OMNI NEWSLETTER FOR PEARL HARBOR DAY, DECEMBER 7, 2008. Compiled by Dick Bennett. Another in OMNI's NATIONAL DAYS series for a Culture of Peace.

OMNI has for seven years believed in preventing wars by advocating world peace through education, the arts and sciences, peacemaking in faith traditions, nonviolence, social and economic justice, human rights, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, diplomacy, negotiation, exchange programs. We have not promoted pacifism. That is, our advocacy has not been absolutist, but has depended upon the search for understanding. Therefore, study of US history has been an integral part of our program. We have tried to understand which of the many US wars and interventions could be justified. While US flag patriots have promoted the righteousness of an expanding empire, we, and the peace movement in general, have tried to discover, through a careful reading of US history, how many regime overthrows, coups, invasions, and occupations were defensible.

Some recent books about this history are American Wars: Illusions and Realities edited by Paul Buchheit, that examines nineteen illusions leading the US to war, and Stephen Kinzer's Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq, a study of the toppling of fourteen foreign governments. Earlier, two books by William Blum surveyed all of the US interventions since WWII: Killing Hope and Rogue State. "From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements struggle against intolerable regimes" (Rogue State, p. 2). These books give us a history of the US as global bully.

World War II is not included in these histories; it has been "the good war" that produced "the greatest generation." However, recently US behavior in that war has received closer scrutiny. In Worshipping the Myths of World War II, Reflections on America's Dedication to War, Edward Wood, Jr., examines four myths "that have masked the real nature of World War II and all our wars that followed" (p. x). The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon by Michael Sherry traces the development and horrendous consequences of indiscriminate bombing of cities by air war. John Dower's War Without Mercy shows the similarities of US and Japanese ferocity.

But one book has a special importance for us today on December 7.
Roland Worth, Jr. in No Choice But War: The United States Embargo Against Japan and the Eruption of War in the Pacific (McFarland, 1995) finds much to blame in both countries for causing World War II in the Pacific. He expresses no sympathy for Japanese militarism and aggression. But he also shows "the pivotal role of the U.S.-led economic embargo in pushing Japan over the edge into overt hostilities against the West. In other words the U.S. decision to embargo 90 percent of Japan's petroleum and two-thirds or more of its trade led directly to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941." "It was not just a matter of Japanese imperialism; the misjudged American response [of total embargo] sealed off the possibility of a peaceful solution or even of 'hot cold war'" and pushed the Japanese "beyond the point of no return" (ix-x).

During the past two decades, the official, patriotic, illusory enthusiasm for US wars that led to more wars has received significant deflation. The US wars were not inevitable. You and I now have a well-substantiated history that can lead to peace. Our task on Pearl Harbor Day and on all war-making national DAYS is to make that history known to the next generations of young people.

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SOME OF OMNI'S HOPES: A WORLD FREE OF VIOLENCE AND ESPECIALLY ON DECEMBER 7 A WORLD FREE OF NATIONAL AGGRESSION, A SOCIETY IN WHICH THE WORTH OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS VALUED SO HIGHLY THAT KILLING IS UNACCEPTABLE, A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY PERSON'S POTENTIAL MAY BE FULFILLED, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, AN EARTH RESTORED.

GRASSROOTS NONVIOLENCE, WORLD PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROTECTING SPECIES AND THE EARTH. Read our brochure and our newsletters, attend our Steering Committee, become an active member of one or more of our committees, participate in our dozens of activities to see how these broad goals for building a Community of Peace are realized in action.