

Editorial

British policy leads to war

August not only marks the first anniversary of George Bush's infamous war against Iraq, but of the bombing raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki with which the United States ended the war against Japan 46 years ago. It is indeed easy and justified to condemn the United States on both counts, and President Bush for the former, and to overlook the role of the British—although they are disgustingly vocal to this day in pressing for the annihilation of Iraq as a nation.

A review of all the wars this century shows the hand of Great Britain, as well as its geopolitics, in setting them off.

More light was shed on this British role on Aug. 4, when the *Washington Post* carried a review of the book *The Great Pacific War*, written by Hector C. Bywater, a British naval expert, in the early 1920s. According to the reviewer, William H. Honan, Bywater's book was hotly debated in the West and in Japan.

Bywater had laid out a scenario for a Japanese surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet, which would open up the Philippines and Guam for capture. He then proposed a U.S. answering strategy of island hopping, to regain territory seized by the Japanese, as opposed to a frontal attack upon Japan itself. This did become the U.S. strategy in the Pacific. Most interesting is the fact that Japanese Admiral Yamamoto, according to Honan, adopted the strategy in Bywater's scenario, even though he himself did not advocate going to war.

In his book, Bywater had forecast an eventual U.S. victory, and correspondence has surfaced in the Japanese archives which corroborates that Yamamoto recognized the correctness of this view, but apparently the Japanese admiral hoped for a negotiated settlement. Most interesting is the contention by reviewer Honan that before Yamamoto's intervention—that is, before Bywater's scenario—the Japanese war plans were directed toward a strike against the Dutch East Indies. The British colonies would also have been threatened, but there is no assurance that—without Pearl Harbor—the United States would have been brought into the war. *Thus it would seem that the First World War had*

barely ended, when the British were planning the next.

The British also pioneered the use of terror-bombing tactics to subdue colonial populations. Thus, in the 1920s, the British bombed Iraq in order to force the Iraqis into submission. The British had been given a League of Nations mandate to rule Iraq, following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the close of the First World War. When the Iraqis tried to free themselves from this new form of despotism, the British used military force against them.

This practice of bombing colonial populations was extended to "police" actions by the British against the Indian population as well, and continued in Iraq, even into 1932. It is even reported that they used delayed-action bombs, which would explode as they were being removed from areas on which they had been dropped—a procedure designed to do the maximum damage to civilians.

When World War II came, Winston Churchill was an advocate of using bombing to instill physical terror in civilian populations, a tactic which led to the strategy of fire-bombing, which resulted in the overnight massacre of 35,000 Germans in Dresden, and in the destruction by fire of Tokyo. Such incendiary bombing was both a precursor of the use of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, and of the development of napalm bombs used in Vietnam and recently against Iraq.

In the 1920s and '30s, the United States opposed this kind of barbarity, and was in favor of the total abolition of aerial bombing. But the British refused to give up the practice. U.S. opposition, of course, did not last, and today we see the U.S. Senate seconding President Bush's (and Great Britain's) threat to renew the aerial bombardment against Iraq.

Certainly Hitler had to be defeated, and the Japanese were carrying out an imperialist policy in the Pacific, but the truth about how Pearl Harbor came about, and the way in which the British have traditionally manipulated the United States into wars, is a story which should be told. Lest it never stop.