

To Have and Have Not: Southeast Asian Raw Materials and the Origins of the Pacific War

Jonathan Marshall



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Jonathan Marshall makes a provocative statement: it was not ideological or national security considerations that led the United States into war with Japan in 1941. Instead, he argues, it was a struggle for access to Southeast Asia's vast storehouse of commodities—rubber, oil, and tin—that drew the U.S. into the conflict. Boldly departing from conventional wisdom, Marshall reexamines the political landscape of the time and recreates the mounting tension and fear that gripped U.S. officials in the months before the war.

Unusual in its extensive use of previously ignored documents and studies, this work records the dilemmas of the Roosevelt administration: it initially hoped to avoid conflict with Japan and, after many diplomatic overtures, it came to see war as inevitable. Marshall also explores the ways that international conflicts often stem from rivalries over land, food, energy, and industry. His insights into "resource war," the competition for essential commodities, will shed new light on U.S. involvement in other conflicts—notably in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf.

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