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Dec. 7, 1941: Why Forewarned

PEARL HARBOR: Warning and Decision. By Roberta Wohlstetter. 426 pp. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. \$7.50.

By LADISLAS FARAGO

WHAT for so long was so woefully needed, a non-partisan and scholarly exposition of the mysterious moves and machinations leading to Pearl Harbor, is provided in this prodigiously researched, lucidly and excitingly written and absolutely fair work of scholarship. It is one of those rare specimens in the literature of current history, the definitive book.

Roberta Wohlstetter of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has managed, not only to sift the evidence, but to present the disentangled facts in a clear, precise and remarkably honest survey. The Pearl Harbor drama is brought into sharp focus. The book establishes Mrs. Wohlstetter in the front rank of military analysts. The basic issue of Pearl Har-

Mr. Farago, an intelligence specialist for the United States Navy during World War II, is the author of the forthcoming "The Tenth Fleet," a study of the war against the U-boats.

bor revolved around what the military scientist calls the element of surprise and the pamphleteer calls the sneak attack. In the case of Pearl Harbor, the basic issue, ambiguous as it is, was distorted also by questions of leadership and responsibility, statesmanship and diplomatic acumen, negligence and even conspiracy. Such emotionally loaded factors hardly facilitated the exploration of the drama and, in most cases, added to the suspicions and recriminations it produced.

Mrs. Wohlstetter avoids the side issues and goes boldly to the crux of the matter. Her book deals primarily with the intellectual factors underlying the management of affairs as they converged on Pearl Harbor: with the complex intelligence activity that should have prevented Pearl Harbor. Seeking neither heroes nor villains, she subjects those intellectual processes to objective scrutiny in order to answer the question: "What does Pearl Harbor tell us about the possibility of a surprise attack today—with possible consequences of an even greater and perhaps fatal magnitude?"

In a sense, her conclusion is

that Pearl Harbor today, in terms of the Jap-avoided or surprise attack," she writes, the signal must be incredible in retrospect "were it not that they were not so in- by competing interpreted." However, she rejects signals, "not as a short cut to glib con- "noise." Among things which have the "lucid- discovery of the of statements after the particular and it usually unattainable between the inter- Mrs. Wohlstetter tells us that mate- and one of those signals was an other is the ambiguous indication of Jap- ary role the intelligence intent to attack the is apparently devoted States. "It is hard to a strategic map in mind the fact," she tional defense. Yes, "that there were many

Mrs. Wohlstetter might also have explained the crucial error as set of signals. Most of the the Pearl Harbor partisan reviews of the Pearl indeed at the harbor material forget these al- national and international explanations." edies. It is the reason could a better intelligence of what the preparedness preclude another ostrate how Pearl Harbor? Mrs. Wohlstet- spread it is to her's answer is in the negative. miliar with the study of Pearl Harbor pitfall, but must offer anything to offer for the lion to America's future," she writes, "it is this: their tradition we have to accept the fact of and pragmatism. certainty and learn to live She establishes that it. No magic, in code of poses and forecasts, otherwise, will provide certain- intelligence activity. Our plans must work with- ing how likely it is." they were it, the