

DECEMBER 7, 1941

We got news of the Japanese attack about 2:30, just before I addressed an American-Slavic group in Detroit. I announced it in the opening of my remarks and managed to get away with the Navy plane which had been lent us for the trip at 5:15 getting to Washington about 8:15, having canceled an engagement to speak in the Atlanta Penitentiary.

The President had called a Cabinet Meeting for 8:30, and there was a full Cabinet Meeting, including Harry Hopkins. He opened his remarks by saying that this was the most serious Cabinet Meeting since the Spring of 1861, that at the moment when the Japanese Ambassador was scheduled to talk to the Secretary of State with respect to the negotiations, the Japanese were actually bombing Pearl Harbor, that Guam had been taken, and there had been an attack on Wake Island and possibly on Midway; that there was no question that this was a concerted effort running over several or many weeks with Germany and that he expected the possibility of war with Germany and Italy. There had been a submarine attack at the same time as the naval attack and six battleships out of eight had probably been put out of business, of which perhaps three could be salvaged. It is supposed that the Japanese airplanes flew at a great height of 25,000 feet perhaps, and dropped suddenly so that they might not be intercepted by ^{air} ~~correlated~~ ^{measures} (it seems to be ^{an extraordinary} ~~a misdemeanor~~, however, that we should have been so unprepared as apparently is the situation). ///

Immediately after the Cabinet the Senate and House leaders came to the President's study. Senator Connally, Senator Austin, Senator Barkley, Sam Rayburn, Joe Martin, Senator Hiram Johnson, and a number of others. The President had before that written a brief but vigorous statement to be given at the Joint Session of the Senate and House requesting them to declare that a state of war has existed since yesterday. Secretary Hull had seemed to think it should have been a longer statement, but the President thought not as a matter of timing in journalism.

Tom Connally

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

The President did not specifically tell the Members of Congress that he would ask for a declaration but it was generally understood. He requested them to pass the necessary resolution asking him to address the Joint Session. He told them the news and they were deeply shocked, and assured him that Congress would be practically unanimous for the declaration.

The President is his usual calm self, but most of us were deeply shocked at the terrific loss. Senator Connally commented on this and said he could not understand why we were taken off our guard.

The President, at my suggestion, will issue a directive to Hoover that he take charge of all censorship pending some permanent arrangement. Meanwhile the Japanese telephones have been plugged and probably the German and Italians will follow.

The President has signed the proclamation for the immediate detention of all suspected Japanese, under the statute, and by Monday morning 736 were arrested and detained in the Immigration offices. There are approximately 800 suspects, including Hawaii.

I am preparing and shall have the President sign similar proclamations for the Germans and Italians. Our information is that Italy had said she would declare war and Von Ribbentrop is now waiting to see Hitler and will also urge a declaration of war.

Hoover talked to his Agent at Honolulu this morning at 6:30 A.M. and the Agent-Shivers - stated that "Our friends L. K. Cook, E. E. Kuhnel, M. G. Banister, R. B. Hood, J. F. Sears and H. R. Duffy, were killed here today. This was cryptic information to the effect that the following battleships were destroyed: West Virginia, Tennessee, California, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Arizona. Hoover received word about half past ten this morning (December 8) that another bombardment had started worse than the last.

Hoover P. ...