese as something slightly less than human.¹¹

The second place where the Japanese found themselves just outside of the Great Powers club was in terms of resources. Though adaptive farming practices and extensive fisheries allowed the archipelago to support a large population, the Japanese Home Islands produced very little in the way of key fuels and metals. Japan was therefore forced to import the vast majority of its oil, coal, natural gas, copper, gold, and iron. As these are the building blocks of a modern industrialized military – a nonnegotiable

¹¹ Maury Klein, *A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 611.

prerequisite to being a colonizer rather than the colonized – the Japanese spent heavily on them. This was, however, unsustainable and the need for resource security conspired with a handful of cultural idiosyncrasies to drive the Japanese to further colonial expansion.¹²

In part because the established colonial powers had no interest in enabling a new rival, in part because of a sense of racial superiority, and in part due to the sheer brutality and cruelty of the Japanese adventures in Asia and the Pacific, by the end of the 1930s the other great powers of the world had begun levying punitive economic sanctions on the Japanese.¹³ By 1941, Germany and Italy – the two major powers sympathetic to Japan – were meeting with military success in Europe but were confined there. The United Kingdom and United States, already heavily sanctioning the Japanese, demanded that Japan withdraw from the territory they had spent vast amounts of blood, treasure, and time to pry from their neighbors or else see the flow of resources – already little more than a trickle – cut off entirely. This would starve the Japanese military, leaving it unable to operate effectively and forever inferior to the other great powers.¹⁴

The Empire, therefore, found itself at a crossroads. Either it could bow to the other powers and accept a subservient position in return for restarting the flow of

¹² The term “Home Islands” has largely been replaced in Western parlance by “Japanese Archipelago.” The archipelago consists of Hokkaido in the north, Honshu in the center, Shikoku in the south, and Kyushu to the southwest, and it has a total of 6,852 islands (of which 430 are inhabited). The Ryukyu Islands (of which Okinawa is the largest) and Kuril Islands are also sometimes counted as parts of the archipelago. Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War 1931-1945*, (New York: Random House, 1978), 133-135.

¹³ While the Empire of Japan was *amazingly* cruel in its colonial conquests, their cruelties did not meaningfully exceed the worst examples of actions that their European rivals had engaged in during their early colonial adventures. They were, however, hamstrung by a global intellectual tradition that was just beginning to take a negative view of such practices. While Japanese incredulity at being reprimanded for the same sort of conduct which had made their critics mighty is not entirely unfair – their general failure to earnestly adapt to and embrace the changing tenor of global public opinion made their demonization by Allied propogandists a matter of little difficulty. *Ibid*, 135.

¹⁴ Edward Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 19-38.

resources – a position that was itself probably not politically possible domestically or internationally – or it could take them by force. Sensing a unique opportunity in the perceived weakness and distraction evident in the other powers, they opted for the latter. A series of surprise attacks against American and British possessions in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Hawaii were followed by a declaration of war. It would be a dirty war – appalling and cruel both in its vastness and in its minutiae – and it would be a desperate war. It would be a theatre in which nations would rise and sing their own epitaphs and a theatre in which a man, if he were clever, powerful, and ambitious enough, might write his name into history.

Economies of Scale make Fools of Us All

There are few endeavors more complicated than a modern war. When Alexander the Great crossed the Hellespont in 334BCE he did so with a force somewhere between forty and fifty thousand men. That the Roman Republic was able to mass perhaps eighty thousand at Cannae in a desperate bid to stop Hannibal Barca was due in no small part to the situation not requiring that they be supplied for very long, moved anywhere, or – ultimately fatefully – given any meaningfully complex tactical instructions. The Friday before the United States found itself a surprised and unhappy belligerent in the Second World War marked the official end of Operation Barbarossa, the name given for the general invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany.

Barbarossa had seen nearly four million personnel, seven thousand tanks and fighting vehicles, five thousand aircraft, twenty-four thousand artillery pieces, eighteen thousand mortars, six-hundred thousand horses, and as many light vehicles. Millions more people manufactured the sundry materiel of war, grew the millions of tons of food

the armies consumed, manned the rail lines that sent goods east, or staffed hospitals that received their bloody progeny. A staff of thousands of highly trained, highly motivated experts oversaw the movement and organization of the necessities of an industrial war machine that had been unimaginable in their own lifetimes. It was also entirely insufficient.¹⁵

By December 5, 1941, Barbarossa had failed. The ramifications of its failure would not be apparent for some time and the cost in human lives was little more than a sample of the horror to come, but the combined attentions of the military, industrial, and economic engines of an ascendent and battle tested nation that had at this point come to control most of Europe had failed to achieve success in an endeavor against an enemy they had taken by surprise and with whom they shared a land border stretching nearly from just north of the Hellespont to the Baltic Sea.

This is all included in an effort to contextualize the scale of the Pacific War – a conflict that would quickly grow to include nearly half the globe in its theatre of operations. A German soldier who had marched past the Brandenburg Gate to the suburbs of Moscow and stood again in the shadow of the great sandstone columns as the Red Army descended on Berlin four years later would have covered about thirty-six hundred kilometers. Were he an American, however, and attempting a journey from the western port city of Los Angeles to the eastern Australian city of Sydney to reinforce this key strategic ally, he would have had to travel more than three times that distance and, of course, he would have had to swim.

¹⁵ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 853-856.

Wars are dictated, perhaps more than any other single factor, by geography. Distance, terrain, climate, and distribution of natural resources serve as clear determining factors in any military conflict. The War in the Pacific incorporated more geographical factors, both in volume and depth, than any other. Where the Germans eventually failed to defeat an enemy across a two-thousand-kilometer front, the Americans needed to succeed against an enemy across a front more than fifteen-thousand kilometers wide. Their supply lines were stretched over endless tracts of dangerous ocean. Their personnel were without contact or resupply for weeks or months not by happenstance, but by design. Where the Germans initially faced a disparate and embittered collection of Soviet satellite states, America faced a Japanese Empire unwavering in its devotion to its Emperor and its commitment to his cause – a Japanese Empire that had for years known that the Americans were coming and had planned accordingly. The distinct lack of a Japanese Empire on maps and travel brochures should stand testament to these obstacles being eventually overcome, but as this is not a treatise on the nature of modern logistics nor an accounting of the Pacific War. Rather, this tangent exists to impress that something as mundane as an infantryman receiving replacement boots on Papua was itself the product of the successes and creativity of dozens, perhaps hundreds of people.

In the face of such overwhelming systems, modern war becomes quite mechanically impersonal. This impersonality is generally unwelcomed by the public. The idea of such a visceral human experience – a tragedy in many cases – being an industrial spreadsheet that consumes human lives like so many millions of units is understandably unpalatable to people who have invested so much of their own worlds in a conflict. It is far easier to personify and anthropomorphize armies, nations, and peoples behind the

mask of a handful of powerful individuals. Rather than the Philippine campaign and all of its successes, failures, victories, and capitulations being the product of many thousands of minds and many hundreds of thousands of bodies one can simply project their intellectual and emotional mass into one or two individuals: MacArthur and Homma, perhaps, engaging in a vast chess match to the death. While few, if perhaps not as few as one might hope, would uphold such a childish notion under sustained scrutiny it does hold that most critical of qualities for an idea to be powerful: it is easy to embrace.

This semi-deliberate occlusion of the minutiae of history gives massively disproportionate power to the figures chosen to represent these groups and events both contemporarily and in the historical narrative. Many figures shy away from this attention to a greater or lesser degree. They fall back on formality, discipline, and an abstract sense of duty as they politely decline the attention. Others, in contrast, revel in their perceived ubiquity; from Napoleon to Bolivar to Patton, history is replete with leaders who clearly embraced and enjoyed the caricatures painted of them by friendly media. MacArthur leaned into this phenomenon and, in the immortal words of Spinal Tap guitarist Nigel Tufnel, turned it “up to eleven.” He regularly referred to himself in his correspondence as being “at the front” or having personally “smashed the enemy.”¹⁶ That he was writing these words far from any fighting – thousands of miles in most cases – wasn’t of great importance to his discourse. His was a charismatic, recognizable name with which to simplify a vast and uncomfortable organization and that was good enough. He

¹⁶ Cable to Harry B. Carroll (Pen and Pencil Club, Philadelphia, PA), 4-14-42, RG-30 Reel-1005, Box 4, Folder 8, Papers of Lieutenant General Richard Kerens Sutherland, USA 1893-1966, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.; RG4R593 Cable to AGWAR (Adjunct General War Department), 2-26-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

recognized, perhaps more clearly than any figure had up to that point in history, the ability afforded by his position to utilize such narrow public perception to determine his own place in history.

A Pattern of Behavior in Khaki Trousers

If ever there was a man born with a leg up on the competition, it was Douglas MacArthur. Born in Arkansas in 1880, MacArthur was already an old man with a full – and controversial – life behind him when the Japanese aircraft carriers fatefully launched their planes towards Pearl Harbor. Of course, this is not the place for a biography nor, accordingly, is this section included for biographical purposes. Rather, it exists to establish a pattern of behavior significantly predating the events discussed in detail in this work and in doing so establish a more holistic view of the man than is often offered in discussions over his behavior. Far too frequently, MacArthur's defenders will brush aside examples of the General's personal and professional failings by pointing to his apparently sterling record as a military man. Certainly, on paper MacArthur boasts a resume with few equals. A broader understanding of his history, however, suggests a pattern of self-aggrandizement which casts serious doubts on the veracity of his resume. This broader understanding is further bolstered by brief introductions to his father, grandfather, and the political capital that each attached to the MacArthur name.

His grandfather, Arthur MacArthur, had emigrated to the United States from Scotland as a boy and had taken to the legal field, eventually earning himself a term as lieutenant-governor (and very briefly governor) of Wisconsin before taking up a series of judicial positions that would see him end his career in Washington D.C. with nearly two

decades as a member of the District's Supreme Court.¹⁷ Arthur's son, also named Arthur, cemented the family's legacy when, at seventeen, Arthur Senior secured his son a commission as a lieutenant in the 24th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry as it headed off to the American Civil War. The boy proved a natural soldier, and his gallantry would soon see him breveted a colonel and awarded the Medal of Honor – distinctions both earned before his twentieth birthday. A failed sojourn of his own into law saw young Arthur step back into uniform within a year of the war's conclusion and while his career slowed during those years following the war, he nonetheless enjoyed a sparkling military career that would culminate in a position as Governor-General of the Philippines.¹⁸ Arthur's own sons, none more so than his youngest, would forever harbor a need to equal their father's legacy.

Douglas was intensely aware of the expectations his family name laid on his shoulders, but seemed from an early age to be perfectly capable of living up to the high standards set before him.¹⁹ As a young man, he worshipped his war hero father and his power broker grandfather and there were few, if any, indications that he would pursue any field other than politics and war.²⁰ He spent his early years enrolled in a series of military schools before enjoying an extremely successful – though in his signature style markedly controversial – stint at West Point. His status as the son of one of the Army's most powerful and revered generals courted as much attention as his own considerable

¹⁷ Geoffrey Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur*, (New York: Random House, 1996), 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 5-12.

¹⁹ Douglas was the youngest of three sons. The middle child, Malcolm, died in childhood of measles. The eldest, Arthur III, was four years Douglas's senior and enjoyed a distinguished and successful three-decade career in the US Navy before dying unexpectedly of appendicitis in 1923 at the age of forty-seven.

²⁰ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 5-6.

achievements and each played a role in his rapid progress. Whether MacArthur had already chosen for himself a venerated place in history is difficult to know, but he had certainly decided that whatever his story, it must be exceptional.

As a newly minted lieutenant, Douglas was posted upon graduation to the Philippines, the military department recently overseen by his father.²¹ This assignment provided MacArthur an anecdote he would carry for life and set the tone for his later legend-building. While on the small island of Guimaris in 1903, so the story goes, he was walking alone when he was ambushed by a pair of *insurrectos*.²² They shot at him with a rifle, tearing off his hat, and he returned fire with a pistol killing them both. Whether there is any kernel of truth at all to the story is doubtful. Aside from his having been assigned briefly to the island in question there is no evidence one way or the other besides his word. The only witness recounted by MacArthur is an unnamed sergeant whom he recalls arriving on the scene, saluting him, and praising him in stereotypically illiterate jargon before disappearing into the mists of history.²³ If one were to note that the incident bore more than a passing resemblance to the “Wild West” dime novels a young man of the time would have grown up reading, such insight would not be misplaced. The legend of Douglas MacArthur was crying out for life, yet young Douglas would spend much of his youth frustrated by a world largely free of the tumult.

Nonetheless, a potent concoction of connections and initiative saw MacArthur assigned to a series of excellent posts for the development of his career and in 1914 he

²¹ Arthur MacArthur was by then the recently appointed commander of the Pacific Division.

²² A catch-all term enjoyed by Americans at the time to refer to innumerable separate and only occasionally aligned Filipino separatist groups as well as bandits and other armed criminals. It is a woeful term on several levels but is kept here as it is the word favored by MacArthur in his own account.

²³ Perrett, 49.; MacArthur, 29.

was able to attach himself to the Veracruz expedition. He arrived in Veracruz to a situation that had been slowed significantly by a lack of locomotives. As MacArthur tells it, he bribed three Mexican rail workers and snuck behind Mexican lines. They found the locomotives they needed but were themselves forced into a series of ferocious gunfights as they got the engines back to American lines. MacArthur, ever – apparently – the gunfighter, killed Mexican after Mexican even as bullets passed through his coat. Geoffrey Perret, another of his many biographers, describes the report delivered by MacArthur as akin to an adventure novel – a sentiment that is if anything underselling the tale spun therein. Almost all of it, particularly the gunfighting, is almost certainly fiction, but MacArthur *did* wind up credited with the acquisition of three locomotives.²⁴

This, he hoped, would win him the Medal of Honor. Receipt of the decoration was, perhaps more than any other pursuit, the greatest single desire of his first sixty years. It is speculation, though safe speculation, that he felt the award would give him parity with his hero father. If his story were even half-true, he would not have been wrong to expect one. Fifty-six Medals of Honor were awarded by the military for a two-day skirmish around the Veracruz customs house. The generous dispensation of awards proved a scandal for the War Department and led both to the tightening of standards for the decoration and the establishing of lower ranking medals.²⁵ He was not, as the

²⁴ MacArthur attempted to force a review of his Veracruz Medal of Honor attempt as a two-star general in 1925, but upon review of his case the decorations board stood by the decision made a decade prior stating “Extraordinary heroism not displayed; duty not considered one of great responsibility and exceptional merit not displayed. Not sufficient gallantry in action displayed.” This, perhaps, the most tactful method of informing one of the nation’s leading generals that force of personality did not outweigh a total lack of evidence. Perrett, 71, 135.; MacArthur, 41-42.

²⁵ The showering of Medals of Honor by the Navy caused significant backlash at then Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels as it accounted for, by far, the largest number ever issued for a single engagement. Admiral Fletcher, who had not left his flagship during the engagement, was awarded one. Smedley Butler, of Marine Corps and warning us all about corporate fascism in America fame, was one of nine marines to

convened board decided, to be awarded anything at all. His story was fanciful, inconsistent, and lacked anything approaching a credible witness, but further opportunity for glory awaited just around the corner.

While Mexico inconclusively consumed itself, war had come to Europe and, eventually, so did America. MacArthur was key in petitioning the formation of a National Guard unit – this would become the 42nd “Rainbow” Division – and successfully arranged for himself a place as the formation’s Chief of Staff. This position came with a breveted commission as a Colonel, an improvement of two ranks from his pre-war rank of Major. This commission was also, at his insistence, in the infantry rather than his own engineer corps. A meaningless designation for a staff officer, but one that finally gave a thirty-seven-year-old Douglas MacArthur footing in his father’s branch.²⁶

MacArthur wasted little time in filling out his new infantryman’s resume with decorations for valor. He was positively showered with awards in France not the least of which was a further breveted promotion to Brigadier General.²⁷ In about seven months MacArthur found himself the recipient of two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Croix

receive the award. He later tried, unsuccessfully, to return it calling it “an utterly foul perversion.” MacArthur did not participate in the “Battle of Veracruz.” Dwight Mears, *The Medal of Honor: The Evolution of America's Highest Military Decoration*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2018), 53.; Smedley Butler, *The Diaries of General Smedley Darlington Butler: The Letters of a Leatherneck, 1898-1931*, ed. Anne C. Venzon, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 136.

²⁶ Though commissioned an engineer, MacArthur had actually spent the years preceding World War One as head of Bureau of Information as something analogous (such a title did not yet exist) to the Army’s first ever press officer. Perret, 78.

²⁷ The promotion to Brigadier General, along with MacArthur being the youngest man to hold the rank in the whole Army at the time, has been used by some of his biographers as evidence of his merit. It is certainly possible that merit played a role in the promotion – gross incompetence would likely have seen him replaced – it is also a matter of fact that Brigadier General is usually the rank associated with a Divisional Chief of Staff which in turn suggests that the promotion was at least in part about aligning the position and its occupant. Ibid, 93-94

de Guerre, and no fewer than seven Silver Citation Stars.²⁸ He also picked up two Wound Chevrons, a precursor to the Purple Heart, from German gas attacks.²⁹ It bothered no one, least of all MacArthur, that these “gas attacks” had left him with remarkably little damage or that the citations for his many awards bore no description of actual combat bar the one in which he was apparently the sole (and miraculously unharmed) survivor of a nighttime patrol. He had been conspicuous in his bravery when in the company of his superiors and had maintained a campaign of breathless reporting from “the front” to his commanders of his daily heroism. He was therefore incredulous when John Pershing, commander of the American forces in France, flatly told him that he did not meet the standards of heroism for the Medal of Honor.³⁰

Unfazed, his star continued to rise after World War One. Appointed Superintendent of West Point upon his return to the United States, a position that allowed him to keep the rank of Brigadier General instead of suffering a return to his pre-war rank of Major, he would follow up that position with stints in the Philippines and as the

²⁸ The Silver Star as a military decoration was not instituted until 1932. Upon its institution it was retroactively awarded to all recipients of Silver Citation Stars. The Chief of Staff at the time was Douglas MacArthur. Ibid, 153-154.

²⁹ Perrett, 105.; The Order of the Purple Heart was also founded in 1932 under MacArthur’s auspices. The Chief of Staff arranged to be awarded the very first Purple Heart medal – his engraved with a large “#1.” Ibid.

³⁰ Pershing does not seem to have personally liked MacArthur. A fixture of the pre-war Army, Pershing had known the young MacArthur for his entire military career. Pershing believed that an inescapable prerequisite for the Medal of Honor was heroism *while participating in combat*. He was also very aware that despite MacArthur’s breathless reporting, there was not a shred of evidence to suggest that the Army’s youngest general had actually participated in combat. It is worth noting that this distinction was, in this case, arbitrary and of Pershing’s own invention. Under another commander, MacArthur may well have received a Medal of Honor. Had the Veracruz scandal over the generous dispensation of the award not shaken the War Department four years earlier he almost certainly would have been so decorated. Newton Baker, then-Secretary of War, attempted to award Pershing a Medal of Honor for his leadership of the American Expeditionary Force. Pershing flatly refused. None of the citations for any of MacArthur’s decorations mention direct involvement in combat. Ibid, 109; T. Bentley Mott, *Twenty Years a Military Attaché*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937)

President of the United States Olympic Committee.³¹ He would continue a steady climb all the way to the office of Chief of Staff of the Army. MacArthur adopted a distinctive style as Chief of Staff, dressing gaudily and presenting himself as more a caricature than a bureaucrat. He spent lavishly on his image, surrounding himself with an ever-increasing level of luxury. It is during this time that he started referring to himself in the third person as “MacArthur” and contracted a public relations firm to bolster his image with the American people.³²

A unique and decorated figure, MacArthur was quickly becoming a contender for the favor of some of the more right-wing elements of the Republican Party and interested parties had begun to discuss the possibility of running him for President in years to come. MacArthur would later claim that he was not one of those parties, but correspondence between MacArthur and figures within the Washington political scene leave little doubt in his interest. This would all change, however, in 1932 with the March of the Bonus Army.³³

In 1932 thousands of World War One veterans, suffering hardships in the face of the Great Depression, descended on Washington to lobby Congress to pay early bonuses they had been promised for their service. The protests were peaceful, but Congress had little interest in acceding to the demands of the Marchers. The Congressional session ended without any action being taken, and district police were called to evict what

³¹ MacArthur, 86-87.

³² William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964*, (New York: Hachette, 1978), 145-146.

³³ TLS from P.W. Reeves to MacArthur with a great deal of information on the Republicans who support MacArthur for the Republican nomination in 1940, 25, November, 1937, RG-1, Reel-2, Box 1, Folder 8, Records of the U.S. Military Advisor to the Philippine Commonwealth, 1935-1941, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States; Perrett, 154-157.

protesters had not simply gone home in disgust. When they would not leave, the police elected to make their point more forcefully and shot several of the protestors. To the somewhat baffling surprise of the authorities, this instead made the demonstrators more upset, which in turn led President Hoover to order MacArthur to use military force to evict the Marchers. MacArthur ordered the Marchers cleared out with tanks, bayonets, and tear gas and then made the fateful decision (against the advice of his subordinates) to oversee the operation personally on horseback and in uniform.³⁴

The imagery of MacArthur bringing military force against unarmed veterans asking for little more than relief badly damaged his reputation with the American people. MacArthur would spend the next several years defending his battered image. In 1934 he sued several journalists, most notably Drew Pearson, over their depiction of his treatment of the Bonus Marchers. They in turn threatened to call as a witness his “secret” mistress, a Filipina named Isabel Rosario Cooper, as a witness. Cooper had been fifteen at the start of their relationship, more than three decades MacArthur’s junior, and her existence was known only to a very few. She was probably unrelated in any way to the suit, MacArthur did not keep her for her counsel, but her presentation would have been an unbearable embarrassment. MacArthur quietly dropped the case and secretly paid the defendants \$15,000 for recovery of his letters to Cooper from Pearson.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gonzales relies heavily on correspondence between Pearson, Ernst, and Cooper. Vernadette Gonzales, *Empire's Mistress, Starring Isabel Rosario Cooper*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 17-18.; Manchester rather confusingly explains away “if it needs an excuse” MacArthur’s decision to bring a child halfway across the world to use as a sex object, isolate her in an apartment outside of town, and exercise complete control over her movements as understandable because of “...the dullness of Washington during those years.” While MacArthur – “Daddy” as he signed his letters to Cooper – was *probably* not in specific violation of any laws of the time (his actions would now be *phenomenally* illegal under 18 USC 2423 – though that was not adopted until 1948,) Manchester’s nonetheless seems an especially poor take by

MacArthur retired in 1935 and accepted an offer from Philippine President Manuel Quezon to supervise the creation of a Philippine Army. Quezon named MacArthur Field Marshall in 1936, a position that came with a dizzying salary, a penthouse apartment in Manila's premier luxury hotel, and a continued link to the war department as "Military Liaison to the Philippines," that of course came with the salary of a major-general.³⁶ MacArthur would spend the remainder of the decade lobbying Washington for equipment, soldiers, officers, and attention, no quantity of which ever seemed to be enough. By the dawn of the next decade, and with independence on the horizon, the Philippine Congress began to question whether the extortionate costs involved in keeping the American Generalissimo justified the relative lack of results. The War Department began to ask questions as well, specifically, whether the buildup of American personnel and war materiel in a location they knew to be indefensible in the event of a war with Japan was particularly wise.³⁷

MacArthur too, it seems, was beginning to grow bored with his self-imposed, if extremely luxurious, exile. Correspondence between MacArthur and agents in Washington show he was keeping tabs on the field of potential Republican presidential candidates and moreover that there was an interest by some in MacArthur joining that field. It seems that while his heavy handedness with the Bonus Marchers had harmed his image with the public, there were a few among the elite who felt he represented an ideal

modern standards. William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964*, (New York: Hachette Book Group, 1978), 145.

³⁶ Perrett, 195.

³⁷ Ibid, 197.; Letters between MacArthur and Marshall in which MacArthur demanded more equipment, personnel, and high-value officers. Personal File, 7-28-41, 8-30-41, 9-13-41, 9-23-41, RG-2 Reel-4, Box 1, Folders 1-2, Records of United States Army Forces Far East (USAFFE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

authoritarian strongman to provide a bulwark against the specter of communism.³⁸ The 1930s had, globally, been rather fruitful for right-wing men in military fatigues who had sought higher office. Roosevelt would prove a crushingly strong candidate in 1940, but his health was worsening, and the Republican field certainly looked open to an outsider candidate with name recognition.³⁹

War delayed any such dreams. With rising tensions with Japan making war inevitable, Washington was left with little choice but to double down on their investment in the Philippines. In late July 1941, with war on the horizon, President Roosevelt federalized the Philippine military and recalled MacArthur to active service as a Lieutenant-General, a rank he would see improved by the end of the year.⁴⁰ He was the now the Supreme Commander of Army Forces in the Far East. He had been so invested in by the War Department in terms of men, materiel, and strategic attention that his position – a position known to war planners to be indefensible – had to be defended. He was, to borrow a phrase, too big to fail.

Introducing the Historiography

The core of this thesis is built around the contrast of events reported by MacArthur's command *during and after* their occurrence and events as they are now

³⁸ Ibid, 171.; TLS from P.W. Reeves to MacArthur, MacArthur Memorial Archives

³⁹ Senator Vandenberg confided in a 1942 letter to a family member that "MacArthur would be his man in 1944." The same letter rails against "Roosevelt's social revolution units" and the President's "private war." D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur Volume II*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), 140.; Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., ed., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), 76.

⁴⁰ MacArthur was technically reinstated at Major General, with orders for promotion to Lieutenant General executed the following day. He was promoted to General on December 22, 1941. Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, (Washington: Center of Military History, 1953), 19.; The Philippine Army prior to the outset of war occupied a nominally subordinate position to the United States Military. The Philippines was slated for some degree of full independence in the near future, so a native military was being trained and equipped by the United States using local funds. (This was technically MacArthur's primary job through the late 1930s.) Legally, however, the Philippine military was something akin to a colonial militia at the outbreak of hostilities and therefore subject to full federalization.

understood to have unfolded, that is in turn joined by demonstration of these reports affecting the historiography. By working with reports both during and subsequent to the events in question, both ignorance and misremembrance can be safely ruled out as proximate causes for inaccuracy. To understand the divisive impact Douglas MacArthur had on the historiography of the Second World War, one must first have a general understanding of the field.

Histories of World War Two that focus on other theatres nevertheless regularly reference, in passing, events and characters in the Pacific. As a result, these serve as useful conduits for the perpetuation of flawed information about MacArthur and the Pacific. A historian will, after all, rarely vet their tangential anecdotes with the same keenness they reserve for the objects of their study. Historians often utilize the secondary works of other historians when introducing contextual information. This, in itself, is a necessary acquiescence to the realities of narrow expertise and limited time.

Unfortunately, this can have the unintended effect of allowing flawed information to become attached to the names of even very reputable historians. This has the occasional, but persistent, repercussion of bolstering MacArthur's preferred historiography as apparently being adopted by authors without a strong bias towards or against him.

The historiography of the Pacific War is itself often subdivided among military historians. The clearest of these divisions is into two categories: naval histories and histories that are not explicitly naval.⁴¹ The former has, again, fewer obvious connections

⁴¹ Naval Historians are almost unique in the field of Military History for their belief that *their* piece of Military History in fact represents a completely separate field. This view is shared by precisely nobody who is not a Naval Historian, is completely irrelevant to outside observers, and aside from this disclaimer that there need be no confusion when, or if, an author is referred to as a "Naval Historian" will not be mentioned again in this work.

with the story of MacArthur and would initially seem candidates to be set to one side for the present discussion. Naval histories, however, offer a similar opportunity to the European histories in their tangential discussion of MacArthur and his world. MacArthur made enemies of many Navy men and won admirers among few Marines. The quiet bias against the General in the source material utilized by the historians focused on naval affairs serves as an interesting parallel to the distance provided by European sources.

There are, of course, many works on land warfare of the Pacific War. It is in these volumes that a curious dichotomy emerges. In some accountings of these events Douglas MacArthur, as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Land Forces, is depicted as the (or at the very least a) key man in planning, organizing, and personally leading a heroic defense of the region against the Japanese, followed by a stunning reconquest. In other accountings, MacArthur is painted as selfish, egomaniacal, and possessing a competent if unremarkable military acumen at best and at worst an incompetence bordering on treason. A predictive gauging of a work's presentation of MacArthur can be drawn – loosely – by determining whether the author relied primarily on sources influenced by the man himself.

While it is, frankly, impossible to account here in full for all of the works on the Second World War that in some way discuss MacArthur without an accompanying work of at least equal volume to this, a curated introduction can provide adequate context.⁴²

The secondary works discussed in this work are divided into two camps; those with a

⁴² Rasor's excellent work is to be recommended above all others as a historiography for works concerning MacArthur, at least those predating its 1994 publishing. While Rasor does an admirable job of accounting for the biases of authors, where present, he does not attempt any analysis of MacArthur's attempt to create a narrative that fosters said biases. Eugene L. Rasor, *General Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.) 89.

tendency to rely on primary sources produced by or in support of MacArthur, and those that have largely eschewed those sources. As this study only concerns itself with the use of sources such as they relate to MacArthur, few fall somewhere in the middle. Where necessary, specific studies of logistics, materiel, or semi-related areas of the war that do not meaningfully opine on MacArthur are utilized as foundational material to establish the context in which decisions and reports were made.⁴³

Examples of secondary works highly dependent on MacArthur-based material are common. In the years immediately following the General's 1964 death, publications broadly reflected the lack of open controversy over MacArthur's accounting of events. *Reports of General MacArthur Volumes 1 & 2* by his General Staff (Ed. Charles Willoughby) (1966) and *The Pacific War 1941-1945* by John Costello (1981) are just two examples of sources which leaned heavily on the primary sources created by MacArthur and his camp.⁴⁴ It would take time, and the gradual surfacing of contradictory evidence, for historians to begin to distrust MacArthur-based primary evidence. *Eagle Against the Sun* by Ronald Spector (1985), *Kokoda* by Peter Fitzsimmons (2004), *The Pacific War: The Strategy, Politics, and Players that Won the War* by William Hopkins (2008), and *The Pacific Campaign in World War II* by William Bruce Johnson (2010) are

⁴³ These are works like Basil Collier's *Japanese Aircraft of World War II* and William H. Bartsch's *Doomed from the Start*, both of which are niche aviation histories, and Edward S. Miller's *War Plan Orange*, which is a study of the evolution of pre-war naval plans. They are used for the purpose of providing non-analytical data obtained from sources other than those in question. On rare occasion these auxiliary works may be referred to in addition to the above works to emphasize a trend, but broadly these are works that do not meaningfully discuss MacArthur's decision making.

⁴⁴ Sources occasionally, and incorrectly, list the author of these works as Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur himself vehemently denied any authorship of the work, though he was without any doubt something of an editor-in-chief, a charge he also denies. *Reports* was compiled by his General Staff and even still MacArthur displayed such reticence to its publishing, as he wished to continue editing it, that as a result it was not published until after his death. The overwhelming bias in its creation results in a work that is as much a primary source as a secondary one. It was, however, intended as (and often used) as a secondary source so that is the context in which it is being viewed for the purposes of this study.

representative of a shift in the historiography towards an understanding that sources created by MacArthur and his partisans were not always completely corroboratory with other primary evidence. None of the aforementioned authors go so far as accusing MacArthur of malicious deceit, but a clear split among historians had formed over the reliability of his work. This split persists to this day, however, and reputable authors and historians still publish work heavily reliant on the sources created by MacArthur and his partisans. *The Real History of World War II* by Alan Axelrod (2008) and *War at the End of the World* by James Duffy (2016) are two such works. The publication dates of these last two works serve as a reminder of the ability of flawed resources to proliferate in a broad field. While published works with reduced reliance on material produced by MacArthur have become more common in recent decades, there remains a robust cohort of modern historians with no apparent prerogative to search for sources beyond those offered by – or heavily influenced by – MacArthur.

Biographies of MacArthur – seeing as much, or in some cases all, of their respective scopes serve as a history of the Pacific War through the involvement of MacArthur – are also pertinent to this discussion. As he was an influential and captivating figure in his own time, biographies of MacArthur were not uncommon during his life. *MacArthur 1941-1951* by Charles Willoughby and John Chamberlain (1954) and *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur* by Frazier Hunt (1954) are but two examples and, like most offerings from those years, are borderline hagiographic. More balanced accounts appeared in the years following his death. *MacArthur* by Gavin Long⁴⁵ (1969),

⁴⁵ Gavin Long was, in his lifetime, possibly Australia's greatest authority on Second World War history. The general editor of the twenty-two-volume series *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, Australia's official

American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964 by William Manchester (1978), and *The Years of MacArthur: Vol 1-3* by D. Clayton James (1970, 1975, 1985) represent three of the most widely read biographies of the man. These works reflected the growing quantity of information, and the reduced influence of MacArthur's partisans, which is seen again in later works like *MacArthur at War: World War Two in the Pacific* by Walter Borneman (2016) and *Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior* by Arthur Herman (2016). As with the broader studies of the war, however, publication date does not necessarily reflect the perspective of the author.

Lastly, there are a handful of oddballs that do not lend themselves to easy categorization, but demand inclusion when discussing the literature surrounding this subject. Key examples of these are *Reminiscences* by Douglas MacArthur and Paul P. Rogers's books *The Good Years* and *The Bitter Years*. These books are ostensibly memoirs, though in each case the author went to great pains to attest the accuracy and academic credibility of the works. Rogers in particular put in significant work to present his work with as many of the hallmarks of a secondary source as possible. None of the three books belongs in the discussion of secondary literature about the war, but each is quite clearly attempting to influence that discussion and cannot, therefore be fully omitted from consideration.

A Brief Exposé on Representative Secondary Literature

The two-volume series *Reports of General MacArthur* constitutes perhaps the most biased secondary account of the war. A preface written by the General himself

history of the war, writer of three of those volumes, and war-correspondent during the first half of the war, his biography of MacArthur is unrelated to his previous work.

indicates that he was unable, due to other pressing yet nebulous duties, to participate in its publication and was instead written by those who had served on his staff – a fact proudly emblazoned on the inside title page. His professed distance from the project is cast in doubt by the 1966 forward written by then-Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson revealing that MacArthur’s need to continually edit “inaccuracies” and refusal to accede to a public release prevented *Reports* from achieving government publication until after MacArthur’s death. Even then, Johnson takes special care to state that “the Department of the Army must therefore disclaim any responsibility for their accuracy.” Also damning is the forward to the re-published 1994 edition in which Harold W. Nelson, the then-Chief of Military History, stating the value of the work “as a detailed account from MacArthur’s perspective of his operations ... in the Southwest Pacific Area.” In each case the admission being skirted is that the influences of MacArthur and his staff rendered the factual viability of the work effectively nil as too many biases were present therein to allow any information presented to be taken at face value. The kindest descriptor of the work is to call it, as Eugene Rasor does, an account of the war from “strictly the MacArthur-staff point of view.”⁴⁶

John Costello’s *The Pacific War*, published in 1981, has found a place as one of the standard histories on the war in question. The seven-hundred page one-volume work does well to summarize four years of events between its covers. Unfortunately, the limited space and vast subject matter leaves Costello with little time to do much more than summarize events. Analysis is left to a minimum and use of primary documents is

⁴⁶ Rasor, 148; MacArthur’s General Staff, *Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific, Volume I*, Ed. Charles Willoughby (Washington: Department of the Army, 1994)

sadly left to other historians – leading readers to track down other works to identify the sources on which his claims are based. This is no simple task as Costello, an educated man but not a trained historian, uses a bizarre and somewhat uncomfortable system of notation. Once identified, his sources are mostly secondary and usually spread very thin. In his discussion of the fall of the Philippines, for example, Louis Morton's *The Fall of the Philippines* is his only significant source. Nonetheless, the work appeals to a wide audience – especially among readers taking their first serious steps into the subject – for its relative approachability and represents a key piece of the historiography of the conflict.⁴⁷

John Duffy's work *War at the End of the World: Douglas MacArthur and the Forgotten Fight for New Guinea 1942-1945* brings to light a campaign often forgotten by Americans in the narrative of the Second World War. Notable for his usage of the official Australian military histories in formulating his work – itself a rarity among American historians – Duffy nonetheless manages to utilize no primary writings from Australian soldiers, officers, or war correspondents.⁴⁸ Instead, he relies heavily on the work of other historians and accounts from those close to MacArthur, leaving the reader with a biased and favorable impression of the man. A similar problem faced by Alan Axelrod, a capable historian, he nonetheless falls into the trap of repeating claims made by MacArthur's defenders without contest or context. His work, however engaging, well put together, and appealing, suffers from the lack of analysis common to broad, single-

⁴⁷ John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945*, (New York: Atlantic Communications), 1981.

⁴⁸ James P. Duffy, *War at the End of the World: Douglas MacArthur and the Forgotten Fight for New Guinea 1942-1945*, (New York: Penguin Random House), 2016.

volume histories aimed at a wide audience, in turn making it a capable vehicle for the proliferation of biased accounts on the topic.⁴⁹

William Hopkins, who experienced the Pacific War as a Marine lieutenant, makes an explicit point of exploring Australian sources. Combining these accounts with those from the American services, Hopkins creates a balanced accounting of the war and takes great pains to devote attention to theatres underserved by historical analysis.⁵⁰ Ronald Spector is described as often as not as a naval historian, and was himself a Marine, albeit in Vietnam rather than the Pacific. Though it is impossible to gauge the impact of those biases on his decision to largely eschew MacArthur-made source material, his decision to do so leads his work *Eagle Against the Sun* to be one of the works most critical of MacArthur.⁵¹

Australian Historian Peter Fitzsimmons offers somewhat less restraint when discussing MacArthur. At various points in his book *Kokoda*, he refers to him as “pompous,” “presumptuous,” and even “insanity in military dress,” and leaves his readers with a picture of an arrogant, cowardly prima donna surrounded by a small “Manchu Court” of loyal sycophants. Never is the comfort in which MacArthur lived left unmentioned, nor his suspicious aversion to finding himself too near anything that might possibly be described as a battlefield untouched. Whether his preference for sources other than MacArthur’s GHQ is due to his emotional connection to the Australian servicemen

⁴⁹ Alan Axelrod, *The Real History of World War II: A New Look at the Past*, (New York: Sterling), 2008.

⁵⁰ William B. Hopkins, *The Pacific War: The Strategy, Politics, and Players that Won the War*, (Minneapolis: Zenith Press), 2008.

⁵¹ While Rasor does not personally weigh in on MacArthur or his tampering with the history of the conflict, he does highly rate accounts critical of the man. He describes Spector’s work as concluding that MacArthur “was unsuited for command by temperament, character, and judgement” shortly after choosing to recommend it as the “best 1-vol. history of the Pacific War.” Ronald Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*, (New York: Random House, 1985); Rasor, 184.

he discusses or the historical tradition in which he was raised is unclear, but the upshot is a heavy reliance on Australian primary and secondary sources and a fairly low opinion of the Americans and an especially low opinion of their commander.⁵²

While iconoclasm is rare in studies of MacArthur, the inverse sentiment is a popular one. It would not be unfair, in fact, to suggest that works on the man which could be fairly categorized as hagiographic are nearly common enough to warrant their own genre. It is unavoidable, therefore, that the biographies are as varied as the histories in both tone and temperament. From the paranoid and defensive account offered by his one-time chief intelligence officer Charles Willoughby – read and approved, of course, by MacArthur – to the scholarly, balanced study by Gavin Long, an Australian historian publishing well removed by time and space from the ire of MacArthur and company.⁵³ The most comprehensive, spread across three volumes and 2,600 pages, is *The Years of MacArthur, 1880-1964* by D. Clayton James. The work is meticulously researched and incorporates a dizzying array of interviews, documents, and transcripts. It is a work that is even-handed almost to a fault. Conscious to avoid extreme positions of praise or

⁵² Peter Fitzsimmons, *Kokoda*, (Sydney: Hodder Australia, 2004)

⁵³ Charles Willoughby, *MacArthur 1941-1951*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954). Willoughby was, among much else, MacArthur's chief censor during the war. He also retained a lifelong penchant for authoritarianism and had a tendency both in his speaking and published works to see communist conspiracies wherever he looked. This led to the defense of some questionable characters including Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. Both before and after the war, Willoughby could be counted on as an avid admirer and outspoken supporter of the fascist dictator. While not necessarily an indictment of his writings, his tendencies to venerate military strongmen who openly rewrote history and view his own partisans as perpetually needing defending from leftist plots does not mark him out as being particularly even handed.; Gavin Long, *MacArthur: As a Military Commander*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1969). Gavin Long's *MacArthur as a Military Leader* was published five years after MacArthur's death and one year after Long's own.

damnation, his avoidance of conclusions or judgements has attracted criticism from some corners as building a structure of excuses for MacArthur.⁵⁴

While James can be chided for his neutrality, Frazier Hunt, author of *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*, can enjoy a spot in the historiography entirely free of such criticism. A longtime friend of MacArthur (Hunt had been a member of MacArthur's press corps during the war), to call his 1954 work – a work Hunt dedicated to MacArthur's son – panegyric is, somehow, to still undersell its depiction of the General.⁵⁵ Unlike Hunt, who sought to create an impressive character, William Manchester seeks in his book *American Caesar* to create an exciting book. The information in his account is drawn heavily from James's work with Manchester's contribution largely one of interpretation – a task he takes to with gusto. Manchester's MacArthur is an adventure in extremes, a character built of juxtapositions though one that the author generally finds exciting and sympathetic.

A passing, if somewhat telling, interrogation can be made of MacArthur's biographies in their analysis of a case not studied in this paper. Inferences, if not conclusions, can be drawn from a biographer's willingness to broach the Isabel Rosario Cooper scandal mentioned previously. Though neither a mark of a good nor bad work of military history, the lascivious episode often serves as a gauge of an author's interest in MacArthur as a complete character. Hunt, a man with a longstanding and amicable relationship with MacArthur, publishing while the General was very much still alive,

⁵⁴ Forrest Pogue, review of *The Years of MacArthur: Volume I: 1880-1964*, by D. Clayton James, *Saturday Review* (September 19, 1970): Cited in Rasor, Eugene, *General Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography*. 17.

⁵⁵ Frazier Hunt, *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*, (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1954)

ignores the issue entirely. Gavin Long mentions, briefly, the lawsuit against the journalists in contact with her, but not Cooper herself. Borneman, Herman, and Manchester mention Cooper by name and go into varying levels of detail about the relationship between the two. All report that MacArthur made an error of judgement in bringing her to America, but none imply their relationship was particularly inappropriate or scandalous. Borneman and Herman both go out of their way to paint MacArthur as a victim and Manchester, who goes into the most detail about the affair, describes Cooper as a bored teenaged dilettante frustrated by the lack of attention from her lover. None mention her age, though each is clearly aware of it – stating age differences and describing her as “young” and “teenaged” – each is clearly working hard to avoid using the most fitting word, “child.” MacArthur’s autobiographies, unsurprisingly, omit her entirely.⁵⁶

On Paul Rogers

Paul Rogers, MacArthur’s loyal clerk, occupies at once a critical and wholly untrustworthy place in the understanding of Douglas MacArthur. His 1990 work *The Good Years* gives an interesting insight into the inner workings of MacArthur’s headquarters. Rogers strives immediately to lend an air of scholarly impartiality with claims in regard to both this book and its 1991 companion piece stating, “I am a professor and a scholar who has published widely in a very specialized area. In the writing of this book, I have observed the established rules of my profession.”⁵⁷ However, both works are

⁵⁶ Manchester, 144-145, 156; Walter Borneman, *MacArthur at War: World War II and the Pacific*, (New York: Hachette, 2016), 35, 42-43; Arthur Herman, *Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior*, (New York: Random House, 2017), 237-242, 249.

⁵⁷ The second of the two books, *The Bitter Years* (1991), and very likely the first were completed and published as Rogers was dying of cancer. (He would pass in 1992.) These memoirs, to call them what they

very clearly more akin to memoirs than academic studies, and no mention is made at any point in the work that Rogers was a Professor of Economics with a focus on insurance policies in late-Soviet Eastern Europe. An important and interesting field, no doubt, but one which does not lend itself to an implication of historiological impartiality.

Fortunately, while likely intended as something of a secondary work, it is as a memoir that the work adds the greatest value to this investigation.

To begin with, Rogers is clearly in awe of MacArthur even at the time of writing.

He writes of his book's star character:

“This book is also an epic. The obvious hero is Douglas MacArthur, who evokes images of Cid Campeador, and El Gran Capitan, and, more recently, “Marse Robert” and “Old Jack.” The real epic hero, however, may be Corporal Mays of the 31st Infantry Regiment, whose story is told in this book in a transcript of his own words. Mays is the infantry soldier who drove back the Persians at Marathon and the French at Waterloo, who took Grant to Richmond and Sherman to the sea. He is the best contemporary example I can find of MacArthur's enlisted counterpart, the epitome of what an infantry soldier should be.”⁵⁸

most closely resemble, are alternately claimed by Rogers to be a historical study, a heroic epic, a personal recollection, and a journey of discovery. He acknowledges that they are a work sympathetic to MacArthur and intent on leaving the reader with a positive opinion of the man and his decisions. These works are far too biased to be of much scholastic value and serve best as a compelling glimpse into the mind of the youngest – and most starstruck – member of MacArthur's inner circle and his view of the world into which he was thrust. A young man who, by his accounts if not by his explicit admission, was desperately ill suited to soldiering and, whatever he thought of them in the abstract, did not much like common soldiers. A fish out of water who would never experience a minute of war outside an office he invested heavily in the first father-figure he could. His works are less historical inquiry, though they are painted as such, than they are a dying man attempting to leave a sympathetic account of the great figures of his youth. Paul P Rogers, *The Good Years*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), xv.

⁵⁸ MacArthur, it bears noting, was never an infantry soldier at any point in his career. Officers are not soldiers, ergo MacArthur was never – in the most literal sense – a soldier. Nor, in fact, was he even commissioned an infantry officer. Upon graduation from West Point, he was commissioned an officer in the engineers. He would not find himself with a commission in the Infantry branch until granted one – after a great deal of his own insistence and without any practical necessity – upon his brevet to Colonel for his assignment as Chief of Staff for the 42nd Division. *Ibid*, xix.

Rogers, despite his authoritative opining on their ideal virtues, would never fight alongside or socialize as a peer with any infantry soldiers, a revelation that does lead one to wonder how he came to so definitive a conclusion.⁵⁹

His hero worship extends also to the interactions he recorded or recalled between MacArthur and other major figures. He attributed what he saw as the discomfort of Admiral Thomas Hart in a meeting between the two in late 1941 as Hart being “cowed” by a “superior intellect” saying, “Ordinary men are uncomfortable in the presence of Olympian Gods.”⁶⁰ A longtime acquaintance of MacArthur and close friend of his late older brother, Arthur III, this impression of Hart is improbable.⁶¹

On Reminiscences

Any discussion of Douglas MacArthur has, by inescapable necessity, to include *Reminiscences*. *Reminiscences* is not a history book. Occupying a difficult to pin down place between autobiography and candid gossip, the work is often described as a memoir. This moniker too falls somewhat flat. Any historian whose work gives them cause to deal in military affairs has read dozens, perhaps hundreds, of generals’ memoirs. This is unlike any of them – and it’s not even particularly close. MacArthur’s literary offering is,

⁵⁹ He recounts an experience early on in his time in the Philippines of the only attempt made by other soldiers to befriend him that is mentioned in his account: “The same G-2 sergeant took me to a local nightclub that evening. I turned down liquor, cigarettes, and a woman in that order. That was the last social invitation I had.” That he was detectably proud of this indicates that his company was desired by very few indeed. *Ibid*, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 71.

⁶¹ Far from being in awe of his opposite, Hart was instead deeply worried about what he saw as the apparent divorce of MacArthur’s war plans from reality, specifically, and his growing megalomania more broadly. Hart would confide in a letter to his wife “The truth of the matter is that Douglas, is, I think, no longer altogether sane... he may not have been for a long time.” He would also advise Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, to bear in mind MacArthur’s mental and personality issues when selecting his successor as Commander of the Asiatic Fleet as he expected further trouble from MacArthur and his supporters in Washington. Hart’s reservation is, in this context, less indicative of a man cowed by his intellectual better than a man trying to talk his way around an unpredictable drifter in a Waffle House parking lot. James Leutze, *A Different Kind of Victory*. (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1981), 218-219.

comparatively, *captivating*. It reads like nothing so much as a turn of the century adventure novel - a Victorian story where a rakish-but-dashing gentleman of the lesser nobility galivants across exotic areas of the globe, romances the daughters of affluent expatriates, heroically defeats a savage barbarian horde, and becomes the beloved hero of the strange but childishly endearing locals. It is nothing short of a meandering parade of contradictions.

It is, for a start, unavoidable. Any historian foolish enough to attempt even the most cursory study of the Pacific War without at least a glimpse into the mind of one the most – perhaps *the* most – significant figures in the history of the conflict would rightly be stripped of their laurels. And yet, *Reminiscences* is perhaps the least reliable accounting of events by a primary source since the invention of the typewriter. Whole episodes, thrilling and nail biting in their delivery, never happened - *demonstrably* never happened. Much of the rest is embellished, understated, or omitted entirely depending on how favorably its inclusion painted the one-time Generalissimo. Nonetheless, it is depressingly common practice among both professional and amateur historians to cite the accounting of events laid out by MacArthur in the book, as he is often the only source describing them. As of January 2022, MacArthur’s entry on Wikipedia, a non-academic but highly influential repository of public history, cites *Reminiscences* – without any disclaimer and often without other supporting evidence – no fewer than thirty-nine times in its body.⁶²

⁶² “Douglas MacArthur,” *Wikipedia*, Accessed January 26, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_MacArthur.

It is at this point it is important to acknowledge the standard defense MacArthur's partisans deploy against accusations that MacArthur was lying. This is to suggest that there is every chance that this is how MacArthur, who was in his eighties and near death at the time of its publishing, remembered events. It is certainly possible that by the end of his life he had come to fully internalize his own version of events as factual.

Reminiscences is just that, as is disclaimed early and with eyebrow raising regularity within the text itself, but in this way too does the book distinguish itself from the memoirs of other military men. While many men use such a platform to argue for or against their involvement in certain events or decisions, MacArthur treats all of the myriad decisions of war as background scenery as he weaves his story of "*Douglas MacArthur! Gentleman Adventurer!*"

This perhaps explains the proximity to the front-line MacArthur implies throughout. *Implies*, of course, because to actually claim regular proximity to fighting of any scale – at least during the Second World War – would invite easy contradiction. This apparent proximity allows MacArthur-the-storyteller to serve as a conduit for the thoughts and actions of the fighting men, particularly the enlisted men. The soldiers at the front occupy a place in the narrative history of modern war far disproportionate to their numbers. There is a certain connection felt to the men – and women – who find themselves unfortunate enough to have to redraw battle lines at the point of a bayonet. This inescapable connection gives the candor of an infantryman in a foxhole a gravity that may elude the general overseeing his theatre. If the soldier is cheerful, his rough-but-wry wit brings a smile to the faces of the men and women back home reading his story. If he is vengeful, the home front might be seized with a righteous indignation at his, no,

their enemies. If he feels that he has been badly led and left to die by *a particular person or group*, well, it might cause some shockwaves indeed.

It is doubtful that MacArthur spoke at any length to soldiers experiencing significant combat at any point in the war, but he freely spoke *for* them.⁶³ He tells of how they fight heroically, though louse ridden and hungry. He tells of how they laugh at Japanese propaganda and spit at the idea of surrender. He tells of how they sing songs in the trenches, as though he himself took up the chorus as he stood sentry through the night. He tells of how they damn the men and groups who had misled them and damned them to their own tropical hell. He never once, however, makes note of the peculiar manner in which the enemies so derided by these men he seems to know so well seem to match up exactly with a list of MacArthur's own personal and political rivals. So too does MacArthur fail to note the almost incredible omission from blame by these brave men of the man whose ego, miscalculations, and strategic and tactical failures led more directly to their deaths than any other.⁶⁴ His readers, for a very long time, would miss this as well.

Problems, Hurdles, and Avenues of Attack

Histories that involve MacArthur, even those by historians critical of him, have difficulty escaping the ubiquitous enormity of his character. An accounting of the, say, Second Battle of El Alamein might mention a successful rebuff of a German spoiling

⁶³ During the Bataan Campaign, MacArthur spent several months within twenty-or-thirty miles of the main lines. This, aside from a handful of later amphibious actions he observed from offshore Naval vessels, seems to be the closest to anything resembling a "front line" MacArthur ever ventured during the war. Despite this, he is recorded as having visited the Bataan Peninsula exactly once during this period and then only for a few hours. While he records a *probably apocryphal* anecdote about being strafed by a Japanese aircraft, this author has thus far been unable to find any evidence that he visited much beyond the command element in the rear. James, *Years of MacArthur*, 68.

⁶⁴ Cable to Alexander Ormsby (Chairman Elks Lodge Jersey City), 6-6-42, RG-30 Reel-1005, Box 4, Folder 8, Papers of Lieutenant General Richard Kerens Sutherland, USA 1893-1966, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.; MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 136.

attack by the 74th Field Artillery of the 50th Infantry Division. An accounting of a similar event occurring under MacArthur's command would, more often than not, refer to a successful defense by "MacArthur's Men." Rather than the 13th Infantry launching an attack along the right flank of a battle line "MacArthur's right flank" would be responsible. Such personification finds few other homes in the historiography of the Pacific War, and none with such volume or regularity. The ubiquity of MacArthur's name in discussing the Pacific theatre stands out even among his contemporaries, and is utilized in a personal-possessive sense with a frequency that at points approaches the bizarre.⁶⁵ While it is not unheard of nor particularly uncommon for military forces to find themselves anthropomorphized around a particularly charismatic leader – discussions of "Patton's Fifth Army" or "Rommel's Afrika Korps" permeate discussion of the same World War – none find themselves so completely inseparable from their supreme commander.

This is unlikely to be accidental. Of the 142 communiqués released by his press office between December 1941 and March 1942, 109 mentioned only one individual, MacArthur.⁶⁶ This of course omitted the names of soldiers, officers, and units that had performed exceptional exploits, but it left the press, the public, and even some elements within the War Department with the idea that MacArthur personally – and alone – was

⁶⁵ This is to say that, in keeping with the possessive/genitive usage discussed by Bergen and Cornelia Evans in *A Dictionary of Contemporary American Uses*, his name is utilized with a specific intent to imply a significant relationship with the subject.

⁶⁶ This collection, though extensively utilized in the creation of this work, contains many sections of microfilm that are degraded past the point of practical use. The author was able to utilize perhaps a hundred of these communiqués and notes that the pattern observed aligned with the ratios mentioned by James. James's numbers have been, therefore, used as he accessed the same records half a century earlier. D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II 1941-1945*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 89-90.; RG-2 Reel-8, Box 3, Folder 6, Records of United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

achieving the victories being reported on. For their part, the War Department and White House both seized on the heroic image MacArthur was crafting for himself and used it unsparingly to prop up the morale of a population greeted thus far by a mostly unstaunched tide of Axis victory.⁶⁷ Even at the time, it was understood by the leadership in Washington that they were purchasing domestic morale for the cost of making untouchable a man they knew would probably be somewhat – but not critically – detrimental to the war effort. Marshall would bluntly admit as much after the war, describing MacArthur as a “fine commander,” but not without numerous qualifications about his “supersensitivity” and belief that “... everybody had ulterior motives about everything.” Marshall would also lament that MacArthur focused a significant amount of his time picking fights with the Navy, despite Admiral Halsey (the naval commander with whom MacArthur was most often directly involved) taking every pain to cater to MacArthur.⁶⁸ Eisenhower, a man well acquainted with MacArthur, tactfully recorded of his former superior’s failings during the opening salvos of the war his belief that MacArthur, “might have done better at the beaches and passes, and certainly should have saved his planes on December 8... but, he’s still the hero.”⁶⁹ America needed a hero. In MacArthur they had a man who felt it his destiny to give them one.

Historians have, therefore, to tangle with primary documents that use MacArthur’s name extensively and often at the expense of names that would provide more detail. A historian might easily find himself referring to “MacArthur’s left flank” or

⁶⁷ James, 90-92.

⁶⁸ Forrest Pogue, “Interview with George C. Marshall,” October 29, 1956. Cited in Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope*, (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 374.

⁶⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 13, 1942, in *The Eisenhower Diaries*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell, (New York: Norton, 1981), 43.

“MacArthur’s pursuit squadrons” because the exact names aren’t used in the primary reports that they are using as a base for their arguments. They might just as easily be using it because it is habitually consistent to adopt the same language as their source material. Perhaps, even, a historian might relish the opportunity to have a larger-than-life caricature to give the reader some relief from the tedium of unit numbers and ever rotating junior officers. Regardless of the reasoning, it is apparently inescapable as even MacArthur’s critics struggle to avoid falling into the trap of his ubiquity. Spector specifically calls attention to this fixture of MacArthur’s reporting, yet himself regularly refers to “MacArthur’s Forces” or some derivation thereof when more specific designations might instead suffice.⁷⁰ The caricature nature of MacArthur, so readily lambasted by his critics, serves in this sense to further the perceived ownership of the triumphs of his subordinates and the temptation offered by its convenience is often too much work to avoid. Besides, with his pipe and his sunglasses and his unorthodox uniform, MacArthur makes a *really good* caricature.

Objectives

As discussed previously, the goal of this work is not to establish guilt, but instead to establish a pattern of behavior – and opportunity to consciously continue said pattern – in order to establish a clear understanding of deliberate intent. That accounts of events that could comfortably be described as “pro” or “anti” MacArthur exist is an established fact. Likewise, that accountings of events that could be described as significantly divorced from the events themselves were produced – both contemporaneously and afterwards – by MacArthur and his defenders is not to be debated here. This work exists

⁷⁰ Spector, 118.

to demonstrate that a sufficient quantity of evidence exists to prove – beyond a reasonable doubt – that MacArthur’s motivations for fomenting this narrative were cynical and selfish and that his position and the ready access he had to accurate accountings of events preclude other reasonable explanations. Historians, both sympathetic and critical of MacArthur, have long couched the distant relationship MacArthur enjoyed with the truth in the language of eccentricity or else focused their ire on his immediate subordinates. This supposed aloofness from a man with a well-deserved reputation for cunning and drive stretches the bounds of plausibility past any reasonable extent.

A historical detective, building a case against MacArthur, would find no admission of his intent to defraud America for his own selfish ends. There exists no damning memorandum from Douglas MacArthur in which he orders the blatant falsification of reports – at least none that have yet been unearthed. Neither does there exist much discourse from his sycophants that more than implies an intention to repackage events in a more favorable manner. It is therefore left to us to engage in a broader survey of both the historiography at large and contemporary reporting. This case must be made out of a collection of smaller evidential elements that in isolation are perhaps excusable through ignorance or aloofness, but together demonstrate a pattern that clearly indicates malicious intent. Through this wider lens we might discern a pattern of bias, omission, and misrepresentation that through its consistency serves for us the same purpose as the collected evidence of the crime scene investigator. Guilt, in this case, rests not on a single smoking gun, but on an established pattern of behavior and action.

A CASE IN TWO PARTS

This section will examine in detail two points from the early days of American involvement in the Second World War in the South Pacific. These points, in order, are the effective destruction of Allied air power in the Philippines as a fighting force at Clark Field, and the escape of MacArthur and his entourage from Corregidor Island. Both are points of significant embarrassment for Douglas MacArthur and are selected here specifically and exclusively for that quality. This is not, it is important to reiterate, an attack on MacArthur for his failings nor is the intention to suggest that other commanders would not have produced similar missteps. Rather, these are understandably the points that those with a vested interest in the image of Douglas MacArthur would most wish to blur and therefore the points at which their actions become the most obvious. Each case will be examined according to the following pattern: a brief survey of events followed by examination of primary documentation by MacArthur and his agents, juxtaposed where necessary with contradictory primary evidence; this will in turn be followed by an analysis of the ubiquity of the inaccurate narrative within the historiography and subsequent analysis.

MacArthur's own Pearl Harbor

On December 8, at 1235 local time, the Japanese 11th Air Fleet began an hour-long attack on Clark Field and neighboring Iba Field on the Philippine Island of Luzon. The American Far East Air Force (FEAF) was caught completely flat footed – unprepared in equal measure for the occurrence of the attack and the effectiveness of

their Japanese foes. American anti-aircraft guns were unable to reach the Japanese bombers cruising at 20,000 feet. What American pursuit craft were airborne or managed to become so, mostly the top-of-the-line P-40 Warhawk, could not reach the cruising height of the Japanese bombers and traded poorly with the accompanying Japanese Mitsubishi A6M “Zero” fighters. By the time the smoke cleared, a third of the FEAF’s prized bombing fleet was destroyed along with nearly one hundred other airplanes – nearly half of which were P-40s. Two-hundred and thirty men were killed or wounded and the FEAF’s key airfield and only RADAR facility in Luzon was badly damaged. The destruction had been so complete that Zeroes from the attack on Iba Field reportedly flew to Clark Field after running out of targets on which to spend their ammunition. The FEAF claimed, somewhat dubiously, seven Japanese aircraft shot down.⁷¹

It was and remains one of the most one-sided defeats in the history of the United States military, made all the more catastrophic for the fact that MacArthur and his staff had more than nine hours’ warning and the Japanese attack had itself been delayed by weather. The severe losses prompted the evacuation from the Philippines of most of the remaining FEAF assets, including all of the surviving B-17 bombers – for all intents and purposes the only remaining offensive weapon in his arsenal – which in turn effectively

⁷¹ Clark Field was initially attacked by 26 Mitsubishi G3M bombers, 27 Mitsubishi G4M bombers, and 34 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. Iba Field was attacked almost simultaneously by 53 Mitsubishi G4M bombers and 51 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. American air assets included 35 B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, 107 Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters, 26 Seversky P-35 fighters, and a wide collection of older fighters, trainers, and observation aircraft. 16 of the B-17s had been moved to Mindanao on or before the day of the attack in preparation for other operations (not, as has been claimed by MacArthur’s defenders, in a conscious attempt to shield them from attack), while two others were on reconnaissance flights and escaped harm. Additionally, a collection of other aircraft had been stationed out of range at Del Monte airfield. The claim of seven Japanese aircraft is disputed as well. Saburo Sakai, a Zero pilot present at the battle, recalled one fighter lost to antiaircraft fire and four more that crashed on the return flight due to damage sustained or lack of fuel but none to enemy aircraft. William H Bartsch and Herbert Ellis. *Doomed at the Start: American Pursuit Pilots in the Philippines, 1941-1942*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995. 56-57, 427.

ceded total air superiority to the Japanese. With his air force crippled, MacArthur was left without the tools necessary to undertake his already dubious plan to defend the archipelago from the beaches and without any means to prevent the Japanese from freely bypassing the region.

How MacArthur Reported It

Whether MacArthur froze on the day or personally underestimated the capabilities and aggressive initiative of the Japanese is speculative and ultimately irrelevant to this study. Certain accounts report that he harbored hopes of Philippine neutrality, while others report him as having been rendered catatonic by events. Neither is particularly likely, but certainly little action was taken. MacArthur did, however, manage two press releases subsequent to his acknowledgement of the War Department memo notifying him of the state of war. The first, likely only approved rather than drafted by MacArthur, was a simple acknowledgement of the state of war and a soon to age terribly declaration of readiness. The second was much more steeped in the elegant prose for which the American public would soon revere him as he declared that “the military is on alert and every possible defense measure is being undertaken” before signing off his message with a declaration of “serenity and confidence.”⁷²

The initial messages on the day of the attack are emblematic of a command in disarray. Though multiple messages were sent from Headquarters USAFFE to both the War Department and to various USAFFE elements, they weren't followed by orders in

⁷² Press Release, 12-8-41, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

any meaningful sense.⁷³ By late morning, after the Far East Air Force's (FEAF) radar station picked up the incoming Japanese attack, a small number of P-40s were scrambled but their launch was without direction and unfortunately timed to see them caught in the process of landing by the Zeroes escorting the Japanese raid.⁷⁴

A press release from MacArthur's office on the evening of December 8 mentioned – in passing – the Clark Field attack. It was given one sentence, sandwiched between other items, and read in full: “Clark Field received a series of attacks today; the heaviest occurred at 1:50 with sanguinary results to both sides.”⁷⁵ Reports to the War Department, in a fashion that would become a hallmark of negative news in MacArthur's camp, were vague and brief. The longest radiogram regarding the attack sent on the day from Headquarters USAFFE to the War Department to be signed by MacArthur stated that the Japanese had heavily bombarded Clark and Nichols field while again emphasizing sanguinary results on both sides.⁷⁶

A USAFFE internal memo, which would have been available to MacArthur at the time, mentioned the losses in aircraft to be extensive and the number of casualties to be in excess of two hundred while claiming just seven Japanese aircraft. A December 9 press release commented only that “the material losses in planes on both sides were very

⁷³ Summary of Activities: Far East Air Force, 12-8-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 3, Folder 3, Records of United States Forces Far East (USAFFE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Press Release, 12-8-41, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁷⁶ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-9-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

heavy.”⁷⁷ MacArthur’s December 9 report to the war department claimed just twenty-four deaths at Clark and a further twenty-two at Iba, barely half of the true total.⁷⁸

MacArthur knew – though the War Department would not for some time – that the “sanguinary” trade was cataclysmic for the Americans and merely a paper cut for the Japanese.

MacArthur also, perhaps in an attempt to partially excuse his defeat, demonstrated his underestimation of Japanese air capabilities when he reported on December 9 that he had evidence “that his [The Japanese] dive bombers are at least partially manned by white pilots.”⁷⁹ This was, of course, not the case. On December 14 a press release boasted that the “heavy punishment” he had inflicted upon the Japanese air fleet had caused a “perceptible deterioration” in the effectiveness of Japanese bombings. This conclusion does not seem to have a basis in anything, aside from what might plausibly be an incredibly generous interpretation of the fact that the Formosa-based air forces of Japan had effectively destroyed all of their initial targets in the Philippines, but it does display a tendency by MacArthur to paint the course of a military operation not as a series of cascading consequences but as a heroic and gritty series of reversals inflicted on the enemy by him personally.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Press Release, 12-9-41, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁷⁸ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-9-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁷⁹ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-9-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁸⁰ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-14-41, RG-2 Reel-5, Box 2, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

Reports of the readiness of MacArthur's command varied as well. The preparedness of his command had been massively exaggerated in the days and weeks leading up to war. As late as December 5 MacArthur reported to the War Department that the air forces under his command were alert and prepared to function in an effective capacity.⁸¹ This tack changed quickly once the Japanese had put lie to his grandiose claims as he pivoted instead to claims of having been surprised and overwhelmed. He would, from that point on, discuss the air corps under his command as a force that was outnumbered and underequipped.⁸² In a December 10 message ostensibly to Air Chief General Arnold, but conspicuously sent to the War Department "For General Arnold" rather than privately, MacArthur assured his colleague that every precaution "within their [FEAF's] limited means ... had been taken here" and the losses were "due entirely to overwhelming superiority of [the] enemy force." He insisted that the Japanese had

⁸¹ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-5-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁸² Clark Field was initially by 26 Mitsubishi G3M bombers, 27 Mitsubishi G4M bombers, and 34 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. Iba Field was attacked almost simultaneously by 53 Mitsubishi G4M bombers and 51 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. American pursuit air assets included 107 Curtis P-40 Warhawk fighters, 26 Seversky P-35 fighters, and a wide collection of older craft. The Philippine Army Air Corps (PAAC) had an additional 60 airplanes including 12 Boeing P-26A fighters and 42 Stearman 76DC trainers of varying serviceability and utility. Even allowing for unserviceable or out of range aircraft there existed the assets to establish at least local numerical parity in pursuit planes with the Japanese in terms of P-40s alone had adequate defensive measures been taken. Additionally, the specificity in mentioning P-40 and P-35 aircraft is to note they represented the only aircraft available to the FEAF capable of contesting control of the air. Some historians discount P-35 numbers, calling the planes "antiquated" and unable to compete with Japanese aircraft. While inferior to both the P-40 and A6M, the P-35 gave reasonable account of itself in the actions in which it took part, and its dismissal is generally in an attempt to deflate the number of "combat" aircraft in service of MacArthur. At the time, the P-35 was believed, incorrectly but believed nonetheless, by Allied planners – including MacArthur – to be at least equal to most of the Japanese arsenal and factored into defense plans accordingly.

“hopelessly outnumbered” the Americans and that “no item of loss can be attributed to neglect or lack of care.”⁸³

These statements contrast sharply with reports MacArthur’s office produced in the coming months. As the situation in the Philippines worsened, MacArthur and his senior staff became increasingly demagogic and embittered.⁸⁴ By late January his office was reporting that aircraft under his command had “driven back Japanese bombers on-route to the Philippines” over the Luzon Strait every day for nearly a week before - and even concurrently with - the Pearl Harbor attack.⁸⁵ A press release, dated January 23, stated: “General MacArthur’s troops anticipated the attack beginning December fourth and his pursuit intercepting planes located hostile Japanese bombers from twenty to fifty miles out at sea each night. The enemy planes always turned back before actual contact was obtained. It is of historic interest that the last one of these night efforts was intercepted and turned back at the exact hour of the delivery of the attack on Hawaii.” The sudden “discovery” of the pre-war confrontations between “MacArthur’s Troops” and the Japanese are, notably, completely absent from the internal reporting of MacArthur’s G-2 section.⁸⁶ While the almost two-month delay in sharing this information should seem immediately suspicious, the claim is repeated in many histories.

⁸³ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-9-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁸⁴ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁸⁵ USAFFE, Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States. Release dated January 23, 1942.

⁸⁶ USAFFE, G-2 Journals, 30 December-31 January 1942, 1-23-42, RG-2 Reel-8, Box 4, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

In casting around for a cause of the debacle not resident in MacArthur's GHQ, the actions of "Japanese spies" were quickly identified as the key agents behind the success of the December 8 raids. By January, and without significant corroboration by MacArthur's G-2 or G-3 elements, MacArthur's press releases included fanciful declarations regarding "proof" acquired by the GHQ of treacherous fifth columnists. Not letting minor details like "being entirely besieged in Corregidor" and "not having the structures in place to obtain accurate information from beyond the battle lines on Bataan" get in the way of a good story, MacArthur's press releases spoke of Japanese residents in the Philippines being organized into military units "nine-thousand strong." A January 23 press release stated:

[The] Story of Japanese treachery subterfuge and use of fifth columnists prior to war becomes more complete daily. Dozens of Japanese Army officers previously domiciled in the Philippines as civilians returned to Japan just prior to hostilities carrying complete reports on all landing fields and all landing beaches. Captured maps and documents indicate information very comprehensive. When their attack was launched their bombers were guided in on radio beams of stations of sympathizers located near our military objectives.⁸⁷

The Japanese did, like any military, engage in an amount of intelligence gathering and subterfuge. MacArthur's own command had a picture of Japanese troop locations and airfields at least as complete as their picture of his. The evidence to support a vast network of malicious Japanese agents acting in coordination with the Japanese raiders

⁸⁷ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 1-23-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States. Release dated January 23, 1942.

has, in years since, failed to materialize.⁸⁸ As with most of the reversals suffered by MacArthur, a ready scapegoat – often a person or group who was unlikely to be in a position to promulgate a contradictory account – was found onto whom the General could place the blame for his failure. Shadowy and nebulous “Japanese Agents,” among much else, are difficult for the press to reach out to for commentary.

On the Other Hand

A radiogram sent to MacArthur by Adjutant General Emory Adams at the War Department hours before the attack detailed the attacks at Pearl Harbor, Wake, and Guam as well as passing along reports of British air assets struggling to repel Japanese air raids over Singapore and Malaya. The tactics of the Japanese attackers as well as their success in destroying aircraft on the ground were both specifically mentioned in the message.⁸⁹ Additionally, a personal message had been sent to MacArthur from Arnold stating specifically that reports from Hawaii indicated aircraft being destroyed on the ground along with a series of recommendations to minimize such losses.⁹⁰ America was at war, and MacArthur had everything he needed to know not only that the Philippines would be attacked, but *how* they would be attacked. Further, he received explicit orders ordering him to carry out tasks assigned to his command under the existing war plans – including

⁸⁸ Study of Air Force for United States Army Forces in the Far East presented to Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces in the Far East: 09-11-1941, Personal File of General MacArthur, 26 July-12 September 1941, RG-2 Reel-4, Box 1, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁸⁹ Cable to CG USA Forces Far East from WD Wash (War Department, Washington), 12-7-41, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁹⁰ The message bears no time stamp, but as both Arnold and Brereton recall discussing exactly these points via transoceanic phone call at some point between 0715 and 0800 Philippine time, it is safe to assume it falls in that timeframe. Cable from Arnold to MacArthur, 12-8-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 3, Folder 3, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

launching air strikes against Japanese positions. On the morning of the seventh Marshall sent a message to MacArthur stating, “Hostilities between Japan and the United States, British Commonwealth and Dutch have commenced. Japanese made an air raid on Pearl Harbor this morning, December 7. Carry out tasks assigned in Rainbow 5 so far as they pertain to Japan. In addition, cooperate with the British and Dutch to the utmost without jeopardizing the primary mission of defense of the Philippines. You are authorized to dispatch air units to operate temporarily from suitable bases in co-operation with the British or Dutch.”⁹¹ Further messages from Secretary of War Henry Stimson and General Henry “Hap” Arnold, received on December 7 and 8 respectively, noted that in Hawaii, Guam, Singapore, and elsewhere, allied aircraft were reported destroyed on the ground by bombs and machine gun fire.⁹² Not only did MacArthur and his staff have forewarning of an attack, but they also had clues about both the targets and the tools with which they would be attacked.⁹³

Upon reflection, it is the January 23, 1942, release that is of particular interest. Though it is more or less impossible to describe the claims within as categorically false, as the complexities of actively losing a war place certain handicaps on the maintenance of unit records, it should suffice to say that no contemporary vindication of the claims has

⁹¹ Copy of radio to MacArthur from Marshall, 12-7-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 3, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁹² Telegram from Secretary of War to MacArthur, 12-7-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 3, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States; Copy of a radio on behalf of Gen Arnold from Gen Adams to MacArthur, 12-8-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 3, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁹³ Stimson’s message mentioning aircraft destroyed by machine gun fire suggested that the Japanese bombers were flying with escort fighters during these attacks. American air doctrine did not necessitate escort fighters at this time and there seems little evidence that either USAFFE or the War Department expected the Japanese would operate otherwise. Ibid.

yet been made available to researchers.⁹⁴ It is, in fact, a statement with only the most passing resemblance to reality. A historian with only the barest understanding of the war would cast doubt on the claims that MacArthur's staff had obtained detailed evidence of Japanese subterfuge while bottled up on Corregidor Island. While there had been a cable on December 5 from the office of George Moore, commander of the harbor defenses around Manila Bay, that claimed to have positive identification of enemy aircraft over central Luzon, the report's accuracy is questionable and at any rate no action seems to have come of it.⁹⁵ The claim that "his" pursuit planes had repeatedly turned back Japanese bombers should immediately draw the eyes of even the most passive student to the complete and apparently antithetic surprise claimed by MacArthur's command when attacked on December 8. Finally, the claim that FEAF pursuit craft had turned back Japanese bombers concurrent with the Pearl Harbor attack is not only easily debunked by Japanese accounts, but also emblematic of a lack of knowledge of the true scope of Japanese air superiority.⁹⁶

Later Defense

MacArthur would repeat the idea that his air forces were antiquated and paltry – and those of the Japanese numerically overwhelming – for the rest of his life. In his own

⁹⁴ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 1-23-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁹⁵ The identity and purpose of the aircraft reported by Moore's office was incredibly uncertain at the time and effectively unknowable eighty years hence. There is a non-zero chance these were reconnaissance craft of the IJN, but just as likely these could have been friendly aircraft. Or birds. No follow up action was taken in any case. Cable from CG of Harbor Defenses of Manila & Subic Bays to Headquarters U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, 12-5-41, RG-2 Reel-45, Box 2, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

⁹⁶ The Japanese 11th Air Fleet had initially hoped to attack concurrently with the Pearl Harbor attack, exactly when MacArthur's headquarters claimed to have turned back Japanese bombers. However, a dense fog blanketing their Formosan airfields delayed the attack. Sakai, et al, 38.

words, “Our air forces in the Philippines, containing many antiquated models, were hardly more than a token force with insufficient equipment, incompletd fields and inadequate maintenance. They were hopelessly outnumbered and never had a chance of winning. They were completely overwhelmed by the enemy’s superior forces. They did everything possible within their limited resources. I attach no blame to General Brereton or other members of the command for the incidents of the battle. Nothing could have saved the day for them.”⁹⁷ Once again, MacArthur’s use of language is both subtle and brilliant and his questionable relationship with facts not evidence of aloofness but of calculation. The use of pronouns is subtle in its flow, but powerful in implication. MacArthur begins by discussing “our” air forces, implying that the loss was one that was shared by America as a whole. He quickly pivots to describing *their* defeat. *They* were defeated because they had been put in a situation where they were opposite “overwhelming” forces with “limited resources.” The implied neglect that had forced this situation was not his, of course, they were after all “our” air forces. A third party must be to blame, and it is in the assignment of this blame that MacArthur makes his only appearance in the passage as an individual agent. He makes it clear in saying that *he* attaches no blame to Brereton, which gives the reader little impression that Brereton deserves no blame but very strongly implies that MacArthur is above any blame himself. He is, after all, assigning – or not assigning – blame from an arbiter’s vantage.

The accounting of Paul Rogers, MacArthur’s one-time clerk turned academic, of the Clark Field debacle is, unsurprisingly, very sympathetic to MacArthur. His own diary

⁹⁷ This specific passage is repeated verbatim three years apart, in the latter case seemly invoking the former as supporting evidence. SCAP GHQ press release, June 25, 1943, and Sept. 27, 1946, RG5, MMBA; James, 12.; *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1946.

recorded little of interest on the day, dedicating only as much time to the Japanese attacks on American holdings as he did to his own indignation at being called to work at unpleasant hour of 5:30.⁹⁸ His account of the day is difficult as well. He makes the bizarre and categorically false claim that part of the reason for the success of the attack was a lack of American radar, saying, “there was none in those days.” This news would no doubt have come as a surprise to the personnel manning the radar station at Iba Field. He also inaccurately recalls the dating of the warning from the War Department about keeping their planes from being destroyed on the ground as having been received on the ninth, when it was in fact received on the morning of the eighth. The remainder of his account of the attack names only one person, Brereton, at the feet of whom he lays all blame for the losses, though with a conciliatory remark that they were “simply a gaggle of planes and crews... not yet coordinated... and awkward in action” and that “we would have lost them all later.”⁹⁹ Interestingly, neither the January 23 press release claiming pre-war aerial face-offs with the Japanese nor the events they purportedly relayed are mentioned at any point.

Who Believed It?

The official accounting rendered by E. Kathleen Williams and Louis Fellow for the United States Air Force, though sympathetic to Brereton’s inability to relocate all of his B-17s to Del Monte, itself leans very heavily on MacArthur’s own accounts. Completed just three years after the end of the war, the work repeats MacArthur’s claims of pre-war sparring with Japanese attack craft while offering little more than the

⁹⁸ Rogers, 95.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 99.

General's own reports.¹⁰⁰ It is in such deference that the work inadvertently reveals two key insights, each a product of the relative closeness of the publication to the events being discussed. In the section discussing Clark Field, historian Richard Watson notes that very few official records of the FEAF survived the early part of the war, and the files of the SWPA GHQ are themselves incomplete. He further notes that as early as 1944, elements within MacArthur's headquarters denied the existence of any such material. This, he concedes, necessitates a reliance on interviews with personnel to establish the course of events. He further concedes the contradictory nature of many of these interviews.¹⁰¹ In itself, this fact is an inconvenience, but the relationship between these points must be put in context. The historical interest in documents related to Clark Field was known to MacArthur's headquarters by May 27, 1944, at the very latest. Coupled with the fact that in 1948 the influence of MacArthur and his partisans was at something of a zenith, a reliance of historians on personal recollections would undoubtedly favor MacArthur's version of events.¹⁰² A round of contradictory finger pointing, unsupported

¹⁰⁰ This work is not *strictly* exclusive to MacArthur's accounts as the work also cites an interview of a Captain Chihaya Takahashi obtained six weeks after the Japanese surrender by MacArthur's command. The statement is therefore correct in principle as the probability of impartiality is significantly diminished by the context in which the interview was obtained and disseminated. E. Kathleen Williams and Louis E. Asher Fellow, "Deployment of the AAF on the Eve of Hostilities," in *The US Army Air Forces in World War II: Volume 1 – Plans and Early Operations Jan 1939-Aug 1942*, Ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 189-191, 685.

¹⁰¹ Richard L. Watson, "Pearl Harbor and Clark Field," in *The US Army Air Forces in World War II: Volume 1 – Plans and Early Operations Jan 1939-Aug 1942*, Ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 203-206."

¹⁰² Ibid, 687. A note is made of a request dated 27 May 1944, from the Fifth Air Force, initiated by the historian of that organization, to GHQ SWPA for information from personnel holding key positions under General MacArthur at the outbreak of war undertook to supplement the record available in AAF files. Among other things, information was sought regarding prewar plans for the employment of the Far East Air Force, the possible effect of the political status of the Philippines on decisions not to assume the initiative against the Japanese after official confirmation of the Pearl Harbor attack had been received, and an indication of such orders as may have been issued to the air force on the morning of 8 December relating to the use of bombers based on Clark Field. The request was returned, however, with indorsement of 7 June 1944 as follows: "There is no official information in this headquarters bearing upon the questions

by large quantities of historical record and with the bulk of what remained being produced under the guidance of MacArthur would leave a great deal of room to exonerate a man already widely viewed as a national hero.

The official US Army history of the events at Clark Field (and concerning MacArthur's later evacuation) is Louis Morton's *The Fall of the Philippines*. Published initially in 1953, Morton delivers a remarkably nuanced analysis of the decision making leading up to the attack. Operating with a mixture of contemporary documentation and latter-day interviews, he eschews the assignment of blame to any particular individual but paints a picture of a milieu of finger pointing and back biting – particularly between Sutherland and Brereton – both at the time and in the years since.¹⁰³ This, perhaps diplomatically, serves to largely elevate MacArthur above criticism. At the time of writing MacArthur was – even after his dismissal – still a very significant figure both within the Army and without and a direct attack on him in the Army's own official history was unlikely to be welcomed.

As it was absolutely the most historically significant secondary study of the topic, the sources used by Morton in *Fall of the Philippines* would help shape future histories in a more significant fashion than those omitted. His disproportionate reliance on interviews and memoirs is notable in as much as it paints a picture of events through a handful of conflicting, defensive, and confused accounts. The sequence of events is often the sequence as recalled by a party with a vested interest in how blame was assigned. While occasionally such biases clearly denoted, they are often unaddressed, which has the added

propounded in basic communication.” This is therein cited as, “Doc. 20 in History, Fifth Air Force, Pt. I, App. XI”

¹⁰³ Morton, 86-88.

effect of leading the notation of certain biases to strengthen the perceived impartiality of those not clearly labeled. For example, when Morton recounts that MacArthur had ordered Brereton to move the B-17 bombers stationed at Clark to Mindanao, it may escape the reader that the sources utilized by Morton are a post-war interview with Sutherland and a 1946 press release by MacArthur – each responding in part to the recently published memoirs of Brereton.¹⁰⁴

Morton's account was a diligent accounting of events but engaged in no speculation or detailed analysis as to the controversial subject of blame, except to acknowledge that there was controversy to be had. In the example explored in the previous paragraph, for instance, Morton's matter-of-fact phrasing lends itself to MacArthur's narrative. MacArthur had indeed ordered that the B-17s at Clark Field be moved to Mindanao, but Morton's accounting gives the impression of an acute and emergent order on which Brereton failed to act. It is far more likely – given the strategic realities of the moment, MacArthur's command style, Brereton's later statements, and the amiable relationship between the two men – that the order was for a movement to be undertaken when necessary precursory actions, such as arranging a place to *put* the planes in Mindanao, rendered such a transfer practicable.¹⁰⁵ Each man would have been fully aware, when the order was given, that the movement was to be undertaken gradually and when resources permitted. After disaster struck, the order became a convenient piece of evidence of MacArthur acting and Brereton failing him – one he leaned in to.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 88

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "M'ARTHUR DENIES BRERETON REPORT; Says He Received No Request From Air Officer in 1941 to Bomb Foe on Formosa DEFENDS STRATEGY AT TIME Declares His Assignment Was to Hold the Philippines, Not Attack Japanese," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1946, 6. Retrieved from

This neutrality does Morton, and many other historians, a disservice. He eschews including many of MacArthur's more fantastical claims, an understandable enough decision as – especially in the early war – his claims divorced significantly from reality, but in such a manner as to have little apparent effect on the events about which Morton wrote.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, in doing so Morton inadvertently allows them to help shape the way the history would be recorded. In not discussing these claims, he cannot discredit them. When combined with his willingness to use the accounts of MacArthur and his partisans where he feels they provide a reliable accounting of events, giving their accounts his tacit endorsement in doing so, this habit lends an air of validity to *all* claims made by MacArthur's camp.

Historians have long been able, therefore, to see in his work whichever argument they wish. Take for example Gavin Long, a historian of similar quality and position to Morton, who cites only two works in his telling of the events at Clark Field. The second of these works is MacArthur's *Reminiscences*, which Long seemingly cites only to establish that MacArthur was not a particularly reliable witness by 1964, but the first is Morton.¹⁰⁸ This reliance on Morton's work is both commonplace and understandable but tends to lead historians to arrive at the same indifferent conclusion. John C. McManus, in his book *Fire and Fortitude* cites Morton as he couches his criticism of MacArthur in

<https://www.nytimes.com/1946/09/28/archives/marthur-denies-brereton-report-says-he-received-no-request-from-air.html> July 28, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Morton, for instance, does not mention MacArthur's claim of January 23 regarding the pre-war aviation action. The claim is obviously false and had no impact on the eventual fall of the Philippines – the subject of Morton's attentions – but the larger historical ramifications in such omissions have proved them a poor decision by the author. Morton, 88-91.

¹⁰⁸ Gavin Long, *MacArthur: As a Military Commander*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1969), 61-65.

terms of “allow[ing] Sutherland to wall him off from the outside world... [creating] a disastrous communication gap with MacArthur.”¹⁰⁹

His defenders dutifully reveled in the interpretive space. The war-correspondent turned radio-announcer Frazier Hunt, who travelled as a part of MacArthur’s Press Corps during much of the Second World War, paints an altogether more favorable picture of events in his 1954 work *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*. Without the unwelcome interference of cited works, Hunt places all of the blame for the disaster on “local commanders,” the pilots themselves, and a series of “confusing and conflicting reports ... by General Brereton and certain members of his staff,” though he notes MacArthur’s magnanimity in his not specifically blaming anyone. Hunt does, helpfully, include two separate accounts by MacArthur himself in his defense of the general’s actions. In the first, penned in June 1943, MacArthur engages in a heated defense of Brereton (and himself) by insisting that he had cleverly and deliberately moved half of the heavy bombers under his command out of range of the enemy before the attack and insists that the pursuit planes under his command were “vastly outnumbered” by the Japanese and would have been lost in a matter of days anyway.¹¹⁰ The second is a response to a question by historian Louis Morton (misspelled as ‘Lewis’ in the text) about whether MacArthur believed he could act to preempt Japanese attack on December 8. In the lengthy response, MacArthur both denies that he had the authorization to take any aggressive action against the Japanese and insists that had he, he would not have, as his

¹⁰⁹ John McManus, *Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941-1943*, (New York: Penguin, 2019), 72.

¹¹⁰ By virtually any count, there were at least twice as many pursuit craft available to USAFFE on December 8, 1941, as MacArthur claims in the June 1943 letter. Frazier Hunt, *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*, (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1954), 220-222, 226.

command lacked fighter aircraft capable of escorting the bombers to their targets. The former point is a misinterpretation (and a significant stretching) of pre-war standing orders not to take unilateral war-starting action.¹¹¹ The later, it is also worth noting, is an attempt to vindicate his inaction by applying tactical knowledge not gained until much later in the war to the situation.¹¹²

Reports of General MacArthur, compiled by MacArthur's staff, omits the debacle at Clark Field entirely. Rather, it cites the very improbable press release from GHQ USAFFE January 23, 1942, that claimed "his" pursuit planes had turned back Japanese bombers on the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and concurrently with the Pearl Harbor attacks, as evidence that MacArthur had anticipated the Japanese attack by several days. The Japanese are mentioned as having attacked with "overwhelming air strength," a favorite claim of MacArthur in his later years, while the ample American air presence was written off as "relatively weak." The successes of the expert Japanese aviators are described as being simply due to "an extensive espionage net... [that] enabled the Japanese to concentrate their attacks accurately on the most important objectives," a claim not even substantiated in the series' other volume.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Morton specifically notes that MacArthur not only had authority to act, but that War Plan Rainbow 5 explicitly called for him to undertake "air raids against Japanese forces and installations." Hunt, 221.; Morton, 71, 81-83. Morton 82 n22. A brief discussion of contemporary doctrine exists later in this section.

¹¹² Contemporary American bombing theory held that bombers were fast, armed, armored, and undetectable enough to render escorts generally superfluous. Though the RAF was aware of the extreme dangers inherent in the employment of unescorted bombers following the disastrous 1939 Battle of the Heligoland Bight, the US Army Air Service remained unconvinced and flew unescorted formations against Axis targets until well into 1944. An unescorted attack by B-17s on Formosa in December 1941 *would* have been disastrous, but there is effectively zero chance that anyone at GHQ USAFFE would have suspected as much. *Ibid.*; Donald L Miller, *Eighth Air Force: The American Bomber Crews in Britain*, (London: Aurum Press, 2007), 42-46.

¹¹³ Volume 2 does mention that the Japanese expected significantly more and better resistance and that they had met with "a spectacular degree of success, especially at Clark Field." MacArthur's General Staff, *Reports of General MacArthur Vol 1 & 2*, Ed. Charles Willoughby, (Washington: Department of the Army, 1994).

Later works are often victims of the tepid – all too often sycophantic – tone of earlier historical works. Clayton James, whose *Years of MacArthur* has been utilized as a source text nearly as often as Morton's, echoes the latter's conclusion that the task of assigning blame has been readily taken up by all parties involved, but spends a significant amount of time steadfastly refusing to pick sides. MacArthur, James writes, is subject to blame in as much as he was responsible in a sense for all mistakes in his command as commander in chief, but strongly implies that the fault lay mostly in the conflict of personalities between Sutherland and Brereton. He also arrives, somewhat bizarrely, at the conclusion that had Brereton been allowed to meet with MacArthur when first he requested, the men would have decided to send the bombers to safety. A curious conclusion given an audience with MacArthur a few hours later very much failed to come to that conclusion.¹¹⁴

Historian Victor Davis Hanson's work *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* cites the 1967 work *Corregidor: The Sage of a Fortress* by James and William Belote as he recounts, incorrectly, the number of American planes destroyed in Luzon on the December 8. Of more significant note is the manner in which he assigns ownership. Introducing the situation, the reader is told of the "legendary" General MacArthur and "his" formidable air arm. On describing the destruction of much of that air arm on the opening day of the war, they are suddenly "Major General Lewis Brereton's air forces" that were caught on the ground. Brereton, as a character, is introduced and disposed of in the same sentence.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ James, 13-14.

¹¹⁵ Victor Davis Hanson, *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict was Fought and Won*, (New York: Hachette, 2017), 344.

Certain revisionists have attempted to steer their work away from MacArthur's accounts. Ronald H. Spector, in his 1985 work *Eagle Against the Sun* utilized very few analyses from MacArthur's headquarters in his analysis of the events of December 8 and paints a profoundly negative picture of both the generalissimo and his command. He describes MacArthur alternately as vainglorious, ambitious, and a "myth," and the strategies he insisted upon in the buildup to the war as "ill-conceived" in his kinder moments and "totally impracticable" is his more scathing analysis.¹¹⁶ Spector writes at length about the events of December 8 and the roles played therein by the starring characters of the USAFFE Command. Forming his analysis largely free of partisan accounts, though admittedly using accounts by Wainwright and Brereton, Spector paints a picture of a proactive Brereton desperately attempting to gain permission to take the steps necessary to prepare the forces under his command for battle they were about to face while being prevented from doing so by both MacArthur and Sutherland. Before discussing MacArthur's elevation to hero-status and subsequent receipt of the Medal of Honor, Spector implies heavily that he could – perhaps even should – have been relieved of command for his failures on and around December 8.¹¹⁷ Spector, as with other critics of MacArthur, limits his criticism to strategic concerns. Discussion of MacArthur's attempts at revision are, unfortunately, absent.

Upshot

For one military to surprise another despite, with the benefit of hindsight, there being significant evidence of impending danger is a regular enough occurrence in

¹¹⁶ Spector, 110-116.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 116.

military history. The very same military that was taken by surprise at Clark Field was similarly upset mere hours before in Hawaii. Earlier that year the Nazi Reich had launched what was then the largest offensive in European history into the Soviet Union to the complete shock and disbelief of the Soviet leadership. The key factor distinguishing these events from those at Clark Field is that in the aforementioned cases the defending party was not – at least until that moment – at war with the aggressors. Those in command during the Clark Field debacle, including and especially MacArthur, had known they were at war all day. As historian of Military Intelligence Stephen Budiansky flatly offers, if Pearl Harbor was caught “asleep,” MacArthur’s Forces were “comatose.”¹¹⁸ Brereton himself would later speculate that MacArthur’s unwillingness to grant him an audience or approve action was born out of futile hopes of Philippine neutrality.¹¹⁹

Headquarters, USAFFE, shouldn’t have had forewarning of an attack. The raid by the 11th Air Fleet was scheduled to coincide with the attacks at Pearl Harbor and Singapore. Formosa, from whence the attack was to be launched, was blanketed by a thick fog that prevented the Japanese aircraft from taking off for hours. Saburo Sakai, a pilot of the air group that participated in the raid, recalled a prevailing belief among the pilots on the ground that American aircraft from Luzon would be overhead to bomb *them* before they could get underway and if they could get airborne, they would be met not by

¹¹⁸ Stephen Budiansky, *Battle of Wits: The Complete Story of Codebreaking in World War II*, (New York: Free Press, 2000), 10.

¹¹⁹ It is worth noting that Brereton’s supposition is *incredibly* unlikely, unsubstantiated and was very likely offered by Brereton for its diplomatic nature. Lewis Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East, and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945*, (New York: William Morrow, 1946), 39.

an unready enemy on the ground but by swarming aircraft in defensive positions.¹²⁰

Neither proved to be the case. General Brereton, the head of the FAEF, insisted on just such a bombing raid on Formosa as soon as news reached him about the new state of war. MacArthur repeatedly rebuffed Brereton's entreaties as did MacArthur's chief of staff General Sutherland. While Brereton did eventually win authorization to engage in a limited reconnaissance of Formosa and begin defensive deployment of pursuit aircraft, both orders came too late.¹²¹

The claims of MacArthur's camp regarding both the failure to undertake proactive bombing of Formosa and to have turned back Japanese attacks in the days leading up to the war are rooted in a selective misunderstanding of contemporary doctrine. American air doctrine of the time did not call for escort fighters to fly in defense of bombardment craft; however, as was evidenced by events, Japanese doctrine did. Furthermore, the eighty-five Japanese A6M "Zero" fighters that accompanied the December 8 attacks were superior machines to the Curtis P-40 Warhawks that made up the cream of the FAEF pursuit detachments and their pilots were at this point in the war likewise of a higher

¹²⁰ Sakai's "autobiography" is a *wildly* unreliable work. With Sakai not being an English speaker, the work was written mostly by Martin Caidin, a science fiction author who would go on to spend his later years as a minor celebrity for his claims of having psychic powers. Entire passages are completely fabricated – apparently created out of whole cloth by Caidin. The claim cited here has been verified in independent interviews with Sakai, but this remains the most accessible English-language source for the claim. The book was not published in Japan, and Sakai was reportedly very upset by the liberties taken by Caidin according to an interview with author Henry Sakaida for his 1985 book *Winged Samurai*. Saburo Sakai, Martin Caidin, and Fred Saito, *Samurai!: The Autobiography of Japan's World War II Flying Ace*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1957), 39-41.; Henry Sakaida, *Winged Samurai: Saburo Sakai and the Zero Fighter Pilots*, (Mesa: Champlin Fighter Museum Press, 1985)

¹²¹ The value of such a bombing raid is, in retrospect, doubtful. The bombers, in accordance with American doctrine of the time, would have been unescorted and would have flown into a hornets' nest of pursuit craft and anti-aircraft fire. This, probably correct, assessment is often (including in *Reports of General MacArthur*) used as a defense for not ordering Brereton to action earlier, but that argument conveniently ignores that neither MacArthur nor his staff could possibly have known such a raid would have been a disaster – as American doctrine continued to emphasize the value of unescorted bombers until well into the war. (See Miller, *Eighth Air Force*)

caliber than their American and Filipino opponents.¹²² That this was not apparent to the men of GHQ USAFFE is hardly an oversight on their part. The destruction of the FEAF as a force capable of contesting control of the skies less than twelve hours into the war never allowed the command an opportunity to determine the competitiveness of their craft in even combat.¹²³ Many of the aircraft and pilots still in the Philippines would perform very admirably, leaving little reason for the Americans to suspect the disparity in quality. Had there been an actual attempt to intercept the Japanese attack force, particularly as close to their targets as the January 23 press release claimed, it is unlikely that the attack would have been delayed – much less repulsed – and equally unlikely any American pursuit craft would have survived the encounter. Similarly, while an unescorted bombing raid by American B-17s on Formosan airfields almost certainly would have been a catastrophic failure, *none* of the general officers of the USAFFE would have had any reason to suspect as much at the time. MacArthur’s later insistence that his decisions were based on a sympathetic understanding of the tactical vulnerability therefore ring somewhat hollow.

In the immediate aftermath, MacArthur’s energies were mostly focused on political damage control. To deeply analyze his December 10 message “to General Arnold” is to recognize a masterpiece of defensive writing. His framing of the report as a

¹²² A robust and passionate culture of debate exists around the merits of various World War Two era aircraft. This debate incorporates a litany of qualifying factors in the comparison between aircraft such as makes nearly any aircraft “superior” when coupled with the appropriate caveats. The author has elected not to engage in this debate.

¹²³ The P-40 eventually proved a serviceable warplane, casting further doubt on MacArthur’s claims of unsuitable equipment in doing so. P-40s saw significant success against Japanese aircraft in the Pacific and the China-Burma-India (CBI) theatre, most notably with the “Flying Tigers” of Claire Chennault. Though mostly successful against the outdated aircraft, they felled a number of modern Ki-43 Type 1 fighters and A6M “Zeros” as the Japanese struggled to replace experienced pilots.

private reply to Arnold sets the tone of the message. Arnold had indeed put voice to a furious confusion as to why the FEAF had been so comprehensively destroyed, but his ire was directed mostly at the local air commander General Brereton. MacArthur, a savvy veteran of the politics of the War Department, would have little feared Arnold's criticism of his subordinate, but recognized both that those with opinions that could affect MacArthur would not take long to cast their eyes up the chain of command and that Arnold had given him an opportunity to outmaneuver them. MacArthur first presents himself as defending the soldiers and pilots of the FEAF, rather than his immediate subordinate. To attempt to defend a member of his headquarters would easily be interpreted as MacArthur implicating himself by "circling the wagons" around his staff. Instead presenting himself as an arbiter defending the lowest rungs of his command from unjust criticism, he implies that he too is seeking answers for a failure of action that must be somewhere in between him and them. Further, he is able to work in claims that every precaution was taken and that neither neglect nor incompetence played a part in the defeat. Again, he is ostensibly reporting on behalf of his troops, but carefully uses language that presses the reader to exonerate him with them. Finally, he manages to work in – as matters of fact – the ideas that the Japanese had overwhelming numbers and that the forces allotted to him were woefully inadequate.¹²⁴

The January 23 GHQ release also, rather helpfully, announces its intention when it includes the phrase "it is of historical note."¹²⁵ It is unlikely that the soldiers under

¹²⁴ Cable to AGWAR (War Department) from Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, 12-10-41, RG-2 Reel-6, Box 2, Folder 6, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹²⁵ USAFFE, Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942. Release dated January 23, 1942.

MacArthur's command, already growing disillusioned with their leader and his grandiose proclamations and with some doubtlessly aware of the inaccuracy of the information presented, believed much of the statement. However, a press release is by its very nature not for the soldiers, but for the press. Newspapers would print stories of a heroic leader, with a name that people would vaguely remember, doggedly fighting against an enemy that only he had seen coming. Historians, beginning not long after the war and continuing to the present day, cite the valuable primary document created by the GHQ as they repeat its claims. It was a clear attempt to create primary information that painted MacArthur in a more favorable light than would the facts alone and it was done, explicitly, for the historical record. This statement, as most statements emanating from GHQ USAFFE were, was signed: MacArthur.

One is also left with the distinct impression that both MacArthur's words to Arnold and his later reports of these pre-war stare-downs with the Japanese cannot simultaneously be true. In fact, it is almost certain that neither is. A cable from the office of George Moore, commander of the harbor defenses around Manila Bay, claimed on December 5 to have positive identification of enemy aircraft over central Luzon, but no action seems to have come of it.¹²⁶ The story about repelling pre-war Japanese bombing attempts is the product of a man keen to display himself as more cunning and alert than everybody else and who had likely already forgotten his insistence that he had been

¹²⁶ The identity and purpose of the aircraft reported by Moore's office was incredibly uncertain at the time and effectively unknowable eighty years hence. There is a non-zero chance these were reconnaissance craft of the IJN, but no follow up action was taken in any case. Cable from CG of Harbor Defenses of Manila & Subic Bays to Headquarters U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, 12-5-41, RG-2 Reel-45, Box 2, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

caught entirely by surprise a few weeks prior. Likewise, the narrative about having a tiny and antiquated air force stands up poorly to scrutiny as MacArthur actually had at his disposal the largest American air force based outside America.¹²⁷

MacArthur, unlike Kimmel and Short in Hawaii who were the subject of several lengthy investigations, escaped any inquiry into the fiasco at Clark-Iba. General Claire Chennault, who spent eight years combatting the Japanese Air Forces in China would later write, “The lightness with which this cardinal military sin [having one’s aircraft caught on the ground] was excused by the American high command... has always seemed to me one of the more shocking defects of the war.”¹²⁸

Escape from Corregidor

On March 11, 1942, after sunset, four small PT boats crept out of Manila Bay. They carried, besides their crews, General Douglas MacArthur, his wife and child, and his child’s nanny. The remainder of the passengers consisted of officers and staff that, aside from a few individuals included by orders from the War Department, would form the nucleus of the new command he was to set up in the relative safety of Australia. These men had been carefully selected by MacArthur and Sutherland for their skillsets, effectiveness, and – most important of all – their personal loyalty to MacArthur.¹²⁹ The party endured an uncomfortable, but uneventful, journey across the northeastern edge of the Sulu Sea before disembarking on the northern coast of Mindanao. A few pleasant days on a local plantation were followed by another uncomfortable, but similarly

¹²⁷ Morton, *Fall of the Philippines*, 62.

¹²⁸ Claire Chennault, *Way of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949), 124.

¹²⁹ Rogers, 189.

uneventful, journey – this time by air – to Australia. A further journey from their port of arrival near Darwin to the train station at Alice Springs preceded one by rail to Melbourne. It was during the latter, on March 20, before the first assembly of reporters had faced since leaving the Philippines, that MacArthur was first able to deliver the line that would be forever associated with the man: “I came through and I shall return.”¹³⁰

How MacArthur Reported It

“The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing an American offensive against Japan, the primary purpose of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return.”¹³¹ These are the words with which MacArthur left the small collection of reporters in Terowie station before resuming his train journey to Melbourne. This apparently impromptu statement, he would have been aware, was one of the most important of his life. His reputation, his career, and his legacy hung on those few words. The situation in the Philippines was bad, and rapidly deteriorating, and the Allied servicemen there were suffering badly. The appearance of their commander stepping out of a luxurious train car more than three thousand miles away would leave little work for his critics should he fail to convince with his address. As usual, he delivered masterfully.

Each word was carefully chosen, truthful enough to escape correction, and drenched in implication. The President had “ordered” him out, which was true, but implied strongly that he would not have left were he not commanded to do so. That he

¹³⁰“I Came Through; I Shall Return,” *The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA: 1931-1954)*, March 21, 1942, 1. Retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/48749454> on July 28, 2021.

¹³¹ Ibid.

had been forced “to break through Japanese lines” was factual only if those lines were on a map but elicits images of MacArthur hacking his way through Japanese infantry with a steel helmet and a machete rather than of a desperately seasick old man being secretly whisked away by boat in the dead of night. Further, explaining that he was there to organize a counterattack left the world believing he would collect his troops and immediately set sail for the Philippines at their head. To read MacArthur’s words splashed across the front pages of newspapers would be to envision a man who would be standing on the foredeck of a destroyer set for Luzon – strong jawed and steely eyed – within the week, not a man who would spend the next several years living in a series of luxury hotels in Eastern Australia. A less savvy man would have been torn to shreds by a cutting press and a gob smacked public. MacArthur flourished.

The news media reveled in MacArthur’s daring escape. The front page of the Los Angeles Times on March 22, 1942, carried a story relayed by Hugh Casey, one of the men with whom MacArthur had left the Philippines, of “an amazing escape” in which the party had dodged snipers, guerillas, and Japanese destroyers in their breakout. The *Times* of London reported that the Australians welcomed MacArthur “for his renown as a fighter.”¹³²

On the Other Hand

MacArthur was never one to miss an opportunity to pat himself on the back nor voice his discontent at perceived slights. His office issued a statement on March 10, the day before his departure, to announce the decorations of several units by the War Department. MacArthur made clear that units were being decorated for “enabling

¹³² “Plots to Kill MacArthur Disclosed by Gen. Casey,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1942, 1.

successful execution of the commanding general's strategic plan" despite "inadequate airfields... anti-aircraft protection... [and] limited equipment."¹³³ If he was leaving – and he was certainly leaving – MacArthur saw no need to leave in any doubt that his command had been excellent, and he had been denied victory only by stingy planners in Washington.

Discussions between MacArthur and Marshall regarding his evacuation had begun as early as late January. By early February discussions to evacuate American civilians and "key personnel" were in advanced stages. On February 4, it was suggested to MacArthur that his wife and young son be evacuated, but MacArthur demurred stating, "they and I will share the fate of the garrison."¹³⁴ Whether this was earnest bravado or a calculated gamble that the MacArthur family as a package being lost would be a public relation disaster the War Department would not be able to stomach is completely speculative and comes down largely to one's preexisting opinions of the man. In either case, they were not separated.

There can be no doubt that, MacArthur, a man well studied on the great figures of military history, was keenly aware of the terrible optics involved in the evacuation. Strategically prudent or not, he would have well understood that a commander who escaped battle alone usually left his reputation dead alongside his army. In a message to Marshall on February 25, MacArthur pleaded with his superior that he be allowed to

¹³³ General Order, Headquarters USAFFE, 3-10-42, RG-2 Reel-18, Box 11, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹³⁴ Cable to MacArthur from Marshall, 02-04-42, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 2, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.; Also referred to in Rogers, 185.

control both the timing of his evacuation and the manner in which it was presented. He stressed that a withdrawal of his person without the proper presentation might cause a complete collapse of Filipino forces in the region and that the reasoning for his evacuation would not be explainable “to their simple intelligence.”¹³⁵

A measure of MacArthur’s embarrassment is perhaps best taken by the paradigm shift in his messaging. The press releases from MacArthur’s GHQ had grown both in length and verve as the siege had dragged on. As early as the end of January, they more closely resembled – in tone, length, and content – tabloid editorials than the building blocks of respectable broadsheets. MacArthur’s headquarters issued a press release on March 10 passionately denouncing Japanese claims that Japanese nationals in the Philippines had suffered undue harm at the hands of American military.¹³⁶ A press release the preceding day was an equally impassioned, and slightly unhinged, denunciation of the subjugation of the Philippines under Japanese rule.¹³⁷ The final press release penned by MacArthur in his headquarters on Corregidor was made on March 11, the day he and his party boarded the PT boats on which they would slip out of Manila Bay contained just four words. This dramatic change in tone, from fiery demagogue to terse stoicism, perhaps more than any other single passage indicates the shame he felt. Unlike his bombastic declaration of nine days later, his March 11 press release would not

¹³⁵ Cable to Marshall from MacArthur, 2-25-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹³⁶ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 3-10-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹³⁷ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 3-9-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

be splashed across newspapers across America. It read, in its entirety, “The situation remains unchanged.”¹³⁸

Further Defense

The characterization of the move as either being made against his will or being significantly daring and dangerous is one he would push for the rest of his life. In his own memoir, the escape from the island is painted as a daring sortie through cyclone-like conditions under the very guns of the Japanese blockade. The flight from Mindanao to Australia consumed by a hair-raising game of cat and mouse with Japanese fighters hot on his tail. He insists too that he had been denied a request to return to the Philippines, undertake a fanciful breakout operation, and personally lead a guerilla campaign against the Japanese.¹³⁹ His kindest critics suggest that by the memoir’s completion, he might have even believed it.¹⁴⁰

As early as April 11, 1942, MacArthur was insisting that “My regret is that I was not with it [the Bataan force] in its last hour of trial and agony.” He would report in an interview with Frazier Hunt for his 1954 biography that “I fully expected to be killed. I would never have surrendered. If necessary, I would have sought the end in some final charge. I suppose the law of averages was against my lasting much longer in any

¹³⁸ Sources occasionally, and incorrectly list the date of MacArthur’s escape as March 12 as it occurred on the night of March 11. All PT boats involved in the action had departed Corregidor by 2000 hours on March 11, while the escape was ongoing by midnight, MacArthur’s departure is only accurately affixed to March 11. USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 3-11-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹³⁹ MacArthur also takes the opportunity to inform the reader that his words almost single-handedly lit the fires of insurgency among the Filipino people. This sentiment is gently questioned even by some of his more sympathetic biographers with William Manchester, a biographer keenly invested in MacArthur as a character, admitting that these words having any great impact among the guerillas in question was doubtful. MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 144-146.; Manchester, 271.

¹⁴⁰ Robert F Futrell, “Untitled Review of *Reminiscences* by Douglas MacArthur,” *The Journal of Modern History* 37, no. 2 (1965): 279–80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1878372>. Accessed 22 December, 2021.

circumstances. I would probably have been killed in a bombing raid or by artillery fire.... And Jean and the boy might have been destroyed in some final general debacle.”¹⁴¹

Paul Rogers, unsurprisingly, paints a very sympathetic picture of MacArthur’s escape. He notes that the evacuation was ordered by the War Department, which it was, and that MacArthur requested limited flexibility on selecting the date, which he did. However, his accounting of MacArthur’s unwillingness to leave is predicated almost entirely upon interviews and statements made years afterwards in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁴² That Rogers is biased is, of course, completely understandable. He owed his very survival to his close proximity and loyalty to MacArthur and much of the success he enjoyed thereafter sprung from the same font, but his readers are left without an admission of this overwhelming bias.

Instead, Rogers takes great pains to present his work as unbiased historical accounting. Unfortunately, he tends to cite only the most mundane and demonstrable facts and otherwise, his defense of MacArthur’s escape is itself largely speculative and hagiographic. This is especially telling in a passage where he addressed the accusation that MacArthur “had led his troops into a death trap from which they could not escape, and then had run away to personal safety and personal glory.”¹⁴³ Constructing from

¹⁴¹ Cable to Lord Cowrie (Governor-General of Australia) from MacArthur, 4-11-42, RG-30 Reel-1005, Box 4, Folder 8, Papers of Lieutenant General Richard Kerens Sutherland, USA 1893-1966, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.; Hunt, *Untold Story*. 257.

¹⁴² This particular statement is from a private interview with MacArthur by Hunt with a deliberate understanding of publication. It also occurred at a time when the decision of President Truman to fire MacArthur for a mixture of warmongering, disobedience, and strategic naivety was a subject of significant controversy and it would have suited MacArthur and his camp to paint him as the rough-and-tumble down-in-the-trenches kind of warrior his father Arthur was, but Douglas had never actually been. Hunt, 234; Also quoted in Rogers, 186.

¹⁴³ Rogers, 187.

whole cloth a conversation between MacArthur and Sutherland that he recalls occurring, but one that Rogers himself was not party to he posits:

I suspect that MacArthur talked of the betrayal of the Philippines, gesticulating in despair, complaining of Roosevelt's refusal to move, as honor had dictated, to the relief of the Filipinos. He must have grimaced with disgust and even revulsion as his words warmed his passion. He must have asserted at least once: "Dick, I will resign my commission. I will go to Bataan as a civilian and stand with the troops until the bitter end."¹⁴⁴

Invented, by his own vague admission, such a passage would ordinarily be easy to catalogue as either the musing of a man desperate to imagine his chosen father-figure as a tough-as-nails warrior in the face of evidence to the contrary or, alternatively, as the speculations of a devoted underling recalling the spirit of events in lieu of specific details. The damning action, as far as the charge of deliberate manipulateness is concerned, is the way he cites the passage. The paragraph is cited just once with a single notation at the end of the last sentence. This is in keeping with Rogers's preferred format, but it does add an air of authority to the speculations about MacArthur's fiery desire to go die alongside those trapped on Bataan. Unfortunately, the endnote connected to the passage gives only the entirely superfluous comment that "MacArthur had resigned his commission in 1937 to serve as military adviser," a statement with minimal relation to the passage and relaying facts made apparent long before the twenty-third chapter of the book.¹⁴⁵ No, the purpose of the note is simply to exist as such, and through doing so add a veneer of validity to Rogers's speculative claims.

¹⁴⁴ Rogers recounts this passage with a not-at-all clearly stated caveat that it is an entirely invented episode in which he places the words that *he assumes* represent the motivations of the participants into their mouths. *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 187, 364.

Who Believed Him?

The split surrounding MacArthur's evacuation comes down largely to which primary sources a historian has placed the most value upon. Those who most highly value interviews with key participants fall heavily into the camp loosely bound by the idea that MacArthur, heroically and against his wishes, undertook a daring and dramatic dash to meet up with and lead a relief force while those who place greater value on primary documentation created outside MacArthur's GHQ are far more likely to view the episode unfavorably.

Frazier Hunt, following interviews with MacArthur himself, writes of MacArthur's insistence on his desire to stay with the soldiers under his command and share their fate only to be ordered to evacuate for the greater good of the war effort. MacArthur himself voices similar sentiments in his autobiography. Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's then-intelligence chief turned biographer, paints the decision as one forced upon a grudging MacArthur and the escape – of which Willoughby was as much a participant as the Generalissimo – as a “breakout” undertaken “against the odds” that “the remaining smoke-begrimed men covered with the murk of battle... of Bataan... [saw as] a matter of grave doubt that the little escape party would succeed.”¹⁴⁶

Walter Borneman, who does not put as much weight on primary accounts from within MacArthur's inner circle, notes that the oft-told stories about MacArthur's desire to stay in the Philippines “makes a great story, particularly in light of later travesties inflicted upon the troops left behind on Bataan, but it is more in keeping with the MacArthur legend than fact. The record simply doesn't support it.” It doesn't. Sutherland,

¹⁴⁶ Charles Willoughby, *MacArthur 1941-1951*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 47-48.

frequently the only man consulted by MacArthur and privy to very nearly every conversation the Generalissimo had, did not recall any such posturing from MacArthur and his departure.¹⁴⁷ Borneman, however, does not press the investigation of the MacArthur legend to its logical conclusion. Despite noting that the fantastical tale spun by MacArthur's camp could not be corroborated by other contemporary sources, Borneman fails to delve into the motivations and actions which facilitated the legend's proliferation.

Though Rogers's work would succeed that of Costello by more than a decade, his sentiments had long been proliferated by MacArthur's allies. Costello's work offers much recounting of MacArthur's agonizing over the order to evacuate. He cites accounts of MacArthur insisting that he would resign and enlist as a simple volunteer before abandoning the men under his command and that only continued pleading from Sutherland and the rest of his staff convinced him to undertake the evacuation. He cites Clayton James's 1975 work on MacArthur, but the work in question – without in any way hinting in the text – cites only MacArthur's own memoir as a source for the claim. Sutherland, in his papers, recounts no such discussion.¹⁴⁸

Upshot

That MacArthur was *embarrassed* by his flight is apparent enough. His acknowledgement of the evacuation order requested specifically he be able to select the time and manner of his departure. He would in turn choose his timing so the soldiers on

¹⁴⁷ Sutherland would later have a falling out with MacArthur over feelings that the later was stifling the advancement of the former. It is reasonable, though speculative, to assume that Sutherland would have a diminished interest in advancing the legend of MacArthur following this. Borneman, 139; Rogers, 186.

¹⁴⁸ Costello, 210-213; James, 98; MacArthur, 140.

Bataan would not know about the evacuation until it was comfortably in the past tense and his first words to reporters upon arriving in Australia would serve to paint his escape as a near-run and daring sojourn made for the sole purpose of gathering a relief force. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that this may have even been his earnest belief, but the defensiveness with which he would for the rest of his life treat the evacuation hints at a deep vein of personal shame.¹⁴⁹

In MacArthur's February 25 message to Marshall, MacArthur had sought control over both the timing of and messaging surrounding his evacuation. He had couched this request in paternalistic language about how the "simple intelligence" of the Filipinos would lead to their capitulation were they not properly prepared for his departure.¹⁵⁰ It is much more likely that MacArthur recognized that it was during this period that the narrative that he and his staff had created was most vulnerable. Marshall's message of two days earlier, to which MacArthur was replying, had pressed MacArthur to undertake his evacuation at the earliest date possible but was operating on a not-altogether-accurate understanding of the situation in Luzon. The situation, especially on Bataan, was much worse than MacArthur had been reporting to the War Department. His shambolic and confused attempts to orchestrate a defense of the whole of Luzon had resulted in crushing defeat and the chaotic retreat to Bataan and Corregidor had led to the bulk of the supplies that had been expected to supply them instead being captured by the Japanese.¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁹ Cable to Marshall from MacArthur, 2-25-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹⁵⁰ Cable to Marshall from MacArthur, 2-25-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹⁵¹ To further compound the military and humanitarian crisis on Bataan, disproportionate quantities of these supplies found their way to Corregidor. The island was stocked in late December with adequate supplies to

dismal supply and tactical situations coupled with the relative safety of MacArthur on Corregidor had made him deeply unpopular among the rank and file on Bataan. Were he to be whisked away before being allowed to lay groundwork and lay down very specific messaging, the consequences not just for the defense of the Philippines *but for MacArthur* would be catastrophic.

To understand the discussion surrounding MacArthur's evacuation one must have a degree of understanding of MacArthur's reporting of the war to that point. The war that the press reported MacArthur waging, and to a significant degree the war that MacArthur reported to the War Department, often bore little more than a passing resemblance to the war on the ground. The conspicuous valor of the American and Filipino forces in their struggle against the Japanese was real enough, though rarely was it reported without MacArthur's being the only name attached, but from a strategic standpoint the campaign had been an unmitigated failure. The Japanese had not been meaningfully delayed, they had not taken disproportionate casualties, and their best units were not tied down.¹⁵² The predicament of the besieged, in terms of disease, hunger, and morale, was desperate in a fashion that MacArthur would never fully acknowledge. In crafting the narrative surrounding his evacuation, he was in a very real sense working to defend the veracity of a body of work months in the making.

maintain 10,000 men for six months which makes it difficult to rationalize MacArthur's decision on January 24, when the island's population was just 9,000, to remove to the island supplies of food from Bataan. These transfers continued until Corregidor had the reserves to provide for 20,000 men through July 1, although the island would not host more than 12,000 through the entire Spring. Word filtered back, as word does, to the front lines that soldiers in the relative safety of Corregidor's tunnels enjoyed rations three or four times the size of those issued to the malaria-ridden soldiers opposite the Japanese and had an effect of compounding the already grievous resentment towards MacArthur. James, 61-64.

¹⁵² Long, 83.

This was not, however, known at the time to Marshall. MacArthur had been sending glowing reports to the War Department. These dispatches spoke of crushing victories against Japanese formations in daring battles, an elite and vastly numerically superior force tied down by MacArthur's stubborn resistance, and a tactical masterpiece of a defense. His press releases boasted of the toll exacted upon the ubiquitous Japanese aircraft by the dogged American defenders and the growing frustration of the Japanese commanders.¹⁵³ In the middle of it all, of course, was MacArthur.¹⁵⁴

The language used by MacArthur in his reports was reminiscent of that of a biblical king. The day after his message to Marshall insisting on creative control in planning his evacuation, MacArthur reported to the War Department:

With light forces I swept through the enemy's screen before my battle position and am now in command of the terrain to my front. The enemy has definitely recoiled. He has refused his flank in front of my right six to ten kilometers and in other sections by various distances. I am pressing to locate and fix his position. His attitude is so passive as to discount any immediate threat of attack.... In the mountain province.... our guerilla activities have become so harassing and deadly that the enemy will shortly be forced either to evacuate or rebuild his forces. Indications are the former.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ MacArthur's press releases carried a section, boastfully labeled the "scorecard," that kept a running tally of Japanese aircraft that had been shot down forces under his command. These abruptly and sheepishly ceased in February, by which time they claimed to have dispatched about a tenth of the entire Japanese air force.

¹⁵⁴ None of this was true. Many of the battles that MacArthur reported his orchestrating victory in never occurred, his force actually outnumbered the Japanese (by this point reservists) by more than two-to-one, and revisionist historians tend to conclude that the Japanese were not in any meaningful fashion delayed by the siege. Cable to Harry B. Carroll (Pen and Pencil Club, Philadelphia, PA), 4-14-42, RG-30 Reel-1005, Box 4, Folder 8, Papers of Lieutenant General Richard Kerens Sutherland, USA 1893-1966, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹⁵⁵ General Homma had ordered a pause in offensive operations on February 8, but elements of the 16th Infantry remained committed in their effort to extricate pockets of their soldiers isolated behind American-Filipino lines with these efforts meeting moderate success by February 15. Cable to AGWAR from MacArthur, 2-26-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

In actual fact, events described by MacArthur bore few commonalities with events in Bataan. The event most likely to be the inspiration for MacArthur's February 27 report was a February 22 move by the Japanese 14th Army that saw them withdraw their line to the north – a few miles in places – to consolidate their line. As this consolidation was in keeping with an explicit order from the Japanese commander, General Homma, to reposition to besiege the peninsula, it was unlikely that a staff as experienced as MacArthur's could have mistaken it for the staggering victory claimed by MacArthur.

Marshall, however well aware of his subordinate's flair for the dramatic, had no reason to suspect his general to be inventing the successes on which he reported. While Marshall would have little entertained the idea that MacArthur was leading the charge from the front, the dispatches he received painted a picture of a man who was in close, experiential contact with the situation on the ground. MacArthur's dispatches never mentioned a shortage of any supplies bar ammunition, never mentioned souring morale, and absolutely never implicated himself as a cause for either. The situation that Marshall was aware of was "reasonably favorable" in as much as it was one in which the forces on Bataan and Corregidor were very much trapped, but meeting success at every turn and badly frustrating elite elements of the Japanese military.¹⁵⁶ Eisenhower, who had long experience with MacArthur, repeatedly (privately) bemoaned MacArthur's dramatizations, egocentrism, and self-aggrandizement in the first months of the war, though never committed to writing any impression that the broad situation in the Philippines was significantly different than the one MacArthur described. Such a

¹⁵⁶ Cable to MacArthur from Marshall, 2-23-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 1, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

situation could easily tolerate the relocation of its senior commander to a position where he might have a less congested strategic view. Such a situation did not exist.¹⁵⁷

In truth, MacArthur was facing crippling supply shortages – largely of his own making – and hoarding what supplies existed on the island of Corregidor.¹⁵⁸ His starving and disease-ridden soldiers, through a mixture of desperation and excellent on-the-ground leadership in Bataan-proper, were just able to hold back a Japanese force that was largely content to besiege the peninsula and await their eventual surrender. As for the Japanese force MacArthur had reported being “elite” and “overwhelming,” unsurprisingly, neither was the case. Homma’s invading force, which had comfortably defeated the American-Filipino forces in open battle, had been largely withdrawn for redeployment in the Netherlands East Indies. It was instead a force intended to garrison the island with which he besieged Bataan. Though under-fed and suffering badly from disease – both of which directly related to MacArthur’s command decisions – the American and Filipino forces nonetheless outnumbered these Japanese reservists more than two-to-one.¹⁵⁹

Critics of MacArthur have long taken the opportunity to lambast MacArthur. Walter B. Hopkins quotes Eisenhower’s diary entry of March 19 suggesting that “the public has built itself a hero out of its own imagination ... strange that no one sees the

¹⁵⁷ Eisenhower, upon gaining a more complete understanding of the situation, divulged to his diary an extremely uncharacteristic vitriolic fury. This outburst so disturbed him that he subsequently destroyed the entry. The only evidence of its existence is in the subsequent March 21 entry in which he chides himself for being overcome by anger and marvels at Marshall’s composure for only engaging in a “fleeting” outburst. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 37-39, 42, 44, 46-47, 49, 50-51.

¹⁵⁸ James, 64.

¹⁵⁹ Homma’s 14th Army had initially included the 16th and 48th Infantry Divisions, the latter considered at the time to be among the best in the Japanese Army, as front-line infantry and the 65th brigade as a garrison force. He was also able to count on two tank regiments, five field artillery battalions, five anti-aircraft battalions, four antitank companies, a mortar battalion, and an overstrength combat engineer complement. Much of this force, including the 48th Infantry and most of the local Japanese air assets, were withdrawn in early January for use in the Netherlands East Indies. Morton, 18.

dangers.” Ronald Spector goes a step further quoting the commander of the 11th Division on Bataan, William Brougher, who wrote, “A foul trick of deception has been played on a large group of Americans by a commander in chief and a small staff who are now eating steak and eggs in Australia. God damn them!”¹⁶⁰ Such contemporary contempt for MacArthur’s reporting might have been disastrous for the General’s reputation, but time and circumstance was on his side. Few of his critics had the means or the interest to challenge his narrative. Those in the War Department, like Eisenhower, had little interest in airing their grievances publicly. Those in the field often had to liaise with MacArthur or his staff to communicate with the press. General Brougher, and far too many like him, would spend most of the war as unhappy guests of the Japanese Empire. They would emerge from their captivity only to find themselves faced with the uncomfortable choice of whether to criticize one of the most powerful and beloved men on Earth. These often opted for silence, or else consigned their criticism to private writings which would not see the light of day until after their deaths.

MacArthur and the Art of Further Control

Censorship

Censorship, as a practical concept, elicits multiple antipathetic perspectives. To paint with the broadest possible brush, it is generally decried by individuals who place value on or find economic security in the free passing of information. It is, inversely, most beloved by those who wish to hide their plans, struggles, and failures. In wartime more than any other period, arguments for censorship are bolstered by a very real

¹⁶⁰ Hopkins, 67; Spector, 119

strategic imperative to protect one's position from enemy exploitation. Censorship is therefore, as a practice, a powerful tool for the control of information, but one with great latitude in regard to exactly what information is curated. This, in turn, leads to significant influence on the part of the censors – and their benefactors – as to exactly which information is deemed to necessitate concealing. Douglas MacArthur would oversee a lot of censorship.

The satirist Steven Wright described experience as “something you don't get until just after you need it.”¹⁶¹ Douglas MacArthur was well acquainted with this principle. There were likely few military men in the entire world more aware of just how much damage a hostile press could do than MacArthur when his train rolled into Melbourne on March 21, 1942. A decade earlier, he had found himself the subject of the newspaper's ire for his perceived role in the violent expulsion of the so-called “Bonus Army” from Washington. The scandal followed him for years – long after he would have preferred it confined to the dustbin of history – and created a snowball effect that threatened further scandals as reporters started to ask questions about his failed marriage and his teenaged Filipina inamorata.¹⁶² His secrets increasingly unsafe and a promising career in conservative politics put indefinitely on hold, MacArthur's decision to retire to a position of power and prestige on the other side of the world while still nearly a decade from the Army's mandatory retirement age was, as much as it was anything else, an escape.¹⁶³ He

¹⁶¹ Steven Wright, “Just for Laughs,” Young Circle Park, Originally Aired: 1995, Accessed on March 13, 2022, YouTube Video, 1:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Mz3EWJGGH0>

¹⁶² Louise Cromwell Brooks, MacArthur's first wife, provided as her reason for divorcing Douglas MacArthur the grossly improbable “failure to provide.” MacArthur himself would write in his memoirs only that the relationship suffered from a “mutual incompatibility.” MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 83.

¹⁶³ “General Douglas MacArthur in His New Job,” *New York Times* 5, December, 1935, Box 1, Folder 1, RG-1 Records of the U.S. Military Advisor to the Philippine Commonwealth, 1935-1941, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

would, however, learn from the experience and would in the future ensure that the press was kept on a tight leash and that the only stories that could filter back to an impressionable public were his own.

In the early days of the war, the control of the flow of information leaving the Philippines concentrating in MacArthur's headquarters was more de-facto than de-jure. He and Quezon had a long-standing and broadly symbiotic relationship and there was little opportunity otherwise for reports to filter back to America. The state of open warfare for the archipelago, especially of the island of Luzon, was brief, confusing, and chaotic. By the end of December, the Japanese controlled Manila, and Quezon and MacArthur occupied what was for all intents and purposes the same headquarters on Corregidor.¹⁶⁴ In any practical sense, as Censorship of the press was instituted shortly after the outbreak of war and a Western press in any respect was confined to MacArthur's command area by the last week of December, there existed little opportunity for the War Department or the American press to obtain information on the conflict that hadn't been released by MacArthur's GHQ.¹⁶⁵

The situation in Australia was altogether different. He arrived a man who was viewed by many of the locals as a potential savior, but he was still a foreigner. He had no claim to understand Australia or Australians and it would not take long for the relief the locals felt towards his arrival to sour into a simmering resentment that their sons, soldiers,

¹⁶⁴ Eisenhower thought Quezon to be little more than a puppet of MacArthur's, dismissing Quezon's messages (especially those in which he echoed Emilio Aguinaldo's calls for Philippine neutrality) as "inspired" by MacArthur. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 46-47.

¹⁶⁵ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 12-10-1941, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

and generals lived and died by the command of a man who was himself an “other.” In Australia, MacArthur was surrounded by more (and less constrained) institutions. In the Philippines, MacArthur had found himself in control of the flow of information almost immediately following the outset of hostilities as the rapidly shifting military situation abolished alternative outlets. Australia would face no such invasion and housed more press apparatuses in Australia than in the Philippines. American and British journalists moved freely alongside local newsmen, and each was subject to different authorities. To censor one group but not the others might lead quickly to conflicting stories. To unilaterally impose censorship on all three would be incredibly unpopular and cast aspersions on what stories were subsequently published.

It was well within the authority of MacArthur as the Commander in Chief of the SWPA to impose censorship on all press discussing military matters. Technically there was no specific legal or diplomatic basis for such a move, but a variety of factors including the uncomfortable military situation and both the Australian and American governments being sympathetic to the move would have seen such action, while balked at in some corners, ultimately accepted. Instead, MacArthur opted to force the decision on Roosevelt and Australian Prime Minister John Curtin. In April and May of 1942 MacArthur traded several messages with the War Department and with Curtin bemoaning his lack of control over the press.¹⁶⁶ MacArthur was able to exercise a complete control over the American press corps, but little over the Australians and none over the British. This created, in theory, a potentially precarious position where

¹⁶⁶ Cable to Marshall from MacArthur, 5-15-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 2, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

journalists from the latter two nations could publish accounts contradictory to the accounts approved by MacArthur's headquarters. Eventually pressed by Marshall to undertake a "complete revision" of the potentially embarrassing censorship situation, MacArthur appealed to Marshall to raise the question with "an authority superior to his own," of course meaning Roosevelt.¹⁶⁷ Though some of his defenders interpret this as MacArthur being "reluctant" to impose censorship on foreign presses, the passing on of the responsibility for what would ultimately be a sensible and eventual order freed him from being specifically charged with attempting to control the narrative presented to the public. With diplomatic pressure from the White House, censorship authority over Australian and British journalists was ceded to MacArthur, granting him a complete monopoly on the flow of information to the public and all without ever having to get his hands dirty.

MacArthur's time in Army Public Relations had left him with the skillset necessary to effectively take advantage of his complete control on information. From the middle of May 1942, MacArthur was the sole source of information about MacArthur, MacArthur's operations, and anything with which MacArthur was remotely associated. The journalists in the field who were ill-disposed to form part of the MacArthur machine found it virtually impossible to continue reporting and commentating and an attitude of revulsion began to characterize their all-too-often-unpublished writing.¹⁶⁸ Australian war correspondent Osmar White wrote bitterly; "An early sign of the sensitivity was a savage

¹⁶⁷ Cable to Marshall from MacArthur, 5-15-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 2, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Fitzsimmons, *Kokoda*, (Sydney: Hodder Australia, 2004), 131-133.

flood of censorship directives and the insistence of MacArthur's general headquarters that field censorship was not competent to decide all matters of security. The use of the local radio station for press dispatches was forbidden. The slightest criticism or speculation meant the immediate "canning" of a dispatch. The correspondents were so dissatisfied and fractious that the sketchy public-relations system collapsed under the strain."¹⁶⁹ He proceeds to draw a direct, and unmistakable, line between MacArthur's seizure of the flow of information and the historiography of the campaign. White confirms a belief that, based on his experience and his interviews with others, the events of the campaign were reported correctly, but doubts openly that the facts were then correctly interpreted by the world press. "In the first place," White offers, "the campaign was reported as a great tactical victory. In the second place it was interpreted as having weighty tactical importance. Both interpretations are disputable."¹⁷⁰ While he does not go as far as to paint it as an Allied failure, he readily concedes half a dozen points to the contrary, the early Campaigns in New Guinea struck White as human tragedy writ large. The vast majority of this tragedy wrought not by combat, but criminal mismanagement.¹⁷¹ Osmar White's fury at the censorship, which he felt prevented his accurately honoring the men and events he witnessed in New Guinea, that even before the end of the war he declaimed, "Once news sources are officially controlled by censorships, no individual writer can deflect by as much as a hair's breadth the impact

¹⁶⁹ Osmar White, *Green Armor*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1945), 86.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 212.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 214-216.

upon the public mind of the tale wartime leadership wants to tell. But history may judge the relationship of dead facts”¹⁷²

The Australians did not trust MacArthur and MacArthur did not work well with the Australians. Anxiety had fostered an initial elation at the arrival of a figure who had been lauded as a heroic military genius in the press, but attitudes quickly soured. An attitude of simmering resentment began to inhabit the Australians as their would-be savior did little to convince the public that he was anything more than an aloof foreigner arbitrarily imposed upon them, their generals, and their soldiers. MacArthur took to using the Australians, along with the Japanese, the Navy, and bureaucrats in Washington, as a catch-all object of blame for the routine failure of reality to live up to his pronouncements. In combination with his refusal to integrate American and Australian forces, itself a decision which led each to believe that they were enduring the majority of the hardships, contributed an atmosphere of discontent among the Australians.¹⁷³

It seems clear that MacArthur arrived in Australia as a man more interested in building a heroic narrative than in taking heroic action. The tale of a high-stakes game of cat and mouse played between the aircraft transporting MacArthur’s party to Australia and a series of Japanese pursuit craft was in American newspapers mere hours after his bellicose declaration at Terowie Station. The account of Master Sergeant Dick Graf, the

¹⁷² White, 76.; Fitzsimmons 132

¹⁷³ This manifested in several murders, a significant number of riots and counter riots, and innumerable physical fights between and within the militaries. While MacArthur cannot be blamed for all of the friction between the Allied contingents in Australia, at no point did he seriously attempt to reconcile the factions. Gen. Thomas Blamey, head of the Australian Army forces (and in theory, if not in practice, the commander of all Allied land forces under MacArthur), presented to MacArthur a detailed list of suggestions for calming tensions following a particularly deadly series of riots in Brisbane in November 1942. He was, in turn, studiously ignored and then contemptuously dismissed. Sporadic rioting and violence would continue through the end of the war. Peter A Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and the Yanks at War*, (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001), 212.

wireless operator on the flight, which held that there were no Japanese, or any other dangers at all, would never garner the same attention.¹⁷⁴ The grandiloquent “I shall return” line delivered by MacArthur upon meeting the Australian press, though among the best publicized quotes by an American general in the whole history of the United States, is rather coolly surmised by historians Richard H. Rovere and Arthur Schlesinger to be little more than “Caesar-esque words... [that] left a rather ashen taste in the mouths of men who knew they would be called on to return somewhat in advance of him.”¹⁷⁵

MacArthur himself would spend much ink attempting to paint himself, completely unironically, as an adamant critic of censorship. He recounts in his memoir a desire by himself to publish the details of the conditions in which the prisoners of the Japanese suffered and the unwillingness of the War Department to allow such macabre detail. He suggests that there existed a conspiracy to keep American attention on Europe and the refusal was rooted in a fear that “American public opinion would demand a greater reaction against Japan” and that his opponents in Washington would not allow that to happen. From there, MacArthur undertakes a diatribe decrying “managed news” by “those in power.”¹⁷⁶ “Here was the first move against that freedom of expression so essential to liberty,” he writes, “It was the introduction, under a disarming slogan, of a type of censorship which can easily become a menace to a free press and a threat to the liberties of a free people.” Hypocrisy, it would seem, was not something that much troubled the man.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Interview quoted in one form or another in Hopkins, 97; Manchester, 312; Fitzsimmons, 108.

¹⁷⁵ Richard H. Rovere and Arthur Schlesinger, *The General and President, and the Future of American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), 22.

¹⁷⁶ MacArthur, 146-147.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Here too, Rogers' insight to the dynamics of MacArthur's decision-making processes is valuable. Rogers confides that those references made by MacArthur to his "staff," usually in relation to decision making or conference, tended to mean whatever MacArthur had taken it to mean at that given time. Often, his "staff" constituted no one beyond Sutherland.¹⁷⁸ Keeping limited counsel, extremely limited in this case, is a general's prerogative, though the wisdom of such insular thought is questionable. However, in framing his decisions, opinions, and conclusions as having been produced by his "staff," the weight of consensus follows his words more so than if they emanated solely from his own eccentric mind. Over the course of the war, Rogers remembers just two conferences in which the entire command staff of the GHQ was called to discuss policy, both in Manila in the opening days of the war. According to Rogers, MacArthur and Sutherland held no more after finding these initial meetings "clumsy and futile," but one struggles to imagine a less sympathetic biographer seeing it as anything more than a disinterest in hearing dissenting opinions.¹⁷⁹ Beyond youthful hero worship, Rogers had other reasons to venerate MacArthur in his works. Rogers, who was in the days leading up to the evacuation promoted from Private to Master Sergeant, was himself evacuated alongside MacArthur. He was the old general's favorite of Sutherland's several stenographers, a claim Rogers proudly makes in tandem with another that such favor existed because he was the best. He also freely admits to understanding that it was on such tenuous circumstance that he was included in the evacuation, quoting his supervisor and fellow evacuee Francis Wilson's take that he had been "chosen because he was doing

¹⁷⁸ Rogers, 230.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 98.

his job. If the other steno[grapher] had been on the job... he would be here [in Australia] and Rogers would be in a prison camp.”¹⁸⁰ A small anecdote in the scheme of history, but everything to a soft and frail Rogers who would have entertained few doubts about the odds of his survival in such a situation. He would never forget that it was his proximity and loyalty to MacArthur that ensured his life.

The importance of loyalty as an explicit a criterion is a key contribution of Rogers to the understanding of the decision making of MacArthur. Perhaps to excuse this, Rogers takes pains to make plain that the list of evacuees was not put together by MacArthur personally, but by his Chief of Staff, Sutherland. Rogers described the selection process in his own words saying, “The priority slots were easily filled: MacArthur, Mrs. MacArthur, young Arthur, his nurse, Ah Chu, Sutherland, Marshall, and Huff. Morehouse was called over from Bataan because a doctor was needed. Admiral Rockwell and Captain Ray were requested by the navy, and General George by the air force in Washington.”¹⁸¹ The remainder, according to Rogers, “had been chosen by Sutherland because of their loyalty [and] their predictable behavior.”¹⁸² Wilson and he earned their places on Sutherland’s list because they “were ‘his.’”¹⁸³ Loyalty to MacArthur or explicit order by the War Department were the only methods of escape. The new staff that would reform around MacArthur in Melbourne would be built around

¹⁸⁰ Rogers, 185-186.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 184-185.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

such loyalty. Though his immediate benefactor, Sutherland, would eventually sour on his superior, Rogers's loyalty would never waver.¹⁸⁴

MacArthur was a man who chose his words carefully, preferring to dictate and edit his thoughts – sometimes several times over – before sharing them. What interviews he attended were with men and women carefully vetted by his staff and his press conferences, when not delegated to his press officer Diller, consisted only of prepared statements. He often refused to speak over the telephone, disliking the lack of time that such tools allowed to carefully word a response or idea. His clerk, Rogers, would note, “MacArthur despised telephones, was never comfortable with them, and used them only when he felt that he had to – and then infrequently.”¹⁸⁵

A final point concerns one of the interesting divergences between works on MacArthur's experience in the Philippines. Soldiers' songs are a fixture of every conflict. Boredom is a powerful creative impetus and soldiers often spend the hours between actions composing lyrics – alternately bawdy, brash, patriotic, and bitter – to fill the silences. Such songs were indeed composed on Bataan by the men trapped there. Historians and writers often take a moment to indulge in the flavor added by their inclusion in a text. One included in almost every discussion of the topic is widely relayed:

We're the battling bastards of Bataan,
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam,
No aunts, no uncles, no nephews, no nieces,
No rifles, no planes, no artillery pieces,
And nobody gives a damn.

¹⁸⁴ Though their relationship would eventually break down (largely over Sutherland's increasing consternation at not being promoted to a theatre command of his own), Sutherland would always maintain a loyalty to MacArthur's version of events. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 44.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 72.

Not specifically critical of MacArthur but echoing a sentiment of having been hung out to dry by the American government that the General shared, the verse even finds its way into his own autobiography.¹⁸⁶ Rarely, however, do his apologists include a second, more cutting song composed by the men on Bataan:

Dugout Doug MacArthur lies a-shakin' on The Rock,
Safe from all the bombers and from any sudden shock,
Dugout Doug is eating the best food on Bataan,
And his troops go starvin' on.

Chorus:

Dugout Doug, come out from hiding,
Dugout Doug, come out from hiding,
Send to Franklin the glad tidings,
That his troops go starving on.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ MacArthur, 136.

¹⁸⁷ The Bataan Project, an affiliate of the Veterans History Project by the American Folklore Center at the Library of Congress, provides an interview with Bernard Fitzpatrick, a Private in the 194th Tank Battalion. Fitzpatrick claims that he and another soldier, Jerry Lundquist, composed the lyrics (of which there are several subsequent verses) while on radio duty after reflecting upon the warehouses of food, ammunition, and medical supplies they had passed in the disorganized retreat to Bataan and the relative comfort and safety enjoyed by MacArthur and others on Corregidor. James Opolony, "Fitzpatrick, PFC. Bernard T.," www.bataanproject.com, The Bataan Project, April 29, 2019, <https://bp21.wbshosting.com/provisional-tank-group/fitzpatrick-pfc-bernard-t/#>.

TO WHAT END?

“Why” is perhaps the most important and most difficult to answer for any historical investigator to produce. The identification of motivations is no less integral to the analysis of a disheveled historiography than it is to the identification of an arsonist. With the case of Douglas MacArthur, one can identify several potential catalysts for his restructuring of the historical record both simple and non-intuitive. Certainly, he was always a vain man with a flair for the dramatic. One, probably apocryphal, anecdote has his one-time subordinate Dwight D. Eisenhower responding to a British woman’s query on his having met MacArthur by quipping some form of, “Not only have I met MacArthur, I studied dramatics under him for nine years.”¹⁸⁸ While the quote is difficult to definitively pin to a primary source, the dramatics were real enough. These “dramatics” were not limited to MacArthur’s own command. In 1944, MacArthur arrived in Honolulu for a critical conference with President Roosevelt and Admiral Nimitz more than an hour late riding in the back of a lavish open-topped touring car. As the motorcade arrived at the ship on which the conference was to be held, the General sat waving like a homecoming queen to a thronging crowd that in turn adored him for it. After bounding up the gangplank towards the meeting he had left waiting, an ailing President Roosevelt shook his hand and remarked on MacArthur’s decision to wear a leather jacket in Hawaii

¹⁸⁸ This quote is widely attributed to Eisenhower, and it is not beyond possibility that he quipped something similar it is not reliably recorded. While the quote not categorically false, (it is certainly in keeping with Eisenhower’s opinions of the MacArthur) nor it does stand up to academic scrutiny.

in July. MacArthur responded by loudly laughing and saying that “Sure it’s warm here, but I just flew in and it’s pretty cold up there!” While Roosevelt did not press the subject, the remark stuck with several others present who had not failed to notice that despite his apparent haste, MacArthur had nonetheless found the time to shave, shower, and procure a one of only two long-bodied convertibles on the island.¹⁸⁹

Immediate Gains – Deification or Death

In a radiogram signed by Marshall sent two days after Christmas specific mention of MacArthur’s reports and press releases as giving an indication of “splendid conduct of your [MacArthur’s] command” and goes on to say that “evidently [the] entire American people have been profoundly impressed with your resistance to Japanese endeavors.” The message further reports willingness to direct large amounts of air and naval assets to further MacArthur’s cause.¹⁹⁰ In reality, his cause was already doomed. A doom not to be laid solely at his feet, but doubtlessly exacerbated by his confusing and badly thought-out command decisions. In fact, as the message arrived, MacArthur had only General Wainwright and his excellent Philippine Scouts to thank for preventing the chaotic retreat of the forces under MacArthur’s command from becoming an uncontrolled rout – perhaps even complete capitulation – as he oversaw one of the most comprehensive defeats of an American army in the modern era. Had a more accurate accounting of events been

¹⁸⁹ Alfred L. Castle, “President Roosevelt and General MacArthur at the Honolulu Conference of 1944,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 38, (2004): 165-173.

¹⁹⁰ Radio from Marshall to MacArthur, 12-27-41, RG-2 Reel-5, Box 2, Folder 3, Records of United States Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

available to the War Department or the public, it is almost certain such support would not have been offered.

MacArthur's myth making bore tangible fruit almost immediately. He would, of course, receive adulation and fame in quantities few, if any, military men have seen since.¹⁹¹ He would become a media darling, a political hopeful, and an inalienable fixture in military planning, yet it is a less apparent benefit which was, perhaps, the most pressing. MacArthur's propagandizing very likely saved his life. It almost certainly saved his job. Like Short and Kimmel, but with far fewer excuses, he saw the offensive potential of the forces entrusted to him crippled on the first day of the war. Unlike his unfortunate peers, he compounded his failure with an ill-conceived plan to defend the entire archipelago, that ended in a disorganized retreat and the loss of most of the supplies required to defend Bataan. Furthermore, his grandiose pronouncements and a complete unwillingness to visit the front were anathema to morale to the point where he was a subject of open derision by soldiers outside of his innermost circle. He might justifiably, to invoke the analysis of Ronald Spector, have been relieved of command.¹⁹² Instead, he was made a hero.

A telegram from General George Marshall to MacArthur's chief of staff Sutherland arrived in February explaining that the War Department would "very much like to award MacArthur with the Medal of Honor" and asking Sutherland to provide them with any sort of action that might serve as a pretext for the award. The War Department, however, quickly decided against waiting for a pretext and awarded the

¹⁹¹ A difficult statement to quantify, perhaps, but one would struggle to present a person more widely celebrated for their military achievements than MacArthur since the General's dismissal in 1951.

¹⁹² Spector, 118.

decoration “for a stout and heroic defense of the Philippines.”¹⁹³ The hero who the American public was already beginning to build in their minds – a hero built on the back of the bellicose accounts spread across every broadsheet in the land – was now recognized by Uncle Sam himself.

The public adoration of his bombast was not without consequence, however. His tales of Japanese spy networks resonated with many on the home front and his open cheerleading for the internment of Japanese Americans would encourage many Americans to support the imprisonment and disenfranchisement of their countrymen. An “International News Summary” from a press release promulgated by his office on March 7, 1943 read:

Violation of constitutional rights! As if the Japanese understood what constitutional rights are! To continue unhampered their espionage activities and their fifth column work – this must be their idea of rights guaranteed by the American constitution ... The privilege has already been enjoyed and abused by the Japanese, but no rights have been established ... Consider for a moment the revenge that could be wreaked on the Japanese nationals by the justly indignant and outraged populace in America. ... Those of us who were in Manila and saw the signal lights and flares at night and discovered the secret radio stations know that no national of Japan can ever be trusted. The hospitality of a friendly country is enjoyed and abused for years by the Japanese and for only one purpose – to betray. It is ludicrous in the extreme for a people who have abused the hospitality of a nation like America to bemoan the loss of their so-called “constitutional rights” when, as guests of the American people, they have underhandedly done all they could to tear the American constitution into tatters and undermine the stability of the American government. America has learned from bitter experience that the polite bow and smile of a Japanese national serve only to conceal a black heart and a traitor’s conscience. And wisely the United States government is depriving them of their opportunities for treachery.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ The final text of the citation is in large part a verbatim copy of an earlier communication of Sutherland’s to the War Department floating the idea. Cable to Sutherland from Marshall, 1-31-41, RG-2 Reel-7, Box 15, Folder 1, Records of United States Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.; “Medal of Honor Recipients: World War II (M-S Full-Text Citations,” United States Army, Accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/keeble/medal/citations22.htm>.

¹⁹⁴ USAFFE: Press Releases, Philippines December 8, 1941-March 11, 1942, 1-23-1942, RG-2 Reel-19, Box 12, Folder 4, Records of United States Forces in the Far East 1941-1942, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States. Release dated March 7, 1942

While the press releases and news bulletins from MacArthur's Corregidor headquarters took on an increasingly paranoid and frenetic tone as his military situation worsened, Americans nonetheless placed disproportionate weight on his words. There is no way to tell how much blood was spilled or how many lives were destroyed because of MacArthur's frantic and largely fantastical invocations of fifth columnists and saboteurs witnessed by "Those of us who were in Manila," but it is unlikely to be none.¹⁹⁵

The benefits of celebrity, however, did not take long to reach the Philippines. American national morale had suffered badly through three months of defeat and disappointment and in MacArthur the home front had found itself a figure that offered hope. Such a figure could not be allowed to fall into the hands of the Japanese, so it was arranged for MacArthur and his chosen staff to be quietly spirited away from their Corregidor hideout and ferried to Australia.¹⁹⁶ It is notable that the less bellicose Wainwright, certainly the outstanding American field commander of the war to that point, was not so recovered.¹⁹⁷

Consideration, at the very least, should be spared for Wainwright. As he was left in command of a doomed force with explicit orders not to surrender, the dual weights of the suffering of his soldiers on one side and his duty as an officer on the other must have

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Historical accounts tend to repeat the story that MacArthur "protested fiercely" at the prospect of being evacuated and leaving the men under his command. Several records exist of MacArthur coordinating the operation with the War Department, but this author is not aware of any contemporary internal records of protest to the decision (though internal records do exist of MacArthur protesting a similar evacuation for Wainwright.) While such outbursts, at least off the record, would likely only be witnessed by his innermost confidants, it becomes apparent upon observation that all of the primary accounts of MacArthur's supposed protestations are from MacArthur himself or from men who would continue to work with MacArthur for years to come and had personally benefitted from his "bravery." These accounts should, therefore, be interpreted in that context.

¹⁹⁷ Eisenhower mourned specifically for Wainwright and his treatment when he received the news that Corregidor had surrendered saying "Poor Wainwright! He did the fighting in the Philippine Islands; another got such glory as the public could find in the operations." Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 54.

been crushing. The attempts by MacArthur to command the operations of Wainwright from Melbourne would not have eased his woes either.¹⁹⁸ When the War Department attempted to communicate directly with Wainwright, MacArthur sent a vicious cable to Wainwright demanding that all communication go through him. The War Department ultimately sided with Wainwright and the incident has long been pointed to by MacArthur's critics and defenders alike as an example of the old general's tendency to micromanage, yet there is a more sinister interpretation. It is possible that MacArthur did not want Wainwright discussing *him* with figures in Washington and wanted control of communication between the two.

A message was sent to MacArthur and Sutherland on May 2 by General Beebe – behind the back of Wainwright – urging them to evacuate Wainwright in the same manner in which they had evacuated MacArthur. Beebe argued that Wainwright's knowledge of and experience in handling Japanese tactics exceeded that of any other officers on which the United States might call. He implored them to order Wainwright to make his escape as, "he is a soldier, and will only move if ordered to do so," and offered himself as a replacement to succeed him for the duties involved in the inevitable surrender. He was steadfastly refused.¹⁹⁹

The reply to this request, signed by Sutherland, insisted that it was beyond their authority to organize such an action as well as implying that Wainwright was

¹⁹⁸ Cable to Wainwright from MacArthur, 4-4-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 2, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

¹⁹⁹ Cable from Beebe to Sutherland, 5-2-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 2, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

indispensable for the defense of Corregidor, while dryly stating that Beebe himself offered no such military utility.²⁰⁰ This is of note, petty slights against Beebe notwithstanding, because while technically the authority for such action rested with the War Department, there would not have been any practical resistance to a request by MacArthur for Wainwright's evacuation. It is speculative, though not beyond consideration, that MacArthur viewed Wainwright as a personal threat. Himself a well-respected commander with a no-nonsense reputation, Wainwright held a service record as long as MacArthur's. He, unlike MacArthur, habitually stood on the front lines and had earned a great deal of affection from those under him for his willingness to share their hardships. Were such a valuable reservoir of tactical experience to be extricated from the Philippines, the War Department would naturally waste little time in debriefing him. MacArthur would have been fully aware that any debriefing of Wainwright would provide a wildly different accounting of events to that which had been fed to them by MacArthur. Furthermore, Wainwright was of perfectly sufficient rank and standing to be offered MacArthur's position and it is not beyond the realm of possibility to suggest that were such revelations to be made MacArthur would find himself relieved of command.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Cable from Sutherland to Beebe, 5-3-42, RG-4 Reel-593, Box 15, Folder 2, Records from General Headquarters United States Army Forces Pacific (USAFPAC), MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia, United States.

²⁰¹ It is worth noting both that Wainwright's 1946 account *General Wainwright's Story* defends MacArthur and that the work was completed under the supervision of (and thoroughly edited by) MacArthur's staff. MacArthur would also vehemently oppose the awarding to Wainwright the Medal of Honor. Ostensibly out of indignation over Corregidor's surrender, it is no great stretch to suggest that MacArthur's opposition to the award was instead built from a fear that such decoration would give Wainwright – and any contradictory accounts he wished to provide – weight equal to MacArthur's own.

Legacy

Beyond the concerns of immediate position and influence, MacArthur was consciously concerned about how he would be remembered. Though his father and grandfather had both enjoyed long lives, and with nothing to suggest that he would not himself enjoy as many years, Douglas MacArthur was halfway through his seventh decade by the conclusion of the Second World War. This may have been, itself, an agonist of his historiographical manipulations, but MacArthur's own writing leaves little doubt that he had always seen himself as an important figure in history. The tenth, and final, section of his 1964 memoir consists mostly of transcriptions of hagiographic speeches attributed to one or another figure of contemporary importance in which he is the beneficiary of vindication and veneration. These are exemplified, both in tone and intent, by a line he attributes to Connecticut Senator Thomas Dodd, "The universal acclaim for General MacArthur... is in my mind more than just a deserved tribute to a very great hero. It is well a symptom of a yearning there and throughout the world for that dynamic, resolute, indomitable American leadership of which General MacArthur was and is the symbol."²⁰² Whatever the actual ubiquity of this or the numerous similar sentiments included in the final section of the work and regardless of reasonable questions of veracity and chicanery, it can be certain that MacArthur envisioned himself as both a contemporary and historical hero.

²⁰² The universally exultant praise of MacArthur, his ideals, and his actions that makes up the final section of his book is, like the rest of the work, completely unburdened by citations or supporting evidence. MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 422.

President MacArthur

MacArthur's family had long been a fixture of Washington politics. He was himself a distant relation of Franklin Roosevelt and it is not unreasonable to assume that the presidency was always somewhere in his ambitions. He would never ultimately achieve the office, but the notoriety offered by his public image as a war hero provided him a very real opportunity for its attainment. His admiration within certain corners of the Republican Party following his stern handling of the "communist" Bonus Army, but the scandal and the fallout would prove too damaging to his public image to entertain seeking office at the time. His removal to the Philippines served, among much else, to give the public and the press time to cool on his perceived authoritarianism, but it was clear MacArthur's aspirations extended further afield than the command he then occupied.

MacArthur's aspirations to high office were among his worst kept secrets. As early as the late 1930s he had agents in Washington sounding out the possibilities of a shot at the Republican presidential nomination.²⁰³ The 1940 election proved to be inopportune, but a future run remained on the cards. The legend of MacArthur played well with American audiences and in the early months of the war Roosevelt looked as though he would be vulnerable in the 1944 election. His promises to keep America out of war had come to naught and the only man meeting apparent success against the enemies of America was MacArthur. Though this was absolutely vainglorious theater, it was more than just vainglorious theatre for its own sake. A May 1942 Gallup poll found him to be one of the top four men considered "Presidential material for 1944." A survey in *Fortune* magazine saw his name receive more support for "an important position in the

²⁰³ TLS from P.W. Reeves to MacArthur, MacArthur Memorial Archives

presidential administration” than Republican heavyweights Wendell Willkie and Thomas Dewey combined.²⁰⁴

That MacArthur was disinterested in the opportunity was doubtful. His long-serving aide recalled that the “idea wasn’t unpleasant to MacArthur” and recalled being ordered to “keep an ear to the ground” in regard to the Republican nomination when departing for a trip home in 1943. Turner Catledge, journalist for and future editor of the *New York Times*, met with MacArthur shortly after Roosevelt’s reelection concluding that the General displayed “some jealousy of Roosevelt” and “In private he talked a great deal in political terms, far more than other generals.” “I believe,” Catledge concludes, “that he was hoping for a popular avalanche of support... When the avalanche did not come, he backed out of the picture reluctantly.”²⁰⁵ Perhaps most tellingly, in December of 1943 General Robert Wood, a key figure in laying the groundwork for a MacArthur candidacy, informed MacArthur that he had been entered into a presidential primary in Illinois. Wood advised MacArthur that the timing was inopportune, and it was best if MacArthur’s name was withdrawn from consideration. Wood included with his message a certificate for MacArthur to sign renouncing his involvement. MacArthur never signed it.²⁰⁶

While the evidence is circumstantial, it strains credulity to imagine that all of his chief lieutenants and so many high-profile Republican politicians were engaged in

²⁰⁴ The author has thus far been unable to access an archival copy of this edition of *Fortune* and has instead opted to cite the example offered by James. James, 138.

²⁰⁵ Turner Catledge, *My Life and Times*, (New York 1971), 155-156.

²⁰⁶ Sidney Huff, *My Fifteen Years with General MacArthur*, (New York: Paperback Library, 1964), 89. Huff recounts relaying anecdotes related to an active polishing of MacArthur’s public image undertaken during this period.; Wood to MacArthur, RG10

discourse on MacArthur's political prospects without his approval. When Senators Brewster, Chandler, Lodge, Mead, and Russell visited him in Port Moresby in September 1943, they found him generous with his time and keenly interested in political developments. In contrast, MacArthur's response to Eleanor Roosevelt's arrival in Australia a few days earlier was to refuse to allow her to visit Port Moresby while himself refusing to meet with her in Australia. As his practical responsibilities at the time were minimal and Ms. Roosevelt's stay not insignificant in length, D. Clayton James – usually an exceedingly neutral biographer – speculates that his avoidance was most likely due to a belief that pictures of the two of them together would damage his political standing among Republican voters.²⁰⁷

He spent much of 1943 working through political allies in Washington to garner support for his candidacy and preformed reasonably well in the early Republican contests.²⁰⁸ Unfortunately for MacArthur, Roosevelt was by then in a much stronger political position than he had been in at the start of the war. The war was progressing well under the leadership and victory had begun to seem an inevitability. There was less broad appeal in a man whose great selling point was being antithetic to the incumbent President, but a more flexible man might still have had a chance. However, he was hampered by distance, poor political instincts, and a complete unwillingness to heed the advice of his allies in Washington the sum of which saw most of his key backers abandon

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 428.

²⁰⁸ MacArthur's most significant backer in Washington was Michigan Senator and arch-conservative Arthur Vandenberg. Vandenberg communicated mostly Willoughby, though he and his unofficial coalition also corresponded with Sutherland, Lehrbas, and Col. LaFollette all of whom were key members of the SWPA GHQ and would not have acted without significant approval from MacArthur. Ibid, 419.

him by mid-1944.²⁰⁹ A speculative bid for the nomination at the Republican Convention would prove to be an embarrassing failure and MacArthur moved quickly to distance himself from the attempt, denying in his memoirs any knowledge of or involvement with the project.²¹⁰

A 1948 move for the office failed to get off the ground and a final attempt to contest the presidency in the 1952 election ended in ignominy. MacArthur, riding a wave of renewed popularity following his dismissal by President Truman, undertook a speaking tour that devolved quickly from selling out entire stadia to struggling to fill even modest venues. Crowds quickly tired of speeches that amounted to little more than whining about real and perceived slights against him by Truman and praising himself.²¹¹ At the Republican convention MacArthur hoped that favorites Dwight Eisenhower and Robert Taft would create a deadlock that he could then step into as a compromise candidate. Once that failed to materialize, MacArthur spurned his one-time subordinate and threw his support behind Taft, who proceeded to lose decisively to Eisenhower. The office would never again be within his reach but, for a decade at least, he had come close enough for him and others to seriously entertain the idea.

²⁰⁹ James, *The Years of MacArthur Volume II, 1941-1945*, 141.

²¹⁰ MacArthur adamantly denies any interest in the movement but seems unable to resist the need to preen over his perceived viability as a candidate by providing an (entirely invented) anecdote in which “Roosevelt whirled in his chair, scattering papers as he roared” so great was his relief upon hearing that MacArthur would not run against him. It is an interesting characterization of Roosevelt to say the least. MacArthur’s partisans would vary in their recollections of the episode. Charles Willoughby, despite having been one of the principal architects of the affair, would deny MacArthur ever had any interest in seeking the office while Col. Sidney Huff, MacArthur’s aide over the same period, would recall both interest and instructions to facilitate the candidacy from MacArthur. MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 184-185.

²¹¹ Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 250-251.

MacArthur's Memory

The legacy left by MacArthur's enormous popularity with the American public is hard to quantify. Certainly, the Medal of Honor he was awarded was the result of congressional pressure rather than military achievement. America was blanketed with streets, public works, parks, dams, children, and even a dance step named in his honor. The National Father's Day Committee named MacArthur "Number One Father for 1942." June 13 of the same year was dubbed "Douglas MacArthur Day."²¹² In 1955, it was proposed in Congress (though the proposal went nowhere) that he be named "General of the Armies," a title ultimately awarded to only two men.²¹³ A broad assembly of leadership awards are disseminated by the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation to junior officers and cadets who have demonstrated "duty, honor, and country." His 1964 death was followed by a state funeral and placement of his body in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol where it lay in state for two days. 150,000 people, according to the Army's official estimate, filed past the bier.²¹⁴ John K. Fairbank echoed the sentiments of many in the years following MacArthur's death when he declared MacArthur "brave beyond belief, courting death hundreds of times to set his troops an example. He was in fact our greatest soldier"²¹⁵

²¹² "MacArthur Day," *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Queensland, Australia 1907-1954), June 1, 1942, Retrieved June 12, 2021, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/63562587?searchTerm=macarthur>

²¹³ The title was effectively awarded only once, to John Pershing in 1919 for his services leading the American Expeditionary Forces in WWI. It was also awarded posthumously to George Washington as part of a bicentennial celebration in 1976.

²¹⁴ B.C. Mossman and M.W. Stark, *The Last Salute: Civil and Military Funerals 1921-1969*, (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1991), 236.

²¹⁵ John K. Fairbank, "Digging Out Doug," Review of *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964*, by William Manchester, *The New York Review*, October 12, 1978 Issue. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1978/10/12/digging-out-doug/>

Those who would venerate him constitute the effect, rather than the impetus, for his legend so long surviving the man. Arthur Herman ponders in his work *Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior* over the curious lack of literature written on MacArthur during his lifetime – itself a curious statement as Herman’s work cites multiple biographies of the man published prior to 1964. Herman does, however, have a point in suggesting that a relatively greater quantity of work has been published since.²¹⁶ In no small part is this due to the man himself. MacArthur zealously guarded his own legacy and his zeal – as much as any other factor – contributed to its longevity and ubiquity.

Juxtaposition

The preceding sections of this work, though examining in detail only an exceedingly modest segment of a vast career, clearly illuminate the will and capability of Douglas MacArthur and his followers to wage successful war against any inconvenient truths. The purpose of this section is to reiterate how unorthodox and unprecedented the actions of this party were through juxtaposition with figures that may on the surface seem similar. Three figures contemporary to MacArthur, George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower, and Bernard Montgomery, find themselves compelling subjects for comparison.

It requires little imagination to draw connections between George Patton and Douglas MacArthur. Neither man, even at the outset of hostilities, could be described as young, humble, or modest. Patton, though five years younger than MacArthur, was a product of the same old Army and had participated in the same military adventures in Mexico and France. Each man carefully maintained an image of a strong-jawed man-in-

²¹⁶ Herman, 840.

the-trenches despite their experience of the Second World War involving little, if any, proximity to actual combat.²¹⁷ There, however, is where the similarities end.

In contrast with MacArthur (and in spite of MacArthur's own breathless accounts) Patton actually did participate in combat during the First World War.²¹⁸ The effects his front-line experience had on his psyche are subjects for speculation more than anything else, but Patton would gain a well-earned reputation for ensuring that the soldiers under his command were among the best-supplied of the whole war. It was, in fact, to his soldiers that Patton mostly pandered.²¹⁹ He drove them exceptionally hard, enforced brutal discipline, and subordinated all concerns to an extremely aggressive style of warfare. His meticulous supply, brusque personality, and conspicuous imagery were all consciously intended to keep his soldiers' approval.²²⁰

MacArthur, on the other hand, desired above all else the adulation of the American public. While Patton's experience with public opinion in America was (both for better and for worse) an effect of his relationship with his soldiers, MacArthur's relationship with his soldiers was entirely built around his courting of public opinion in the United States. Patton adopted a controversial and occasionally physical style of interacting with his soldiers and leant into their loose speech, casual racism, and

²¹⁷ It bears repeating that neither man's position necessitated nor realistically lent itself to actual engagement in combat. This is simply a statement that the image that each projected was steeped in implications of physical participation in combat. Patton, for example, regularly and enthusiastically participated in combat operations during WWI. The point being made here is that during the *Second World War* each cultivated an image incompatible with their positional realities.

²¹⁸ Patton participated regularly in aggressive action and was rewarded with a gunshot through the leg for his trouble. This is understood in military circles to be one of nature's methods of telling you to slow down. George Patton, *The Patton Papers 1885-1940*, ed. Martin Blumenson, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 764-766.

²¹⁹ There are, of course, exceptions. Patton openly admits to "probably" killing one of his own soldiers with a shovel during WWI for refusing to continue fighting while under heavy shelling. *Ibid*, 768.

²²⁰ Brenton Wallace, *Patton and his Third Army*, (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing Co., 1946), 97.

combative aggression. MacArthur instead carefully courted and curated his press corps and rarely found time to offer more than the occasional perfunctory remark to a departing combat unit as he spent the vast majority of his time hundreds of miles from anything that might be described as a front.²²¹

This distance from combat seems a point of significantly greater insecurity for MacArthur. In January 1944 an article by former *Fortune* and *Time* editor John McCarten attacking the partisan overtones developing around the MacArthur mythos mentioned, not inaccurately, MacArthur's failure to visit the front in Bataan and New Guinea. A theatre commander with no operational or practical reason to do so, MacArthur should have felt no need to defend his position. Instead, he travelled some three hundred miles north of Brisbane, where Eichelberger's I Corps was engaged in training exercises in the hilly jungle outside Rockhampton with his Press Officers Diller and Lehrbas and a cohort of photographers. He spent the day being photographed in and around Eichelberger's command post before a somewhat puzzled Eichelberger was "directed to send all negatives to his [MacArthur's] headquarters and he selected the ones which were not to be destroyed. A number of these were sent to all the papers in the United States under

²²¹ Robert L. Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, (New York: Viking Press, 1950), 99.; The episode includes an interview with Jack Manol, conducted by Chris Masters, in which the former recounts a review of the 39th Colonial Militia, of which Manol was a member, that MacArthur presided over during a visit to Port Moresby. The event lasted a few minutes, included bombastic, but distant remarks from the General, followed by him retiring back to the Government House for a pleasant evening followed by a return trip to Australia. This, according to Manol, was the closest MacArthur ever got to the fighting. *Four Corners*, season 1998, episode 9, "The Men Who Saved Australia," directed by Chris Masters, aired April 26, 1998, in broadcast syndication, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJ6oS0v59Ig>.

such captions as ‘General MacArthur at the Front with Gen. Eichelberger in New Guinea.’”²²²

MacArthur, incontrovertibly, was a masterful and incisive manager of the media of his day. Patton might generously be called a media disaster. Where the former carefully practiced and revised even his “impromptu” speeches the latter made new enemies nearly every time he spoke.²²³ Though famed, even in his own time, as a fiery speaker, he was consistently outmaneuvered when it came time to commit his words to print. He was, in 1945 alone, characterized in American press as having declared both Democrats and Republicans analogous to Nazis, having insulted the valor of dead soldiers, and having declared that it was the destiny of America to rule the world.²²⁴ Though often mischaracterized or exaggerated, Patton always presented an image of himself to the American public that was never going to inspire universal acclaim.²²⁵

Finally, Patton died *before* his legacy was open for debate. While MacArthur would enjoy at least a decade at the end of his life in which to defend and curate the complete legacy of “Douglas MacArthur,” Patton suffered a spinal injury in a low-speed car accident in late 1945 and died a few days later. Though likely staring down retirement and reflection at the time, Patton had yet to organize and present his own analysis of his

²²² Eichelberger, 99.; “DSM Is Awarded to MacArthur On 64th Birthday by President; Citation Hails General for Successes in Southwest Pacific With Limited Forces and Materiel at Hand”, *New York Times*, 27 Jan, 1944.

²²³ Alexander Lovelace, "The Image of a General: The Wartime Relationship between General George S. Patton Jr. and the American Media," *Journalism History*, vol. 40 (2014): 108–120

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Eisenhower believed that Patton was a shrewd, dutiful, and courageous soldier who maintained a flamboyant caricature for the purposes of inspiring his men. He did worry, however, that Patton’s showmanship along with a tendency to talk too readily and too often created undesirable impressions. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 93.

life and achievements. His historical legacy is, as a consequence, shaped mostly by how he was viewed by others.²²⁶

While Patton's position never awarded him the total control that MacArthur's did, the position of MacArthur's former lieutenant, Dwight Eisenhower, certainly did. He ended the Second World War as the Supreme Commander of all Allied forces in Europe, and would, only a few years later, find himself head of the armies of NATO and, eventually, President of the United States. Riding overwhelming social, political, and military authority to what would ultimately be the first presidency to be held by a Republican in a generation, Eisenhower would have means to edit his legacy in quantity and scale of which MacArthur could only ever have dreamed. Yet, he did not.

While Eisenhower held equal, and ultimately greater, authority relative to his former boss, his position was subject to far more scrutiny. Geography, no less than other enabling factors, facilitated MacArthur's deception. Between 1936 and 1951 MacArthur rarely operated within the same hemisphere as anyone who exceeded either his de facto or de jure authority. While Eisenhower could and did exercise similar military authority, the limitations of technology and military priority granted to MacArthur a near-total monopoly on the flow of information that was simply not possible for Eisenhower. Eisenhower's later service as President further invited examination of his service. Though popular, Eisenhower was not without political enemies. His entire life and career were subject to analysis and reanalysis for far longer than MacArthur, whose legacy was

²²⁶ Purely for the purposes of conjecture, the author wishes to note, if not to draw *too* much analysis from, that Patton was, upon his own insistence, buried in a military cemetery in Luxembourg alongside war dead from his Third Army. MacArthur is interred in a museum bearing his own name, built in his honor, in Virginia.

considered a complete and past thing of historical significance for more than a decade before his death.

Eisenhower's profile also proved more conducive to an electoral campaign than MacArthur's. A presidential campaign necessarily includes significant public inquest into a candidate's actions and character. While Eisenhower's public image was built on an identity as an administrator and delegator as much as military acumen, MacArthur's public image, in contrast, was one of caricature. The 1944 election cycle was far enough removed from the hectic opening days of the war that the voting public responded unenthusiastically even to tentative attempts to reconcile the hero they had constructed in those tense times with their expectations for a presidential candidate. The following election cycles saw the temporal gap further diminish the electoral appeal of the bellicose and uncompromising caricature of MacArthur.²²⁷

Ultimately, Eisenhower did not attempt to cynically construct a favorable narrative as his former commander had done largely because he simply did not want to. Eisenhower was proud; he famously chaffed at the slights visited upon him by MacArthur and Sutherland during their time together, but he was not overtly egotistical. It was this quality that ultimately won him the position of Supreme Commander.²²⁸ He was not a combatant in any of the wars his nation took part in during his life, but nor did he ever pretend to be. He was an administrator, an organizer, a logistician, and uniformly

²²⁷ James, *The Years of MacArthur Volume II: 1941-1945*, 418.

²²⁸ Eisenhower was chosen for every one of his command positions during the Second World War over a significant number of more senior officers. His level headedness, man management, and modest competence were then, and is now, widely understood to be the impetus for these decisions. Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect (1893-1952)*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 275.

brilliant at each. He curated subordinates, Omar Bradley, Mark Clark, and George Patton among them, who led armies in the field and allowed them the attention and adulation they won. Where MacArthur insulted, humiliated, and removed commanders who refused to consign the credit for their victories to him, Eisenhower displayed no interest in coopting the successes of his subordinates. While it is *possible*, though unlikely, that Eisenhower might have pulled off a deception similar to that managed by MacArthur and his partisans, it simply was not conducive to his character.

Bernard Montgomery offers another, and for our purposes a final, interesting comparison. He alone among MacArthur's immediate contemporaries (here understood as the commanders of Allied armies) shared a sort of exalted ubiquity with his nation.²²⁹ Much like MacArthur, Montgomery was difficult to work with, abrasive, and openly derisive of his Allied peers. He was generally disinterested in communicating his intentions to his allies and a well-earned reputation for summarily dismissing those who displeased him.²³⁰

Montgomery, however, was not a British MacArthur. Like Patton, he had participated in heavy combat in the First World War and was himself shot twice. Also, like Patton he undertook a deliberate campaign of conspicuous bravery in the field

²²⁹ This statement comes with its own laundry list of qualifiers, many of them exceedingly valid. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that Montgomery left a larger footprint in the British consciousness than Brooke, Alexander, Wavell, Gort, or Auchinlek. Other British figures such as Harris or Mountbatten are not, for the purposes of this comparison, included as they represented other branches of the armed forces. The list of reasons Charles de Gaul does not qualify is, itself, sufficiently extensive to contraindicate inclusion here.

²³⁰ Patton recounts candidly a discussion he had with Omar Bradley regarding instructions from Montgomery the upshot of which was Patton's opinion that Montgomery's orders and person deserved neither deference nor obedience stating, "To hell with him." George Patton, "Diary entry for September 17, 1944", *George S. Patton Papers: Diaries, 1910-1945; Original; 1944, May 31-Oct. 2. Manuscript/Mixed Material*. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss35634010/>.

explicitly to inspire confidence in his soldiers and adopted a media-handling style intended to curry their favor – not that of the wider public.²³¹ Inside the High Command Montgomery had to deal with both superiors and rivals. These were not nominal and on the other side of an ocean, but very real and nearby. Any attempt at deception in real time would be both readily noticeable and quickly taken advantage of by robust contingents within both the British and Allied militaries who were decidedly against the Englishman. British Air Marshal Arthur Tedder in particular regularly and publicly demanded that Eisenhower sack Montgomery and it remains one of the Field Marshal's great accomplishments that he was able to maintain his position within the Allied high command against attacks from all sides.²³²

Like MacArthur, Montgomery was blessed with a long life and a critical pen. Remaining in service until 1958, at the time already past seventy, he lived nearly a further two decades. He used this time to very openly court controversy through his actions and publications. While MacArthur's memoirs were published only just before his death, Montgomery's were published shortly after his retirement. In these he openly attacked very nearly every commander he had ever served with or under and, unlike MacArthur, no cult of personality had grown up around Montgomery. He had at least as many enemies as he had supporters and his accusations were taken as little more than embittered opinions to be indulged or discarded on a case-by-case basis. He was never

²³¹ Eisenhower regarded Montgomery to be one of his finest commanders and was of the opinion that much of the latter's showmanship was undertaken to inspire his men. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 59-91.

²³² Mark Urban, *Generals: Ten British Commanders Who Shaped the World*, (London: Faber and Faber), 287.; Eisenhower thought supremely highly of Tedder as a commander. His ability to prevent this from ruling his decision-making regarding Montgomery, reflect highly on both Eisenhower and Montgomery. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 84, 91.

given the free hand to guide the creation of primary sources that so blessed MacArthur's fortunes.

This is what makes MacArthur's deception so remarkable. No specific element of his deception is, in isolation, unique. He held extremely uncommon, but not unique, quantities of both de facto and de jure influence within the American military. His control of the flow of information, a circumstance aided immeasurably by the limitations of the technology of the time and the distances involved, was no greater than that of many historical colonial governors. It was not unprecedented that he be venerated as a hero in the early days of the war; little shame can be attached to the very human instinct to embrace any apparent relief in a storm of bad news. The pettiness and narcissism with which he promoted himself at the expense of his rivals – real and imaginary – might even be said to be depressingly common. However, it is extremely rare for all of those factors to be in play for one person at one time. Emperors, dictators, and autocrats alone hold such overwhelming tools for the shaping of a historical narrative – and their accounts are accordingly viewed with deep suspicion by historians. MacArthur was not an Emperor. Despite being, for a time, more powerful than all but a handful of historical figures have ever been, his position was ostensibly one that fell far short of the threshold maintained by historians for potential agents of historical manipulation. This critical, but deceptively subtle, addition to the formula is what makes MacArthur truly unique.

CONCLUSION

Opinions on Douglas MacArthur run the gamut from veneration to bitter contempt. While the conclusion of this study is one that paints MacArthur as, at the very least, manipulative and scheming, it is important to distinguish this impression from one of “good” or “bad.” MacArthur was a complicated man with an undeniable spark of genius. It was perhaps not the spark of military genius he was convinced he possessed, but he was a masterful manipulator of the media of his day and magnetic character who inspired intense loyalty in those closest to him. Paul Rogers, MacArthur’s young clerk, would write of him half a century hence as having been an “Olympian God.”²³³ Sycophantic or no, such intense idolization does not come from nowhere.

MacArthur’s position granted him access to more information than can reasonably be processed by one person. The job of summarizing and relaying the thousands of reports that each day painted a picture of the war as it happened fell to a cadre of subordinates, who often were themselves responsible for executing the resulting commands. That MacArthur might not have been aware of minute details is eminently excusable, that he would relay information that significantly misrepresented events – or else created events altogether – is not. While the opportunity for MacArthur and his supporters to explicitly order the creation of material that eschewed information and interpretations harmful to MacArthur or his legacy never quite existed, it is clear from the

²³³ Rogers, 71.; conversation referred to also in James Leutze, *A Different Kind of Victory*, 218.

cases discussed in this work that there was both ample implicit motivation for such action and more than enough access to accurate information to rule out the theory that ignorance was, as has been suggested in the past by his critics, the primary cause of his inaccurate reporting.

In analyzing the Clark Field debacle, we noted the remarkable lack of detail in the preliminary reports to the War Department followed by reports that were extremely generous in their assessment of the performance of the men of USAFFE at all levels. The narrative emerging from MacArthur's GHQ shifted from one of complete preparedness, to complete unpreparedness and ignorance, before a final shift on January 23, 1942, to a desperately implausible narrative of pre-cognizance.²³⁴ The increasingly biased and dogmatic reporting emanating from MacArthur's GHQ in the early months of 1942 served multiple purposes. First, and most immediately relevant, they protected MacArthur from the same repercussions experienced by Short and Kimmel and secured continued support of his operations – particularly in terms of finances. Second, the apparently vicious toll he reported (himself) taking on the Japanese led to a sharp rise in popularity for MacArthur among the American people. This led directly to the decision to evacuate him, and his chosen staff, to Australia. Considering the hardship endured by the men he abandoned, this almost certainly saved many of the lives of those he felt most valuable. Finally, the accounting from MacArthur's office of the opening events of the American entry into the war do much to safeguard a legacy that was very much open to

²³⁴ This release, which Eisenhower diplomatically referred to in his diary as “flamboyant,” included a recommendation that Sutherland be given MacArthur's position in the event of “my death.” Eisenhower commented only that MacArthur was “showing he still liked his boot lickers.” Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 44.

questioning at the time. His military career to that point was long and decorated, but close and unsympathetic examination of those decorations could easily come to suspect that many of his decorations had an air of having been either awarded for political reasons or having been awarded by the man himself.²³⁵ Were his final act as a military leader to have been the decisive defeat he did in fact oversee in the Philippines to an enemy broadly perceived to have been both technologically and intrinsically inferior, it would not have taken much for an unfavorable biographer to paint him as a fraud who failed spectacularly in his first trial by fire and whose career had been built on nepotism and connections. Presented instead as a grizzled old veteran who was able to extract a sanguinary price from an overwhelming enemy while being abandoned by corrupt bureaucrats in Washington, he became a figure of veneration in the United States. He became, instead, someone who could embody the frustrations of a people losing a war they felt they *should* be winning.

These sentiments could easily have shifted following the fall of the Philippines and MacArthur's conspicuous lack of falling with it. Much has been made, at the time and in years since, by MacArthur and his defenders of his agonizing over the decision to escape. Indeed, questioning eyes do not take long to fix their gaze on a captain who almost alone escapes a sinking ship. The primary sources indicate little contemporary consternation over the decision to leave but note a great deal of latitude having been insisted upon by MacArthur in how the escape was to be presented. The terms "escape" and "evacuate" are not used in any statements to the press, but rather "breaking through" and "counterattack" to give an impression of MacArthur having opted to undertake

²³⁵ See n29.

something even more personally dangerous than remaining at his post. It also implied, and as discussed previously was used as supporting evidence by several historians, that MacArthur expected a force to be waiting in Australia capable of launching an immediate counterattack at the Philippines. None of the messages exchanged between him and the War Department give any indication of this belief. Several messages from MacArthur insist that such actions should be taken, but these same messages equally decry that such action has not been taken.²³⁶

Historians broadly trust one another.²³⁷ Historians of all stripes approach arguments and evidence with care and practiced suspicion, but rarely question facts recited by their peers. Facts are generally easy enough to prove or to disprove that to include information that is objectively wrong would be massively damaging ones' reputation. It is sensible enough, therefore, to assume that a professional would take such care to avoid factual mistakes as for them to be nonexistent. The problem, in turn, manifests as something of a historiological Trojan Horse. In essence it exists where a historian cites another historian's accounting of something – usually auxiliary to their actual argument and meant only to provide context – but in doing so eschews the initial context.

For instance, a historian may carefully record that MacArthur later claimed that he was made to leave the Philippines against his will and spend an entire chapter

²³⁶ MacArthur also insists in these messages that the whole of the American Navy, Atlantic and Pacific, be launched at the Japanese mainland “while all of their forces were attacking the Philippines.” It goes without saying that, so few Japanese forces were committed to the Philippines by the time these messages were sent in February and March 1942 that they were themselves heavily outnumbered. It also goes without saying that no sane commander in MacArthur's position could have earnestly believed the Navy would entertain any such actions nor, at any rate, was the Navy inclined to indulge him.

²³⁷ However true, by some distance, this is the most inflammatory statement in this thesis.

discussing the veracity of that claim. A second historian, writing on a different part of the war, might cite the first to contextualize their study with something along the lines of “as _____ was happening, MacArthur was demanding his superiors allow him to remain in the Philippines” Such an anecdote is flavorful, a nice touch in a field often lacking in flair, and apparently borne out by seeking out the cited passage. A further historian might use the second historian’s work as amply reputable to do something similar. In a field with some of the greatest density of literature ever garnered by a single topic, much of which not specifically an analysis of MacArthur or the South Pacific, these sort of inaccuracies – once a part of the historical discussion – can proliferate rapidly.

The prevalence of the baseless story, as Walter Borneman puts it, about MacArthur’s supposed desire to fight and die alongside the men on Bataan serves in a way to proliferate the narrative. John Dower, in his 1986 book *War Without Mercy* repeats the claim in a section that actually had remarkably little to do with MacArthur. As the point is not integral to any arguments Dower is attempting to make, he simply cites Costello’s *The Pacific War* to support his anecdote. Costello cites exclusively post-war interviews from MacArthur or those with MacArthur’s best interests at heart. A seemingly innocent oversight, but one resultant in another reputable historian putting their name to the MacArthur narrative.²³⁸

Why does it matter? Why invoke the language of malicious intent in the case of one of America’s most venerated generals? For decades, the narrative surrounding MacArthur’s reporting of the war has been one of “multiple perspectives” with even his critics conceding that there was every chance that MacArthur himself believed the story

²³⁸ Dower, 321 n10.

he spun. To do so gives the historian a shield from accusations that they sought to attack the legacy of the general. That is no longer acceptable. The repercussions for criticizing the “most dangerous man in America” are no longer too great to bear.

Douglas MacArthur was a fascinating figure. He was charismatic, charming, and enigmatic. He possessed a cunning that could eviscerate his rivals and enchant his supplicants. He was the sort of figure who could command a room in absolute silence through force of personality alone. He was also vindictive, vainglorious, and petty. He was a case study in narcissism and megalomania. He had a suspicious aversion to a fight and boasted about his bravery just a little too loud and from just far enough away from danger to raise an eyebrow. Hanson’s *The Second World Wars*, a work not at all critical of MacArthur, nonetheless concedes that one of the great successes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was their ability to support the “megalomaniac (and politically untouchable) Douglas MacArthur... without turning over too many strategic decisions to his often-unsteady judgement.”²³⁹ He was not, in the words of Thomas Hart, “altogether sane.”²⁴⁰ He also lied. He lied not just within the confines of operational secrecy, but freely. He built an entire character, an entire legacy, an entire American Hero, with lies.

Historical records should accurately reflect the actions of the figures recorded therein. Douglas MacArthur failed to prevent catastrophic loss of life and materiel – in measure at least equal to that which had seen his contemporaries, Short and Kimmel, relieved in Hawaii – despite having had more than adequate warning of attack. He led his army to, and ultimately only his innermost circle away from, the greatest single military

²³⁹ Hanson, 446.

²⁴⁰ Leutze, 218-219.

defeat in the history of the United States. He profited immensely from his political connections with the Philippine government – particularly with President Quezon – not only through the small fortune he secured from the Philippine treasury before making his escape, but from half a decade of extortionate pay and benefits in exchange for a promise to build a national army that would eventually prove completely incapable of fulfilling its charter.²⁴¹ His name should be listed alongside Custer, Varus, Burgoyne, and any other men whose slavery to their hubris littered their legacies with the bodies of other men's sons. Instead, he became a hero.

The time has come to acknowledge, in the open and in plain language, that MacArthur knowingly – through his own actions and those taken on his behalf – sought to deceive the world in the service of his immediate ambitions and long-term legacy. If the fantasy he created is allowed to continue to proliferate within respectable works, his version of events will bear the veneer of implicit validity afforded by endurance. In an era where an intellectual cancer has taken root among a not-insignificant minority, in the form of the belief that facts can be changed through repetition of lies, it is past time for historians to stop shrinking from this task. To admit the propagandistic lies of a vainglorious megalomaniac to pollute the historiography of one of the key moments in

²⁴¹ It is of note that the revelation of the transfer of about \$1,000,000 USD from the Philippine Treasury to MacArthur and his staff was not known outside of MacArthur's innermost circle, a single-digit number of officers at the War Department, and President Roosevelt until the story was broken by historian Carol Petillo in 1979. The topic was, however, clearly on the minds of MacArthur and his staff as *Reports*, published in 1966, includes an unprompted and defensive accounting of having taken "immediate action" to turn over 20,000,000 pesos to Quezon. This sum had made available by Roosevelt and the Congress for the government of the Philippines to put towards relief of the civilian population. MacArthur was not at any point in a position to dictate or handle such a transfer, so the unprompted accounting of his not-embezzling Philippine funds makes little sense other than as a rebuttal for future accusations.

the history of the United States for fear of repercussions or fallout only invites further men, richer in ambition than morality, to imitation.

MacArthur is a character for the ages – a fascinating man to be studied and debated – but no longer one to be indulged. Ronald H. Spector wrote that Americans invented themselves a hero, an opinion that held quite a cutting edge in 1985. Nearly four decades on, the statement's edge seems all too dull. Douglas MacArthur, the character, the man, the *myth*, invented himself. While Americans let him, they can be complicit in the lie no longer.

There is too much at stake.

APPENDIX

A: Characters

All persons are here identified by – and only by – their role during the period that constitutes their involvement in this study and is not inclusive of later authors unless an unavoidably significant connection to events exists. (i.e., Paul Rogers is listed due to his role as MacArthur’s clerk, but Gavin Long – who was a war correspondent at the time – is not due to his lack of involvement in MacArthur’s headquarters, chain of command, or decision making.)

Arnold, Henry “Hap”: Commander of the United States Army Air Forces (and equivalent as the organization underwent restructuring.)

Beebe, Lewis: MacArthur’s Assistant Chief of Staff during the Bataan-Corregidor campaign, later Wainwright’s Chief of Staff.

Blamey, Thomas: Commander in Chief of Australian Military Forces and Commander of Allied Land Forces in the SWPA under MacArthur.

Brereton, Lewis: Commander of the United States Far East Air Force

Cooper, Isabel R.: MacArthur’s Filipina mistress. Cooper was no more than sixteen when she became the mistress of the then-50-year-old MacArthur. She was kept by MacArthur in a luxurious sort of imprisonment in Washington D.C. and was no more than nineteen when the relationship threatened to become public, and he divested himself of her with a payment of \$15,000.

Curtin, John: Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Defence from October 1941 until his death in July 1945.

Diller, LaGrande “Pick”: MacArthur’s press and public relations officer for the duration of the war.

Eichelberger, Robert: Commander of the United States Eighth Army

Eisenhower, Dwight: MacArthur’s former assistant, he would be Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in North Africa by the end of 1942, and Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe by the end of 1943.

Lehrbas, Lloyd: Press Relations officer for MacArthur.

Hart, Thomas: Commander in Chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet from 1939 to 1942.

Hoover, Herbert: President of the United States of America 1929-1933.

Kimmel, Husband: Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Fleet. Relieved after Pearl Harbor.

King, Ernest: Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations

MacArthur, Arthur Jr.: Father of Douglas. Medal of Honor recipient. Governor General of the Philippines.

MacArthur, Douglas: Commander in Chief United States Forces Far East and subsequently Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area.

Marshall, George: Chief of Staff of the United States Army

Montgomery, Bernard: Commander in Chief of Allied Ground Forces (Normandy). Later served in reduced capacity as head of the 21st Army Group before post-war roles as Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Deputy Supreme Commander in Europe.

Nimitz, Chester: Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Fleet from 1941 to 1945. Succeeding Kimmel.

Patton, George: Commander of the United States Third Army

Pearson, Drew: Influential anti-conservative newspaper columnist. Sued by MacArthur for defamation before the case was dropped amidst threats to reveal MacArthur's mistress.

Pershing, John: Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Force in World War One.

Quezon, Manuel: President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines 1935-1944.

Rogers, Paul: Personal clerk and stenographer to Sunderland and MacArthur for the duration of the war.

Roosevelt, Franklin D.: President of the United States 1933-1945.

Short, Walter: Commander in Chief of Army forces in Hawaii from February 8 to December 17, 1941.

Sutherland, Richard: MacArthur's Chief of Staff from 1938 through the end of the war.

Stimson, Henry: United States Secretary of War 1940-1945.

Vandenberg, Arthur: Republican Senator for Michigan 1928-1951. Arch- conservative and the key political backer of MacArthur's 1944 presidential bid.

Wainwright, Jonathan: Senior field commander of American and Filipino forces under MacArthur. Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces in the Philippines following MacArthur's departure.

Willoughby, Charles: MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence from 1941 to 1951.

B: Full Text of Select Orders

Order from War Department to MacArthur instructing his evacuation

To be seen by decoding clerk only

With reference to the rapidly approaching reorganization of the ABDA Area and also to the rather favorable report on the situation in Bataan in your No.341, as well as your No. 344, regarding the build-up of resources in Mindanao: the president directs that you make arrangements to leave Fort Mills and proceed to Mindanao. You are directed to make this change as quickly as possible. The President desires that in Mindanao you take such measures as will insure a prolonged defense of that region—this especially in view of the transfer of President Quezon and his government to the Southern Philippines and the great importance the President attaches to the future of the Philippines by prolonging in every way possible the continuance of defense by United States troops and the continuance of the active support of the Philippine Government and people. From Mindanao you will proceed to Australia where you will assume command of all United States Troops. It is the intention of the President to arrange with the Australian and British Governments for their acceptance of you as commander of the reconstituted ABDA Area. Because of the vital importance of your assuming command in Australia at an early date, your delay in Mindanao will not be prolonged beyond one week and you will leave sooner if transportation becomes available earlier. Instructions will be given from here at your request for the movement of submarine or plane or both to enable you to carry out the foregoing instructions. You are authorized to take with you your Chief of Staff, General Sutherland. – Marshall (RG4R593)

Reply by MacArthur to War Department regarding his evacuation

To be seen by decoding clerk only

I am deeply appreciative of the confidence in me that is implied in your 1078. As my communications have shown I am completely in accord with the strategical importance of the continued active support of the government and people and of the consequent prolonged defense in the Philippines. It is my studied opinion that the immediate movement directed is too sudden and abrupt in that it may result at this time in the collapse of the Philippine Area with ensuing adverse effect on the entire theatre before the means are available for counter offensive action from Australia. The lack of visible support for the Philippines has created here a very difficult situation which I have been able to market only through the peculiar confidence placed in me by the Filipino people and army on the one hand and President Quezon on the other. The intent of the enemy in this area is not yet clear. We may be approaching the stalemate of positional warfare but it is possible that a major effort may soon be made to break my Bataan front; his plans will shortly become evident. I am of the opinion that I can throw back an attack if made with the troops now available locally and can then restabilize the situation. I am not in possession of information regarding your developments in Australia but it is apparent that there must be a great deal of organizational work accomplished in the accumulation of forces and in the building of an SOS before offensive action will be possible. I am of the opinion that during the initial stages of that organizational effort I can better accomplish the aims of the president set forth in your radio by temporary delay in my departure. This would not prevent any immediate reorganization you may have in mind nor my reassumption of command of the troops in the far east at this time; it would

merely permit me temporarily to maintain my headquarters here until the psychological time to leave. I earnestly urge that you accept my advice as to the timing of this movement. I know the situation here in the Philippines and unless the right moment is chosen for this delicate operation, a sudden collapse might occur which would carry with it not only the people but the government. Rightly or wrongly, these people are depending upon me now not only militarily but civically and any idea that might develop in their minds that I was being withdrawn for any other purpose than to bring them immediate relief could not be explained to their simple intelligence. At the right time I believe they will understand it but if done too soon and too abruptly it may result in a sudden major collapse. Please be guided by me in this matter. With regard to the actual movement I deem it advisable to go to Mindanao by combined use of surface craft and submarine and then to destination by air, further movement by submarine being too time consuming. A flight of three B24s or B17s will be able to fight through if intercepted. To set up the transportation will require a period of time that will probably suffice to make essential psychological and physical adjustments here. Advise the Navy that no repeat no fuel is available for a submarine. -MacArthur (RG4R93)

Medal of Honor Citation for Douglas MacArthur

Rank and organization: General, U.S. Army, commanding U.S. Army Forces in the Far East. Place and date: Bataan Peninsula, Philippine Islands. Entered service at: Ashland, Wis. Birth: Little Rock, Ark. G.O. No.: 16, 1 April 1942. Citation: For conspicuous leadership in preparing the Philippine Islands to resist conquest, for gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against invading Japanese

forces, and for the heroic conduct of defensive and offensive operations on the Bataan Peninsula. He mobilized, trained, and led an army which has received world acclaim for its gallant defense against a tremendous superiority of enemy forces in men and arms. His utter disregard of personal danger under heavy fire and aerial bombardment, his calm judgment in each crisis, inspired his troops, galvanized the spirit of resistance of the Filipino people, and confirmed the faith of the American people in their Armed Forces. -

Full Citation for Medal of Honor, Douglas MacArthur

C: A Partial Glossary of Terms

ABDACOM: American British Dutch Australian Command. A loose and ultimately short-lived conglomeration of Allied military forces in the Western Pacific. Formed January 1, 1942, the command effectively ceased to exist following the destruction of the combined ABDA fleet under Karel Doorman at the Battle of the Java Sea on February 27, 1942.

AGWAR: Adjutant General – War Department.

Cable (Cablegram): A telegraph message sent via undersea cable.

FEAF: (United States) Far East Air Force

Fifth Columnist: A member of an organized group within a country working actively for the benefit of the country's enemies.

Front: A roughly defined area of close combat created when opposing armies meet.

G-#: A headquarters element with a mission identified by uniform numerical designation. For field-grade commands, the element's designation is S-#.

G-1 (S-1): Personnel

G-2 (S-2): Intelligence

G-3 (S-3): Operations and Training

G-4 (S-4): Logistics

G-5 (S-5): Civil-Military Operations

G-6 (S-6): Signal Operations

GHQ: General Headquarters. The command, logistical, and organizational center of a formation led by a General. GHQ SWPA was the command element for the entire Allied operation in the Southwest Pacific.

Pursuit (Aircraft): An aircraft intended to intercept and defeat other aircraft in the air. "Fighter"

PT Boat: Patrol-Torpedo Boat. A small, fast class of boats used primarily for coastal action by the US Navy during WWII.

Radiogram: A written message transmitted by radio.

SWPA: The name given to the overall Allied military command of the Southwest Pacific area. Created on April 18, 1942 with General Douglas MacArthur at its head its five subordinate commands were Allied Land Forces, Allied Air Forces, Allied Naval Forces, United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA), and United States Army Forces in the Philippines (which ceased to exist after the fall of Corregidor).

Theatre: A broad (usually geographic) region in which military action is occurring. Usually distinct from other theatres in terms of geography and combatants.

USAFFE: United States Forces – Far East. A formation representing American and Filipino forces in the South Pacific which effectively supplanted the old Philippine Department upon the federalization of its forces on July 26, 1941.

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