

Hollywood Movie Slanders MacArthur

by Donald Phau

April 8—The recently released film about General Douglas MacArthur, “The Emperor,” continues the tradition of vile slanders against the renowned general, who represented a best of American military thinking into the 20th Century.

Premiered on March 6, the film stars Tommy Lee Jones as MacArthur. Beginning with MacArthur’s landing in Tokyo in 1945 as the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP) to take command of the American occupation of Japan, the film portrays MacArthur as a shouting, cursing, overweight thug. That in itself is a significant lie: the actual MacArthur never screamed, was fit and trim throughout his life, and was an intellectual.

The movie is 90% Hollywood fluff, centered on a love story between MacArthur’s fictitious legal assistant, General Fuller, and a Japanese girl he had met in college in the United States, before the war. The movie revolves around MacArthur’s order to Fuller, giving him 10 days to provide the evidence that Japan’s Emperor Hirohito ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor.

This is the context for the most significant lie of the film.

In the movie, MacArthur dispatches his assistant to Hirohito’s palace with an invitation to the Emperor to come to MacArthur’s headquarters. Coming from the general, such an “invitation” would be taken as a command. But the “invitation” never happened. In his autobiography *Reminiscences*, MacArthur wrote:

“Shortly after my arrival in Tokyo, I was urged by members of my staff to summon the Emperor to my headquarters as a show of power. I brushed the suggestions aside. “To do so,” I explained, “ would be to outrage the feelings of the Japanese people and make a martyr of the Emperor in their eyes. No, I shall wait and in time the Emperor will voluntarily come to see me. In this case, the patience of the East rather than the haste of the West will best serve our purpose.” He

added: “The Emperor did indeed shortly request an interview.”

MacArthur then very movingly described his first meeting with the Emperor, whom he understood was seen as a near-god by the Japanese people. While the movie accurately portrays Hirohito telling MacArthur, in an abbreviated statement, that he takes full responsibility for the war, Tommy Lee Jones’ reaction was a smile and a handshake. In his memoir MacArthur’s real reaction shows something very different.

“I tried to make it easy for him as I could, but I knew how deep and dreadful must be his agony of humiliation. I had an uneasy feeling he might plead his own cause against indictment as a war criminal. There was considerable outcry from some of the Allies, notably the Russians and the British, to include him in this category. Indeed the initial list proposed by them was headed by the Emperor’s name.

“Realizing the tragic consequences that would follow such an unjust action, I had stoutly resisted the efforts. When Washington seemed to be veering toward the British point of view, I had advised that I would need at least one million reinforcements would such an action be taken. I believed that if the Emperor were indicted, and perhaps hanged, as a war criminal, military government would have to be instituted throughout all Japan, and guerilla warfare would probably break out. The Emperor’s name had been stricken from the list. But of all of this he knew nothing.

“But my fears were groundless. What he said was this: ‘I come to you, General MacArthur, to offer myself to the judgment of the powers you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision made and action taken by my people in the conduct of the war.’ A tremendous impression swept me. This courageous assumption of a responsibility implicit with death, a responsibility clearly belied by facts of which I was fully aware, moved me to the very marrow of my bones. He was an Emperor by inherent birth, but in that instant I knew I faced the First Gentleman of Japan in his own right.”

That meeting was the beginning of a close working relationship that was key in rebuilding Japan. It was a Japan that for the next five years MacArthur helped shape into a major democratic power freed from the aristocratic class which had ruled Japan for centuries. It’s a MacArthur whom the British and Hollywood want to make sure the American people never know.