"Only one war in my lifetime - the Second World War - has retained any vestige of moral core. Yet, even that one was contaminated by war culture on the "good" side.” Patricia Hynes.

Contents #1
- War Against Germany
  - Pauwels, Myths of the Good War
  - Wood, Worshipping the Myths of WWII
  - Hynes, Good to Bad War
  - Baker, For Pacifism (Dick)
- Roberts, US Soldiers and French Women
- War Against Japan
  - Roland Worth, US Embargo of Japan and Pearl Harbor
  - ICE Case Study, the Road to Pearl Harbor
  - Resister Hirabayashi v. US
  - Dick, Forgiveness, Japan and US

MYTHS OF WWII

The Myth of the Good War: America in World War II By Dr. Jacques R.
In the night of February 13-14, 1945, the ancient and beautiful capital of Saxony, Dresden, was attacked three times, twice by the RAF and once by the USAAF, the United States Army Air Force, in an operation involving well over 1,000 bombers. The consequences were catastrophic, as the historical city centre was incinerated and between 25,000 and 40,000 people lost their lives.[1] Dresden was not an important industrial or military centre and therefore not a target worthy of the considerable and unusual common American and British effort involved in the raid. The city was not attacked as retribution for earlier German bombing raids on cities such as Rotterdam and Coventry, either. In revenge for the destruction of these cities, bombed ruthlessly by the Luftwaffe in 1940, Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne and countless other German towns big and small had already paid dearly in 1942, 1943, and 1944. Furthermore, by the beginning of 1945, the Allied commanders knew perfectly well that even the most ferocious bombing raid would not succeed in “terrorizing [the Germans] into submission,”[2] so that it is not realistic to ascribe this motive to the planners of the operation. The bombing of Dresden, then, seems to have been a senseless slaughter, and looms as an even more terrible undertaking than the atomic obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which is at least supposed to have led to the capitulation of Japan.

In recent times, however, the bombing of countries and of cities has almost become an everyday occurrence, rationalized not only by our political leaders but also presented by our media as an effective military undertaking and as a perfectly legitimate means to achieve supposedly worthwhile objectives. In this context, even the terrible attack on Dresden has recently been rehabilitated by a British historian,
Frederick Taylor, who argues that the huge destruction wreaked on the Saxon city was not intended by the planners of the attack, but was the unexpected result of a combination of unfortunate circumstances, including perfect weather conditions and hopelessly inadequate German air defenses.[3] However, Taylor’s claim is contradicted by a fact that he himself refers to in his book, namely, that approximately 40 American “heavies” strayed from the flight path and ended up dropping their bombs on Prague instead of Dresden.[4] If everything had gone according to plan, the destruction in Dresden would surely have been even bigger than it already was. It is thus obvious that an unusually high degree of destruction had been intended. More serious is Taylor’s insistence that Dresden did constitute a legitimate target, since it was not only an important military centre but also a first-rate turntable for rail traffic as well as a major industrial city, where countless factories and workshops produced all sorts of militarily important equipment. A string of facts, however, indicate that these “legitimate” targets hardly played a role in the calculations of the planners of the raid. First, the only truly significant military installation, the Luftwaffe airfield a few kilometres to the north of the city, was not attacked. Second, the presumably crucially important railway station was not marked as a target by the British “Pathfinder” planes that guided the bombers. Instead, the crews were instructed to drop their bombs on the inner city, situated to the north of the railway station.[5] Consequently, even though the Americans did bomb the station and countless people perished in it, the facility suffered relatively little structural damage, so little, in fact, that it was again able to handle trains transporting troops within days of the operation.[6] Third, the great majority of Dresden’s militarily important industries were not located downtown but in the suburbs, where no bombs were dropped, at least not deliberately.[7]

It cannot be denied that Dresden, like any other major German city, contained militarily important industrial installations, and that at least some of these installations were located in the inner city and were therefore wiped out in the raid, but this does not logically lead to the conclusion that the attack was planned for this purpose. Hospitals and churches were also destroyed, and numerous Allied POWs who happened to be in the city were killed, but nobody argues that the raid was organized to bring that about. Similarly, a number of Jews and members of Germany’s anti-Nazi resistance, awaiting deportation and/or execution, were able to escape from prison during the chaos caused by the bombing,[8] but no one claims that this was the objective of the raid. There is no logical reason, then, to conclude that the destruction of an unknown number of industrial installations of greater or lesser military importance was the raison d’être of the raid. The destruction of Dresden’s industry – like the liberation of a handful of Jews –
was nothing more than an unplanned “by-product” of the operation.

It is frequently suggested, also by Taylor, that the bombing of the Saxon capital was intended to facilitate the advance of the Red Army. The Soviets themselves allegedly asked their western partners during the Yalta Conference of February 4 to 11, 1945, to weaken the German resistance on the eastern front by means of air raids. However, there is no evidence whatsoever that confirms such allegations. The possibility of Anglo-American air raids on targets in eastern Germany was indeed discussed at Yalta, but during these talks the Soviets expressed the concern that their own lines might be hit by the bombers, so they requested that the RAF and USAAF would not operate too far to the east.[9] (The Soviets’ fear of being hit by what is now called “friendly fire” was not unwarranted, as was demonstrated during the raid on Dresden itself, when a considerable number of planes mistakenly bombed Prague, situated about as far from Dresden as the Red Army lines were.) It was in this context that a Soviet general by the name of Antonov expressed a general interest in “air attacks that would impede enemy movements,” but this can hardly be interpreted as a request to mete out to the Saxon capital – which, incidentally, he did not mention at all – or to any other German city the kind of treatment that Dresden received on February 13-14. Neither at Yalta, nor at any other occasion, did the Soviets ask their Western Allies for the kind of air support that presumably materialized in the form of the obliteration of Dresden. Moreover, they never gave their approval to the plan to bomb Dresden, as is also often claimed.[10] In any case, even if the Soviets would have asked for such assistance from the air, it is extremely unlikely that their allies would have responded by immediately unleashing the mighty fleet of bombers that did in fact attack Dresden.

In order to understand why this is so, we have to take a close look at inter-Allied relations in early 1945. In mid- to late January, the Americans were still involved in the final convulsions of the “Battle of the Bulge,” an unexpected German counter-offensive on the western front which had caused them great difficulties. The Americans, British, and Canadians had not yet crossed the Rhine, had not even reached the western banks of that river, and were still separated from Berlin by more than 500 kilometers. On the eastern front, meanwhile, the Red Army had launched a major offensive on January 12 and advanced rapidly to within 100 kilometers of the German capital. The resulting likelihood that the Soviets would not only take Berlin, but penetrate deep into Germany’s western half before the war ended, greatly perturbed many American and British military and political leaders. Is it realistic to believe that, under those circumstances, Washington and London were eager to enable the Soviets to achieve even greater progress? Even if Stalin
had asked for Anglo-American assistance from the air, Churchill and Roosevelt might have provided some token assistance, but would never have launched the massive and unprecedented combined RAF-USAAF operation that the bombing of Dresden revealed itself to be. Moreover, attacking Dresden meant sending hundreds of big bombers more than 2,000 kilometers through enemy airspace, approaching the lines of the Red Army so closely that they would run the risk of dropping their bombs by mistake on the Soviets or being fired at by Soviet anti-aircraft artillery. Could Churchill or Roosevelt be expected to invest such huge human and material resources and to run such risks in an operation that would make it easier for the Red Army to take Berlin and possibly reach the Rhine before they did? Absolutely not. The American-British political and military leaders were undoubtedly of the opinion that the Red Army was already advancing fast enough.

Towards the end of January 1945, Roosevelt and Churchill prepared to travel to Yalta for a meeting with Stalin. They had asked for such a meeting because they wanted to make binding agreements about postwar Germany before the end of the hostilities. In the absence of such agreements, the military realities in the field would determine who would control which parts of Germany, and it looked very much as if, by the time the Nazis would finally capitulate, the Soviets would be in control of most of Germany and thus be able to unilaterally determine that country’s political, social, and economic future. For such a unilateral course of action, Washington and London themselves had created a fateful precedent, namely when they liberated Italy in 1943 and categorically denied the Soviet Union any participation in the reconstruction of that country; they did the same thing in France and Belgium in 1944.[11] Stalin, who had followed his allies’ example when he liberated countries in Eastern Europe, obviously did not need or want such a binding inter-allied agreement with respect to Germany, and therefore such a meeting. He did accept the proposal, but insisted on meeting on Soviet soil, namely in the Crimean resort of Yalta. Contrary to conventional beliefs about that Conference, Stalin would prove to be most accommodating there, agreeing to a formula proposed by the British and Americans and highly advantageous to them, namely, a division of postwar Germany into occupation zones, with only approximately one third of Germany’s territory – the later “East Germany” – being assigned to the Soviets. Roosevelt and Churchill could not have foreseen this happy outcome of the Yalta Conference, from which they would return “in an exultant spirit.”[12] In the weeks leading up to the conference, they expected the Soviet leader, buoyed by the recent successes of the Red Army and enjoying a kind of home-game advantage, to be a difficult and demanding interlocutor. A way had to be found to bring him down to earth, to condition him to make concessions despite being
the temporary favourite of the god of war.

It was crucially important to make it clear to Stalin that the military power of the Western Allies, in spite of recent setbacks in the Belgian Ardennes, should not be underestimated. The Red Army admittedly featured huge masses of infantry, excellent tanks, and a formidable artillery, but the Western Allies held in their hands a military trump which the Soviets were unable to match. That trump was their air force, featuring the most impressive collection of bombers the world had ever seen. This weapon made it possible for the Americans and the British to launch devastating strikes on targets that were far removed from their own lines. If Stalin could be made aware of this, would he not prove easier to deal with at Yalta?

It was Churchill who decided that the total obliteration of a German city, under the noses of the Soviets so to speak, would send the desired message to the Kremlin. The RAF and USAAF had been able for some time to strike a devastating blow against any German city, and detailed plans for such an operation, known as “Operation Thunderclap,” had been meticulously prepared. During the summer of 1944, however, when the rapid advance from Normandy made it seem likely that the war would be won before the end of the year, and thoughts were already turning to postwar reconstruction, a Thunderclap-style operation had begun to be seen as a means to intimidate the Soviets. In August 1944, an RAF memorandum pointed out that “the total devastation of the centre of a vast [German] city…would convince the Russian allies…of the effectiveness of Anglo-American air power.”[13]

For the purpose of defeating Germany, Thunderclap was no longer considered necessary by early 1945. But towards the end of January 1945, while preparing to travel to Yalta, Churchill suddenly showed great interest in this project, insisted that it be carried out tout de suite, and specifically ordered the head of the RAF Bomber Command, Arthur Harris, to wipe out a city in Germany’s east.[14] On January 25 the British Prime Minister indicated where he wanted the Germans to be “blasted,” namely, somewhere “in their [westward] retreat from Breslau [now Wroclaw in Poland].”[15] In terms of urban centres, this was tantamount to spelling D-R-E-S-D-E-N. That Churchill himself was behind the decision to bomb a city in Germany’s east is also hinted at in the autobiography of Arthur Harris, who wrote that “the attack on Dresden was at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than myself.”[16] It is obvious that only personalities of the calibre of Churchill were able to impose their will on the czar of strategic bombing. As the British military historian Alexander McKee has written, Churchill “intended to write [a] lesson on the night sky [of Dresden]” for the benefit of the Soviets. However, since the
USAAF also ended up being involved in the bombing of Dresden, we may assume that Churchill acted with the knowledge and approval of Roosevelt. Churchill’s partners at the top of the United States’ political as well as military hierarchy, including General Marshall, shared his viewpoint; they too were fascinated, as McKee writes, by the idea of “intimidating the [Soviet] communists by terrorising the Nazis.”[17] The American participation in the Dresden raid was not really necessary, because the RAF was undoubtedly capable of wiping out Dresden in a solo performance. But the “overkill” effect resulting from a redundant American contribution was perfectly functional for the purpose of demonstrating to the Soviets the lethality of Anglo-American air power. It is also likely that Churchill did not want the responsibility for what he knew would be a terrible slaughter to be exclusively British; it was a crime for which he needed a partner.

A Thunderclap–style operation would of course do damage to whatever military and industrial installations and communications infrastructure were housed in the targeted city, and would therefore inevitably amount to yet another blow to the already tottering German enemy. But when such an operation was finally launched, with Dresden as target, it was done far less in order to speed up the defeat of the Nazi enemy than in order to intimidate the Soviets. Using the terminology of the “functional analysis” school of American sociology, hitting the Germans as hard as possible was the “manifest function” of the operation, while intimidating the Soviets was its far more important “latent” or “hidden” function. The massive destruction wreaked in Dresden was planned – in other words, was “functional” – not for the purpose of striking a devastating blow to the German enemy, but for the purpose of demonstrating to the Soviet ally that the Anglo-Americans had a weapon which the Red Army, no matter how mighty and successful it was against the Germans, could not match, and against which it had no adequate defenses.

Many American and British generals and high-ranking officers were undoubtedly aware of the latent function of the destruction of Dresden, and approved of such an undertaking; this knowledge also reached the local commanders of the RAF and USAAF as well as the “master bombers.” (After the war, two master bombers claimed to remember that they had been told clearly that this attack was intended “to impress the Soviets with the hitting power of our Bomber Command.”)[18] But the Soviets, who had hitherto made the biggest contribution to the war against Nazi Germany, and who had thereby not only suffered the biggest losses but also scored the most spectacular successes, e.g. in Stalingrad, enjoyed much sympathy among low-ranking American and British military personnel, including bomber crews. This constituency would certainly have disapproved of any kind of plan to intimidate the Soviets, and most certainly of a
plan – the obliteration of a German city from the air – which they would have to carry out. It was therefore necessary to camouflage the objective of the operation behind an official rationale. In other words, because the latent function of the raid was “unspeakable,” a “speakable” manifest function had to be concocted.

And so the regional commanders and the master bombers were instructed to formulate other, hopefully credible, objectives for the benefit of their crews. In view of this, we can understand why the instructions to the crews with respect to the objectives differed from unit to unit and were often fanciful and even contradictory. The majority of the commanders emphasized military objectives, and cited undefined “military targets,” hypothetical “vital ammunition factories” and “dumps of weapons and supplies,” Dresden’s alleged role as “fortified city,” and even the existence in the city of some “German Army Headquarters.” Vague references were also frequently made to “important industrial installations” and “marshalling yards.” In order to explain to the crews why the historical city centre was targeted and not the industrial suburbs, some commanders talked about the existence there of a “Gestapo headquarters” and of “a gigantic poison gas factory.” Some speakers were either unable to invent such imaginary targets, or were for some reason unwilling to do so; they laconically told their men that the bombs were to be dropped on “the built-up city centre of Dresden,” or “on Dresden” tout court.[19] To destroy the centre of a German city, hoping to wreak as much damage as possible to military and industrial installations and to communication infrastructures, happened to be the essence of the Allied, or at least British, strategy of “area bombing.”[20] The crew members had learned to accept this nasty fact of life, or rather of death, but in the case of Dresden many of them felt ill at ease. They questioned the instructions with respect to the objectives, and had the feeling that this raid involved something unusual and suspicious and was certainly not a “routine” affair, as Taylor presents things in his book. The radio operator of a B-17, for example, declared in a confidential communication that “this was the only time” that “[he] (and others) felt that the mission was unusual.” The anxiety experienced by the crews was also illustrated by the fact that in many cases a commander’s briefing did not trigger the crews’ traditional cheers but were met with icy silence.[21]

Directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, the instructions and briefings addressed to the crews sometimes revealed the true function of the attack. For example, a directive of the RAF to the crews of a number of bomber groups, issued on the day of the attack, February 13, 1945, unequivocally stated that it was the intention “to show the Russians, when they reach the city, what our Bomber Command is capable of doing.”[22] Under these circumstances, it is hardly
surprising that many crew members understood clearly that they had to wipe Dresden from the map in order to scare the Soviets. A Canadian member of a bomber crew was to state after the war to an oral historian that he was convinced that the bombing of Dresden had aimed to make it clear to the Soviets “that they had to behave themselves, otherwise we would show them what we could also do to Russian cities.”[23]

The news of the particularly awful destruction of Dresden also caused great discomfort among British and American civilians, who shared the soldiers’ sympathy for the Soviet ally and who, upon learning the news of the raid, likewise sensed that this operation exuded something unusual and suspicious. The authorities attempted to exorcize the public’s unease by explaining the operation as an effort to facilitate the advance of the Red Army. At an RAF press conference in liberated Paris on February 16, 1945, journalists were told that the destruction of this “communications centre” situated close to “the Russian front” had been inspired by the desire to make it possible for the Russians “to continue their struggle with success.” That this was merely a rationale, concocted after the facts by what are called “spin doctors” today, was revealed by the military spokesman himself, who lamely acknowledged that he “thought” that it had “probably” been the intention to assist the Soviets.[24]

The hypothesis that the attack on Dresden was intended to intimidate the Soviets explains not only the magnitude of the operation but also the choice of the target. To the planners of Thunderclap, Berlin had always loomed as the perfect target. By early 1945, however, the German capital had already been bombed repeatedly. Could it be expected that yet another bombing raid, no matter how devastating, would have the desired effect on the Soviets when they would fight their way into the capital? Destruction wreaked within 24 hours would surely loom considerably more spectacular if a fairly big, compact, and “virginal” – i.e. not yet bombed – city were the target. Dresden, fortunate not to have been bombed thus far, was now unfortunate enough to meet all these criteria. Moreover, the British American commanders expected that the Soviets would reach the Saxon capital within days, so that they would be able to see very soon with their own eyes what the RAF and the USAAF could achieve in a single operation. Although the Red Army was to enter Dresden much later than the British and the Americans had expected, namely, on May 8, 1945, the destruction of the Saxon capital did have the desired effect. The Soviet lines were situated only a couple of hundred of kilometers from the city, so that the men and women of the Red Army could admire the glow of the Dresden inferno on the nocturnal horizon. The firestorm was allegedly visible up to a distance of 300 kilometers.
If intimidating the Soviets is viewed as the “latent,” in other words the real function of the destruction of Dresden, then not only the magnitude but also the timing of the operation makes sense. The attack was supposed to have taken place, at least according to some historians, on February 4, 1945, but had to be postponed on account of inclement weather to the night of February 13-14.[25] The Yalta Conference started on February 4. If the Dresden fireworks had taken place on that day, it might have provided Stalin with some food for thought at a critical moment. The Soviet leader, flying high after the recent successes of the Red Army, would be brought down to earth by this feat of his allies’ air forces, and would therefore turn out to be a less confident and more agreeable interlocutor at the conference table. This expectation was clearly reflected in a comment made one week before the start of the Yalta Conference by an American general, David M. Schlatter:

I feel that our air forces are the blue chips with which we will approach the post-war treaty table, and that this operation [the planned bombing of Dresden and/or Berlin] will add immeasurably to their strength, or rather to the Russian knowledge of their strength.[26]

The plan to bomb Dresden was not cancelled, but merely postponed. The kind of demonstration of military potency that it was supposed to be retained its psychological usefulness even after the end of the Crimean conference. It continued to be expected that the Soviets would soon enter Dresden and thus be able to see firsthand what horrible destruction the Anglo-American air forces were able to cause to a city far removed from their bases in a single night. Afterwards, when the rather vague agreements made at Yalta would have to be put into practice, the “boys in the Kremin” would surely remember what they had seen in Dresden, draw useful conclusions from their observations, and behave as Washington and London expected of them. When towards the end of the hostilities American troops had an opportunity to reach Dresden before the Soviets, Churchill vetoed this: even at that late stage, when Churchill was very eager for the Anglo-Americans to occupy as much German territory as possible, he still insisted that the Soviets be allowed to occupy Dresden, no doubt so they could benefit from the demonstration effect of the bombing.

**Dresden was obliterated in order to intimidate the Soviets** with a demonstration of the enormous firepower that permitted bombers of the RAF and the USAAF to unleash death and destruction hundreds of kilometers away from their bases, and the subtext was clear: this firepower could be aimed at the Soviet Union itself. This interpretation explains the many peculiarities of the bombing of Dresden, such as the magnitude of the operation, the unusual
participation in one single raid of both the RAF and USAAF, the choice of a “virginal” target, the (intended) enormity of the destruction, the timing of the attack, and the fact that the supposedly crucially important railway station and the suburbs with their factories and Luftwaffe airfield were not targeted. The bombing of Dresden had little or nothing to do with the war against Nazi Germany: it was an American British message for Stalin, a message that cost the lives of tens of thousands of people. Later that same year, two more similarly coded yet not very subtle messages would follow, involving even more victims, but this time Japanese cities were targeted, and the idea was to direct Stalin’s attention to the lethality of America’s terrible new weapon, the atomic bomb.\[27\] **Dresden had little or nothing to do with the war against Nazi Germany; it had much, if not everything, to do with a new conflict in which the enemy was to be the Soviet Union. In the horrible heat of the infernos of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Cold War was born.**

**Notes**


[9] Taylor, p. 190; Groehler, pp. 400-401. Citing a study about Yalta, the British author of the latest study of Allied bombing during World War II notes that the Soviets “clearly preferred to keep the RAF and the USAAF away from territory they might soon be occupying,” see C. Grayling, Among the Dead Cities: Was the Allied Bombing of Civilians in WWII a Necessity or a Crime?, London, 2006, p. 176.


[12] Ibid., p. 119.


[19] Ibid., p. 404.


[22] Quotation from Groehler, p. 404. See also Grayling, p. 260.


[27] A. C. Grayling, for example, writes in his new book on Allied bombing that “it is recognized
that one of the main motives for the atomb-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to demonstrate to the Russians the superiority in waponry that the United States had attained…In the case of Dresden something similar is regrettably true.”

JACQUES R. PAUWELS. The Myth of the Good War
The USA in World War II

First published in October 2002. 264 Pages / Paperback/ $24.95.

Visit the publisher's page for this book

This book offers a fresh and provocative look at the role of the USA in World War II. It spent four months on the nonfiction bestseller lists in Europe when it was first published in Belgium in 2001. Since then it has been translated into French, German and Spanish. Popular historian Jacques Pauwels attacks the widely held belief that World War II was the “good war,” the war in which America led the forces of democracy and freedom to victory over fascist dictatorship and Japanese militarism. He argues that the role of the USA in World War II was determined not by idealism, but by the interests of America's corporations and by the country's social, economic, and political leaders.

JACQUES R. PAUWELS has taught European history at the University of Toronto, York University, and the University of Western Ontario.

A WWII veteran's controversial perspective

WORSHIPPING THE MYTHS OF WORLD WAR II

Reflections on America's Dedication to War

Edward W. Wood, Jr

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**Table of Contents**

**Excerpt**

**Press Release**

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**Description:**

Is any war a “good war”? In *Worshipping the Myths of World War II*, the author takes a critical look at what he sees is America’s dedication to war as a panacea and as Washington’s primary method for leading the world. Articulating why he believes the lessons of World War II are profoundly relevant to today’s events, Edward W. Wood, Jr., reflects on such topics as the killing of innocents, which became increasingly accepted during the war; on how actual killing is usually ignored in war discussions and reporting; on the lifetime impact of frontline duty, which he knew firsthand; on the widely accepted concept of “the Greatest Generation”; on present criteria for judging war memoirs and novels; on the fallacy that the United States won the war largely on its own; and on the effect that the Holocaust had on our national concepts of evil and purity. His final chapter centers on how the “war on terror” is different from World War II—and why the myths created about the latter hide that reality.

2007 Outstanding Academic Title selection from *Choice Magazine*

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**About the Author(s)/Editor(s)**

Edward W. Wood, Jr., was severely wounded in World War II. A retired city planner, he is the author of *On Being Wounded* and *Beyond the Weapons of Our Fathers*. His articles, essays, and poetry have appeared in publications ranging from the U.S. Air Force Academy journal *War, Literature & the Arts* to *The Friends Journal*. He lives in Denver.

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**Reviews/Endorsements:**

"Edward Wood's beautifully written and articulately argued little book should be on the bedside reading table of presidential advisors, state department movers and shakers, military historians, and all concerned citizens who have given thought to the growing frequency and intensity of the world's armed hostilities...It is a book to be read slowly, perhaps in small doses, so that its echoes stay with the reader during his waking day, nagging, pricking, at his consciousness."

*War, Literature & the Arts: International Journal of the Humanities*
“Wood has written a heartfelt and searing indictment for anyone who would imagine that World War II should be called good or its warriors great. He was there. He knows the life-long scars of war for those who do the killing. Relentlessly he unmasks the romancing of war and reminds of its brutality, especially in industrial war with its inevitable murder and maiming of thousands if not millions of civilians. He critically reviews much of the literature about World War II and finds hope for a world without war only through an honest recognition of what war really is.”

Bishop Frederick Borsch, professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and author of *The Spirit Searches Everything: Keeping Life’s Questions*

“The aftermath of war stretches out for decades after war’s end. The truths and lies of war are best understood by the veterans of these conflicts, in particular those who served on the front lines. Ed Wood and his compatriots experience the human toll of war every day of their lives. We need to listen to them, and learn.”

Lori Grinker, photojournalist and author of *Afterwar: Veterans from a World in Conflict*

“*Worshipping the Myths of World War II* is an important addition to the literature of war and peace, exploring our nation’s descent into a calcified war mentality after World War II. Ed Wood is provocative and challenging, to be sure, but he also offers the solace of realistic and achievable means for breaking out of that mentality. He has given us clear direction for progress toward a ‘public maturity’ for the United States.”

Jeanne Herrick-Stare, senior fellow for civil liberties and human rights, Friends Committee on National Legislation

“The wizards of war have too long held sway in our country, telling us in Orwellian doublespeak that war is the best and only means to foster democracy and peace. Edward Wood pulls their curtain away, showing how politicians, pundits, and popularizers distort history by turning the tragedy and triumph of World War II into a parable about the virtues and benefits of all wars. And he shows, sadly, how Iraq is the Frankenstein creation of this misguided worldview. This is a powerful book that should give us all pause before we once again assent to the leadership of ideologues who assure us that might always makes right.”

Leonard Steinhorn, author of *Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boom Legacy*

“This intelligent and eloquent rumination, by a wounded veteran of ‘the good war,’ with its impassioned renunciation of all wars, could not be more timely. Whatever the moral core of World War II, which Edward Wood freely acknowledges, that experience has been used to create myths, from Vietnam to Iraq, which perpetuate the idea that war is a proper solution for the world’s problems. Wood not only dissects that mythology, in its political and artistic forms, but he points, with persuasive argument, to the possibility of a world without war.”

Howard Zinn, author of *Just War* and editor of *The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates*

**THE BOMBING OF ROYAN**

*World War II: The Good War Gone Bad*

Thursday, 09 August 2012 11:37 By H Patricia Hynes, Truthout | News Analysis
This is the first article in an irregularly appearing series, "Listening to Soldiers and Vets," featuring the voices of soldiers and veterans from armed conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries, voices whose clarity and moral fiber were forged in the crucible of war. http://truth-out.org/news/item/10664-world-war-ii-the-good-war-gone-bad

So long as we resort to war to settle differences between nations, so long will we have to endure the horrors, the barbarities and excesses that war brings. -British Air Marshall Sir Robert Saundby on the Allied bombing of Dresden

In January 2012, the White House and the Department of Defense released a pithy, strategic policy document, "Sustaining US Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense." Like all predecessor defense policies since World War II, its raison d'etre is maintaining American global supremacy through military superiority. And its premise: "Everybody else must be weaker," to sustain US national security. Cold wars and hot wars since World War II have turned us into a self-appointed global cop, notes Army veteran and international policy specialist Andrew Bacevich. As for statecraft, he adds, "Washington has become an intellectual dead zone."

The seeds of American militarism spawned by the Second World War compel us to probe beneath the "good war" moniker because it is the poster war that keeps war acceptable in our society. In this piece, the soldiers' and veterans' voices are unique in being few - it was our most popular war, critics are rare and in from voices of highly educated veterans and high-level military commanders.

The Good War Gone Bad

I was born as British and American troops were establishing beachheads in Taranto and Salerno, Italy, for what would be a protracted and deadly campaign to rout Mussolini’s fascist regime. Two of my mother's brothers and two other uncles, all first generation Americans, served in the war. Only one war in my lifetime - the Second World War - has retained any vestige of moral core. Yet, even that one was
contaminated by war culture on the "good" side.

In the world war to defeat fascism and that ended the Holocaust, the Allies committed a legion of militarily unnecessary and criminal acts, from British and American bombers intentionally firebombing hundreds of thousands of civilians in German and Japanese cities to mass serial and gang rape of German women by Russians at the war's end. More than 100,000 women and girls in Berlin were raped over a period of eight weeks in spring 1945 by conquering Allied Russian soldiers, men drunk on alcohol intentionally left behind by German soldiers to impair their fighting ability.(1) Churchill caused an estimated three million Indians to starve as British authorities precipitated the 1943-44 Bengal famine in India by exporting Indian grain to feed Britain and extracting India's industrial production to support the Allied war effort.(2) In showcasing the atom bomb by dropping it on a country in the process of negotiating a truce, the United States instigated the cold-war buildup of nuclear weapons, the specter of nuclear war, the duplicitous "Atoms for Peace" program and a multitude of proxy wars.

Thus, even the allegedly just war, World War II, was corrupted in means and consequences. Moreover, Allied corruption pre-dated the outbreak of the war. In his history of nonviolence, Mark Kurlansky indicts the "captains of banking and industry in the United States, Britain and France"(3) and their acquiescent political leaders for a decade of industrial and financial support of Germany during which period Hitler made his fascist intentions known.

The Bombing of Royan: ABombardier's Reflections on Air War

*War corrupts everyone who engages in it ... I and others had become unthinking killers of innocent people.* -"Just War"(4)

The probing journey made in 1966 by World War II veteran and historian Howard Zinn to the French Atlantic coast town of Royan - a town he had helped to destroy as a bombardier in a 1945 Allied air-ground assault - sheds piercing light into military culture and the inevitable inhumanity of war. The official US version, parroted by The New York Times, of the three-day air assault on Royan with incendiaries, nearly one-half million gallons of napalm bombs and 2,000 pound demolition bombs pronounced the routing of "stubborn German garrisons ... still holding out" a success.(5) Zinn, however, uncovered media falsification, military hubris and needless tragedy in his pursuit of the facts behind the bombing mission.

The April 1945 mission took place three weeks before the end of the war in Europe. Garrisoned German troops in Royan were waiting for the declaration of war's end to surrender; they were not resisting or attacking. Further, while officially recorded as a mission directed at German installations, Zinn points out that it was designed as saturation, not precision, bombing with little ability to target the German garrison. "From our great height (25,000 feet), I remember distinctly seeing the bombs explode in the town, flaring like matches struck in a fog. I was completely unaware of the human chaos below."(6)

The town center of Royan had been mistakenly bombed three months earlier by British bombers who missed their military target; the April bombing completed its obliteration. Jellied gasoline, known as napalm, was first used by the US Eighth Air Force on Royan,
serving as a trial test of the American Air Force's new skin-burning incendiary weapon and a precursor to its massive use in the Korean War and later in Vietnam.

A French admiral's memoir, published in 1966, offered further insight into the why of the Royan assault. In a word, morale. It would boost French ground troop morale to follow the bombing with some invigorating end-of-war fighting, the admiral explains. Moreover, French military pride demanded that the enemy not be allowed to surrender but must be conquered.(7) The living, burning furnace of French people, homes, forest and town center was, as the military memoirist recalls, a blaze of glory that sharpened the appetite for further military action and glory on the eve of the war's end. The troops were ordered next to attack the French island of Oleron - "... a conquest without military value ...")(8)

Zinn collates the venal motives behind the assault on the small French Atlantic town and uses them as a mirror for the macro dynamics of war culture. Blinding military ambition and pride in compiling victories, the quest for honor and glory even in militarily useless battles, the irresistible urge to try out new weapons and a habit of obedience to duty such that one does not step out of line: all generate and intensify the one-way momentum of war beyond the bounds of just war principles and international conventions - even for the "good guys." Zinn's unvarnished account of the bombing of Royan serves as an archetype of air war's morbid legacy throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries.

The Slippery Slope of Air War

The first bombs used in war were dropped from Italian planes in 1911 onto desert oases near Tripoli, to kill Turks and Arabs and to win possession of what would be named Libya. At home, poets feted the pilots and rhapsodized about the sound and fury of the new aerial warfare. Other colonial powers followed suit against other colonial people. Britain routinely used aerial bombing throughout its empire to control uprisings, with no regard for whom and what were bombed. France maintained order in Syria by bombing villages around Damascus to the point of near total destruction in early 1926.(9) European powers considered rebellious colonial peoples as "savages," "infidels" and inferior to themselves and, thus, outside the conventions of war they more or less honored with each other.

In 1925, Spain bombed Moroccan villages and, in breach of the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning biological and chemical warfare, dropped mustard gas. In a similar quest to liquidate "inferiors," Japan dropped incendiary bombs throughout the provisional capital of China, Chungking, in 1939, creating massive infernos that consumed wood houses and people.

While the specter and likelihood of air warfare grew, Europeans resisted full-scale air warfare against each other's citizens until the Spanish Civil War. From 1936 to 1939, Germany dropped millions of bombs on Spanish cities, towns and villages to crush the resistance to Franco's fascism. The devastation of the Basque cultural center and capital, Guernica, with a mix of fire, splinter and high explosive bombs, caught the Western world's attention. Media coverage of Basque people being bombed and Picasso's modernist depiction of human and animal agony and terror in Guernica spoke to the West in a way that European and Japanese bombing of colonial peoples had not - because they had bombed "their own." It also set a precedent for bombing human settlements in the Second World War.(10)
Bombing of Cities in World War II

Are the former Allied nations willing ... to question the morality of means by which they won the war ...? -Mark Anderson

Bombing between Allied and Axis Powers began with British bombing of German military targets and industrial targets, which also destroyed working-class neighborhoods. The Nazis retaliated with the blitzkrieg of British cities, killing an estimated 40,000 civilians over six months. British strategic bombing of German military and industrial targets traveled swiftly down a slippery slope to area bombing of whole cities with incendiary bombs followed by high-explosive bombs that prevented Germans from fighting the fires. One night's air attack on Hamburg killed 50,000 residents. Plans were set in place to kill millions of German civilians through urban bombing, in order to destroy citizen morale. (11) Once the logic of bombing took over - obliterate as much as possible as quickly as possible to end the war as soon as possible - the rights of civilians in armed conflict, as defined by international conventions, vanished. Given the moral abhorrence of the Nazi genocide of European Jews, the extreme scale of Nazi war crimes and the status of World War II as a just war, the Anglo-American bombing of 131 German cities and towns, which killed up to half a million civilians and wounded nearly a million in cataclysmic firestorms, has not been scrutinized until recently.

At best, we do have a few clear-eyed veterans of that war who grasped war's slippery slope and inevitable descent into barbarity. British Air Marshall Sir Robert Saundby wrote of the Allied bombing of Dresden:

It is not so much this or the other means of making war that is immoral or inhumane. What is immoral is war itself. Once full-scale war has broken out it can never be humanized or civilized and if one side attempted to do so it would be most likely to be defeated. So long as we resort to war to settle differences between nations, so long will we have to endure the horrors, the barbarities and excesses that war brings[12].

Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

'The use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender. -Adm. William D. Leahy

The saturation bombing of German and Japanese cities, which incinerated, poisoned and suffocated hundreds of thousands of civilians in cataclysmic firestorms, seasoned the US government for dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the first atomic blast, which killed 100,000 residents of Hiroshima immediately, the grievous radiation sickness of survivors was not anticipated, nor was it believed when reported. Without any reconsideration, a second bomb - this one plutonium - was dropped on Nagasaki, killing 70,000 outright. The American military censored all documentation and photo images of the two bombs' unparalleled human devastation,(13) sheltering Americans from the horrors of what our government perpetrated on Japanese civilians: women, men and children instantly reduced to ash. Likewise, the post-war US occupying authority forbade, under penalty of law, Japanese citizens to own pictures of the atomic bomb destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

A teenager in Nagasaki on August 9, Kyoko Hayashi ran from the blast with a "pack of
people whose hands, feet, faces no longer looked human."(14) As a survivor, a hibakusha, she feels that a unique violence of the atomic bomb is that it destroyed the fundamental human reciprocity of those who die and those who see them off. Near the age of 70, she visited Trinity site, the Air Force Atomic Museum and the Science Museum at Los Alamos where photos, objects and films about the history of the atomic bomb were shown. (She noted the audiences were comprised of white people only.) Of this soul-wrenching experience, she wrote, "I understand that winners create a proud history ... The world did not need your experiment."(15)

At the time of the atomic bombing, Japanese peace negotiations were underway in Moscow, negotiations of which President Truman knew at least three months before the bombs were dropped.(16) Moreover, Japan's emperor had telegraphed Truman in July 1945 (by which time sixty-six of Japan's largest cities had been extensively firebombed) asking for peace discussions.(17)

American military leaders from all branches of the armed forces, among them Generals Eisenhower, Arnold, Marshall and MacArthur; and Admirals Leahy, Nimitz and Halsey strongly dissented from the decision to use the bombs - some prior to August 1945, some in retrospect - for the following military and moral reasons. Japan was already defeated and in peace negotiations with Russia; surrender was imminent. Moreover, Russia was willing to enter the war against Japan, if necessary. Bombing dense human settlements was barbarous, immoral and would shock world opinion; and a demonstration bombing away from residential areas (also suggested by some atomic bomb scientists) could be used instead to force immediate surrender. The top military commanders concurred that the decision to use the atomic bomb was political, not military.(18)

The 1946 United States Strategic Bombing Survey drew the same conclusion, adding that Allied bombing of cities in Germany and American bombing in Japan did not appreciably shorten or win the war. In his 1994 memoir, John Kenneth Galbraith, who had conducted the 1946 US Strategic Bombing Survey, observes that in all subsequent US wars in which air warfare dominated, it did not win or affect the war's outcome because of the "extensively random destructiveness of air warfare."(19)

**Aftermath**

*The remarkable goodwill and credibility enjoyed by the United States at the close of the Second World War was dissipated country by country, intervention by intervention.* - "Killing Hope"(20) MORE: http://truth-out.org/news/item/10664-world-war-ii-the-good-war-gone-bad

**HITLER, THE JEWS, AND PACIFISM**

Nicholson Baker in "Why I'm a Pacifist: The Dangerous Myth of the Good War," Harper's (May 2011) argues that Hitler was foremost a hostage-taker, and that the allies early in the war at least should have tried to negotiate with Hitler to rescue Jews, as the pacifists at the time urged (Abraham Kaufman, Dorothy Day, Jessie
Wallace Hughan, Rabbi Abraham Cronbach, Vera Brittain, Arthur Ponsonby, Clarence Pickett, Bertha Bracey, Runham Brown, Grace Beaton, Victor Gollancz, to name a few). Instead, the allies chose retribution, air war, firebombing, while the Jewish Holocaust continued. The pacifists were practical (there were numerous smaller examples of saving victims of Hitler's enmity); they sought to save lives. --Dick

JAPAN

The Way to Pearl Harbor: US vs Japan
Yuichi Arima

I. Case Background
II. Environment Aspect
III. Conflict Aspect
IV. Env - Conflict Overlap
V. Related Information

ICE Case Studies
Number 118,
December, 2003

ICE Home
ICE Cases
Possible ICE Cases
ICE Template
The ICE Expert System
Undertaking and Coding ICE Case Studies
Site Map

Mandala Home
Trade Environment Database
Inventory of Conflict and Environment
Global Classroom
E-Town
Environment, Statistics and Policy
Site Map
I. CASE BACKGROUND

1. Abstract

Japan is extremely poor in natural resources, and the situation was not much different in the pre-World War II era. Consequently, Japan had to depend on trade heavily to function as a modern nation, and it was a serious and vital issue for Japan to keep all crucial strategic resources, particularly oil, coming in to it from the outside world. If the route for Japan to obtain these materials was cut off, and therefore, the strategic resources were stopped from coming to Japan, there would basically be only two choices left for Japan. One is to lower the level of function as a modern nation to where it could meet the level of domestic productivity for natural resources. And two is to go out actively and find a way to gain what it needed to maintain its function as a modern nation. The conflict and negotiation between the US and Japan in the pre-World War II period illustrates a good example of the case and explains why Japan went to war against the US. The US, the biggest oil supplier for Japan at the time, imposed the oil embargo on Japan in July, 1941, and it helped the Japanese to make up their minds to fight against the Americans. Thus, in a way, the attack on Pearl Harbor was not a surprise one at all; it was a necessary result of the conflict and negotiation.
2. Description

The war Japan fought against the United States was a hopeless war for the Japanese, which they had basically no chance to win. Even many government leaders of Japan knew that at the time. However, at the same time, it was the war that they had to fight. That is because Japan’s national interest and the US one over China collided each other, and the Japanese leaders simply refused to bow before the US.

Japan had sent its troops in China and the US demanded Japan to withdraw from there. To back up the demand and to make Japan comply with it, the US even imposed the oil embargo on Japan. The attitude that the US took during a series of negotiations toward Japan was very formidable and little room for compromise was given, and as a result, the Japanese leaders had to make a very difficult decision about the nation’s course of action, whether they should accept the US demand or refused to do so and prepare for the war against the US. Needless to say, they chose to fight and faced a disastrous result later. But why China was so important to Japan? And what did the oil embargo mean to Japan? The following would try to explain these whys.

The Era of Imperialism and the Wake of Japan

Japan, under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, closed its doors to the outside-world in the early 17th century with an only exception of Deshima in Nagasaki, a small restricted port-area, where only the Portuguese and Dutch were allowed to put in at. During this period, it was strictly prohibited for any general Japanese people to make contact with the outside-world; anyone who did was very much likely to be sentenced to death [1]. The situation remained so for more than 200 years. Since Japan was an islands-nation surrounded by the ocean it was relatively easy for the Japanese to maintain national isolation policy. In fact, it was a very peaceful 200-year-period without any huge war. However, this peaceful time was about to end as four American battleships, including two with steam-engine that the Japanese had never seen before, led by Commodore Matthew Perry of the US Navy appeared in the Edo (Tokyo) Bay in 1853 [2].

While Japan was enjoying a peaceful time, the world was changing rapidly and the era of Imperialism had begun. The western imperial powers took whole African continent and divided it up as they desired. The wave of western imperialism reached Asia as well. By the mid 19th century, the British had gained the control of India, Myanmar, Singapore, and Malaya.
(Malaysia). The French had controlled Indochina, and the Dutch had colonized East India (Indonesia). The United States was a late-starter in Asia, but also expanded its presence and had put Philippines under its control in 1898 [3]. Even the Qin Dynasty of China was defeated by the British in the Opium Wars (1840-1843, 1856-1860), and became a prime target of the imperial powers. The world was in such situation when Perry came to Japan.

It was a very shocking fact for the Japanese that even the Qin Dynasty of China, which had probably been the strong power in Asia and considered as the sleeping lion, could do only a little against the British and their weapons with the latest technologies. Now Japan was the next, the Japanese leaders thought. China’s defeat actually put the Japanese leaders in a situation presented with a difficult choice: Should they keep the isolationism and fight against anyone who would dare to open the door, or should they open the door by themselves and try to learn about the world? The Japanese leaders were convinced by the China’s defeat that it was impossible for them to repel the hand of western imperialists by force; if even China could not keep the westerns away and stand alone, there was no hope for Japan. Consequently, Japan abandoned its closed-door policy finally [4]. Furthermore, the Tokugawa shogunate was thrown away and it ceded a way to the Meiji restoration (1868).

The leaders of the Meiji government were well-aware that if they would want to defend their national dignity and be treated equally with other western imperial powers, Japan had to become like these powers [5]. In other words, they chose to become rather a predator than a miserable victim, and it set a rail for Japan to move toward militarism. Japan under the Meiji government rapidly modernized the nation under the slogan of fukoku kyohei (enrich the country, strengthen the military) [6].

When Japan took its first step out from the 250-year isolationism in the mid 19th century, it was nothing but a weak and far-less-advanced nation compared to the west. However, within 30 years Japan emerged as the strongest power in Asia, and started to expand [7]. In 1894, Japan defeated China (Sino-Japanese War) and gained Taiwan. In 1904, Japan even fought a war against the Russian Empire and surprised the whole world with unexpected victory. As a result, Japan succeeded to exclude the Russian influence from Korea. The aspiration of Japan for imperialism was spurred as it annexed Korea in 1910 and established the state of Manchuria, which was nothing but a puppet government, in 1932 [8].

**War with China and Conflict with the US**

In 1937, Japan went to war against China. As the war increased its scale, Japan advocated the construction of new order in East Asia and made its intention clear to establish a new world order in the region, which had Japan on top as a leader. As the US national interest in China was infringed by such attitude of Japan and the Washington government was provoked, and an imposition of economic sanction against Japan started to be discussed to
restrain Japan’s aggression. [9]

However, the World War II began in 1939 as Hitler and Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Moreover, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed an alliance treaty and formed the Triple Axis in 1940. Although the general public in America was unwilling to be involved in the war in Europe, President Frankly D. Roosevelt of the US felt that it was his responsibility to assist the Great Britain. Also, there was apprehension among some people at the time that if Japan attacked the British colonies in the Asia-Pacific region while the mother-land of Britain was under the attack of Germany it would lead to the collapse of the British Empire. So, Roosevelt believed that to defend the British territories in the Asia-Pacific region the US should take a firm line with Japan’s further expansion, and demanded Japan to withdraw from China. Even within the State Department the hardliners, who insisted that if the US showed a strong opposition and took a firm attitude to Japan’s expansion Japan would back off, dominated others, and warning from some people like Joseph Grew, the US Ambassador to Japan, that sanction would rather drive Japan to move to south than make it withdraw from China and eventually cause a war was neglected [10].

Economic Sanctions, Negotiations, and War
>From 1939 to 1941, the US gradually tightened the level of economic sanction. Ironically, however, such squeeze could not deter Japan’s aggression but rather provoked it to take more aggressive actions instead [11]. The vicious circle of retaliations and eventually resulted in the collapse of the US-Japan relationship.

Japanese Reliance Upon US Scrap-Metal [t-1]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1939, the US notified Japan that it would renounce the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation that was signed by both countries in 1911. President Roosevelt, then, went on to the imposition of partial embargo of gasoline for aircraft and scrap-metal on Japan in July 1940. Japan countered the partial embargo by advancing its troops to the northern Indo-China, and the US matched the Japan’s expansion with the addition of more subjects to the list of partial embargo. This vicious circle of retaliations escalated and reached its peak when Japan moved even into the southern Indo-China in July, 1941 and the US replied to it by freezing the Japanese assets in the US and, furthermore, by the complete oil embargo on Japan [12]. As a result, the Japanese leaders found themselves in an extremely difficult situation in which they had to make their decision out of two options: to bow before the US, or to fight a desperate war against the US.
At the time there were mainly three issues between the US and Japan to be solved in the negotiations [13].

(1) Tripartite Pact of Alliance: The US urged Japan to withdraw from the alliance with Germany and Italy.
(2) Southern Indo-China: The US demanded Japan to withdraw from the southern Indo-China.
(3) China: The US demanded Japan to withdraw from China.

Among these points, there was a room for both countries to come up with compromising plans about the first two issues. However, Cordell Hull, the US Secretary of the State, was very reluctant to make any compromise on the third issue, namely about China. At this point, the Japanese leaders still had a little hope to settle the issues by negotiations so that the war would be avoided. The Japanese side proposed some plans, too. However, the US eventually refused to accept any plans presented by Japan and replied to Japan with the final proposition called the “Hull Note,” which contained only US original demands on issues on November 26th, 1941. As a result, the war became inevitable.

China
As mentioned above, one of the demands that the US made to Japan was the withdrawal from China, and Japan was totally unwilling to comply with the demand. But why was China so important to Japan? There were mainly two reasons: face-saving and national security.

(1) Face-saving
The withdrawal from China was absolutely impossible to accept for Japan because Japan had already made huge sacrifices in China, in terms of financial costs, military costs, and human costs, to maintain its presence. Furthermore, Japan’s foreign policy was carried out in the name of Emperor, or Tennoh, who was perceived as a son of heaven by the general public in Japan. Therefore, once the policy, which was regarded as the will of heaven, was determined it was not to be taken back. If Japan did comply with the demand of the U.S. and withdrew from China, many people thought that the wealth of the empire would have been reduced by far, and the prestige of the empire would have been severely damaged. Then, the Japanese leaders did not think that they knew any way to account such withdrawal to the people of Japan, and believed that, even if they could manage to accept the demand from the US, the general public would not. The Japanese leaders were even afraid that the compliance with the demand might cause a military coup de’ tat or riots among people and that would overthrow not only the government but also the imperial system, which meant that even life of Emperor might possibly be in danger. Thus, the withdrawal from China was, in any means, unacceptable for Japan [14].
National security

The withdrawal from China was also unacceptable for the security reason. When Hull demanded Japan to withdraw from China, the Japanese leaders believed that Hull meant the withdrawal from Manchuria as well. Manchuria’s strategic location was very important to Japan’s national security. Without Manchuria it would have made it very difficult to defend Korea, which held the biggest strategic importance for Japan’s national security. Ever since Japan opened the door, the leaders of Japan had always been afraid of Korea being controlled by the third party, such as China and Russia. After all, both the Sino-Japanese War (1894) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904) were fought over the control of Korea. To secure Korea Japan needed Manchuria, and thus, the withdrawal from China that was likely to demand the withdrawal from Manchuria as well was not acceptable at all.

Oil

The US imposed the oil embargo on Japan on August 1st, 1941 to make Japan comply with its demands, and the embargo was a fatal shot to Japan’s foreign policy makers, which drove them into the corner. The table below shows main exporters and importers of oil in 1935 [t-2].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Oil Exporters in 1935</th>
<th>Main Oil Importers in 1935</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6,958 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>6,860 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>6,221 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutch East India</strong> (Indonesia)</td>
<td>5,139 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3,369 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2,279 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>10,487 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6,390 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4,509 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4,366 kt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3,680 kt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Japan's Dependence on Oil Import in 1940 [t-3]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country From</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>btw 3,820 - 4,366 kt</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch East India (Indonesia)</td>
<td>btw 621 - 709 kt</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Japan was very poor in most of natural resources, and it had to rely on import of these resources to function as a modern state. Among many natural resources, oil was one of the most crucial strategic materials that Japan desperately needed. Japan could not produce oil within its borders, even for 10% of its domestic consumption. At the time, Japan had relied very much on the US, which supplied Japan about 80% of oil that was consumed in the island-nation \[15\]. In other words, the power of life or death was in the hand of the American president. And President Roosevelt decided to choke Japan by keeping all oil, not even one drop, from going to Japan to make it comply with the demand of the US. Japan had also tied an economic treaty with Netherlands, which promised Japan the supply of oil (approximately 13% of the oil need) from the Dutch East India (Indonesia). However, the Dutch broke the treaty and followed the America’s oil embargo in August of 1941 as well. That meant that there was no oil supply for Japan from the outside world, and the Japanese leaders had to find an alternative way to gain oil. Only option that the Japanese leaders could come up with was to take the Dutch East India and control oil fields. However, it was clear that if Japan just moved to south the war would become inevitable. The oil stock Japan had was only for a year and half, and time was running out. The Japanese leaders had to make up their minds as quickly as possible. If the war was unavoidable and they chose to fight, the longer they would wait the lesser the chance for victory would be because of the limited oil stock, which would be spent even during the peace time. The final decision the leaders of Japan made was war, though most of them knew that their chance to beat the US was very slim, and on December 7th in 1941, the Japanese airplanes launched from the aircraft-carriers carried out a surprise attack on the US military bases in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

3. Duration

1937 - 1945

It was the 1937 Japanese invasion of China that brought a crack between the United States and Japan up to surface. The US took a critical attitude toward the Japanese invasion and the crack became larger and deeper when Japan decided to go south in search of oil and other natural resources in 1940.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steel industry raw materials</th>
<th>88%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What good are principles if we suspend them each time there is a crisis?” asks Hirabayashi, at an appeal hearing over 40 years after his imprisonment for opposing the relocation of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Assembled from interviews, articles, and Hirabayashi’s journal entries, the author’s family provides insight into how the accidental civil rights pioneer felt throughout his prison sentences. The strong faith afforded to him by his family’s upbringing and Quaker allegiance guided Hirabayashi to conscientiously object to the war effort, but his strong desire to be treated as a full citizen of the United States and his belief in constitutional equality shaped his resolve to object to discrimination. At one point, Hirabayashi refuses bail on the grounds that being forced to live in an internment camp would be at odds with his identity as an American citizen, and he later hitchhikes 1,600 miles to serve on a road camp outside of military grounds. The reliance on his journal make Hirabayashi’s odyssey through the judiciary system difficult to follow. In addition, particular trial details are summarized by third-party reports, while the lives of his parents, wife, and children are glossed over. However, in portraying Hirabayashi’s fight for his own American dream, the book successfully reminds us of the struggles needed to secure our freedoms today. (Apr.)

Reviewed on: 02/04/2013

Giving and Asking Forgiveness: Japan and US
by Dick Bennett, December 22, 2012

Following WWII, with the assistance of Frank Buchman’s Moral Re-armament Movement, Japanese leaders began to apologize to the nations and peoples it had harmed by its invasions, exploitations, and killings. In 1950 Japanese emissaries visited European countries and the US for reconciliation. One of the delegates spoke to the US Senate and House and expressed “our sincere regret that Japan has broken an almost century-old friendship.” He received a standing ovation.

In 1955 the Japanese government sent a representative to the Philippines to ask forgiveness for Japanese atrocities during the war. In 1957 a similar apology was given to the Korean government. In the same year, the pursuit of reconciliation intensified when the Prime Minister of Japan personally visited seven Southeast Asian nations to express his sorrow at the war, apologize, and ask forgiveness. The Washington Evening Star commented that surely Premier Kishi had performed “one of the most unusual missions ever undertaken by a statesman of his rank.” Solving the problems and breaking the chain of hate caused by
Japanese colonial expansion were at last sincerely begun. And finally, in 1978 Japan began to accept refugees from the conquered countries.

In 1950 the Japanese delegation to the US included the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The New York Times commented in an editorial, “If they, too, felt that they had something to forgive they had achieved a miracle.” The Saturday Evening Post said: “The idea of a nation admitting it could be mistaken about anything has a refreshing impact. . . . Perhaps even Americans could think up a few past occasions of which it could be safely admitted, ‘We certainly fouled things up that time.’” Forty five years later in 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary ceremonies marking the atomic bombings, the mayor of Hiroshima apologized for the “unbearable suffering that Japanese colonial domination and war inflicted on so many people.” And the mayor of Nagasaki spoke in similar terms at a ceremony in his city, adding this significant point: “Without reflection and apology on Japan’s own past, our calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons will not be heard by the people of the world.”

Unfortunately, these apologies for their nation’s atrociousness failed to inspire the United States with similar considerateness for other countries or to impede US development of ever more destructive nuclear weapons. The Japanese apologized for Pearl Harbor, even though it was the inevitable, atrocious response to US colonial policy. As Roland Worth, Jr., explains: “. . .the United States knowingly and intentionally imposed economic strangulation upon Japan” (preceding the bombing of Pearl Harbor), “aware that the Japanese economy was being wrecked to a degree that would have been intolerable if this nation had been on the receiving end. The US embraced a severe embargo ‘knowing full well its probable result. Hence . . .the Pacific war was caused by the United States launching a policy of economic destruction against the Japanese nation” (218).

As the Saturday Evening Post suggested, the US had also “fouled things up” in the past. It was a colonial competitor with Japan in the Pacific and East Asian rim; its embargo drove Japan to the violence of Pearl Harbor. It too should apologize for the “war without mercy,” as John Dower epitomizes WWII in the Pacific, in which so many died needlessly. Pearl Harbor offers “an abiding lesson . . .that has been little noticed,” Worth writes. “Never inflict upon another major military power a policy which would cause you yourself to go to war. . . . And don’t be surprised that if they do decide to retaliate, that they seek out a time and a place that inflicts the maximum harm and humiliation upon your cause” (219).

But the war was not the only “foul-up,” to repeat the euphemism. The atomic bombs led quickly to the US development of hydrogen bombs. The US forcibly removed citizens of the Marshall Islands from their homes in order to test over fifty hydrogen bombs. Today testing continues in myriad ways. In what The New York Times described as a moral miracle, mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki apologized for their country’s atrocities in war, desiring to abolish nuclear weapons, the only rational policy, while the US to this day has offered no apologies for the embargo or for the nuclear destruction of two civilian cities, while it continues to develop more nuclear weapons.

Without reflection and apology by US leaders for their extreme embargo prior to Pearl Harbor and for their nuclear bombings and continued preparation for nuclear holocaust, their talk about peace and nuclear weapons control will not be trusted by the people of the world.

References:
See earlier newsletters on “Pearl Harbor Day”/Colonial Pacific World War II.
MARY LOUISE ROBERTS. WHAT SOLDIERS DO: SEX AND THE AMERICAN GI IN WORLD WAR II FRANCE.

This clear-eyed examination of what randy American soldiers got up to in France from D-Day through 1946 strips away the sentimentality from the overworked, cliché portrayal of the Greatest Generation. Yes, the GIs fought, and fought well, University of Wisconsin historian Roberts (Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin de Siècle France) acknowledges, but when they weren't engaging the enemy, they were engaging—or trying to engage—local women. As Roberts shows, the soldiers didn't always conduct themselves well when pursuing French members of the opposite sex, and they didn't always seek consent: to some GIs, their invasion of France entitled them to possess mesdemoiselles as well as le territoire. Roberts zeroes in on three kinds of interactions between GIs and French women—romance, prostitution, and rape—to explore the larger political and martial power struggles between the allied nations of France and the U.S. In the end, of course, the former regained its autonomy, but its men were portrayed as emasculated for their inability to save their country and their women, and France's international power declined. Roberts convincingly argues, in this focused, alternative military history, that libidinous American GIs played an important role in that shift. 23 b&w illus. (June)

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