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## Britannia at Bay

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Haggie, Paul. *Britannia at Bay: The Defence of the British Empire Against Japan, 1931-1941*. New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1981. 264pp. \$49.50

By the mid-1930s, Britain was faced with the prospect of conflict in three separate theaters against three different opponents: Japan in the Far East, Italy in the Mediterranean and Germany on the European continent. Britain unfortunately did not have the necessary resources for dealing with all three contingencies simultaneously. Consequently, in allocating her scarce resources, she was involved in a constant juggling act. This excellent book, which is based on a careful examination of the official records of the period as well as numerous collections of private papers, graphically details the policies pursued in the Far East as the aging British Empire tried to check a rising Japan.

It was the Japanese who first interrupted the relative calm of the interwar period with their invasion of Manchuria (1931). At the time, the British were committed to sending immediately the Main Fleet to Singapore. And throughout the 1930s, as the German and Italian threats emerged, Britain still maintained its commitment to sending a fleet to contest the Japanese. However, as Haggie shows, this was a hollow promise by the end of the 1930s. Certainly, the decision in the first part of 1938 not to build a two-ocean navy removed any chance of sending a fleet to the Far East. Finally, in 1939, with a European war on the horizon, British planners decided to concentrate on launching an offensive in the Mediterranean. There would be no fleet for the Far East.

Those first years of the European war (1939-1941) were filled with disasters for the British. Nor surprisingly, the Japanese took full advantage of Britain's weakness. The British searched in vain for a way to check the Japanese. Mainly, they sought to ally themselves with the

United States. This was actually a constant theme in British grand strategy throughout the 1930s. However, the Americans refused to commit themselves to any form of meaningful alliance. Although Haggie does not explicitly criticize American policy, his description of that policy leaves little doubt that he believes it was foolhardy. The dénouement of this sad tale came in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese sank the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, and then captured Singapore. This was "the greatest single disaster to British arms since Yorktown."

Although Haggie is well aware of the formidable, if not impossible, task that British policymakers faced in the late 1930s and early 1940s as they sought to devise a deterrent strategy for the Far East, he is also sharply critical of British thinking in these years. For example he argues that although the British recognized that Japan was a threat, they consistently underestimated Japanese military prowess. Equally important, the British failed to recognize that naval forces alone would not be able to deal with the Japanese threat. They were tied to "an obsolete maritime strategy." The rise of air power after World War I, coupled with the mobility of land armies in the industrial age, meant that Britain would have to send large-scale ground forces and air forces as well as naval forces to deal with the Japanese. Of course, since Britain did not even have the resources to send a formidable naval force to the Pacific, one cannot help but wonder whether it would have made much difference if Britain had recognized the need to send greater numbers of air force and army units. By 1939, Britain's strategic needs were so much greater than her available resources that it was inevitable that she would suffer some egregious losses in the war. Imaginative strategic thinking might have helped somewhat, but in the end, as Haggie makes clear, Britain just did not

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have the economic strength and the manpower necessary to oppose Italy, Japan and Germany.

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Marder, Arthur J. *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 521pp. \$49.50

After Arthur Marder died on Christmas Day, 1980, the *Times* of London wrote that he was "a supreme naval historian" who was "one of the greatest exponents of British naval history of the Edwardian and Georgian eras." This posthumous volume (the only one we shall see of a projected two) confirms that tribute. Marder's relentless research, fair-mindedness and happy way with words all shine in this book. Although the bibliography was to be in the second volume, there are plentiful references to sources in the footnotes.

Marder's subtitle is "Strategic Illusions, 1936-41," but he shows clearly that the real illusion began in 1922 with the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 and its replacement with the innocuous (misspelled in the text, a sure sign that Professor Marder had not lived to shepherd his book past the printer's wolves) Four Power Treaty. "We have traded whisky for water," moaned one Japanese admiral, who also may have been having fun with the new American prohibition amendment. Under that treaty and the concomitant 5:5:3 battleship limitation Britain and the United States had ceded strategic superiority in the Western Pacific to Japan. Yet they both refused to adjust their political goals accordingly. By 1936, the threat of Hitler's Germany forced Britain to make such an adjustment; the United States never did so until Pearl Harbor changed the

political map of Asia. As late as November 1941, the State Department was resisting successfully "on political grounds" the Navy's request to remove the Marines from Shanghai and Peking.

Marder moves from his strategic appraisal to his main theme, the two navies. Here the contrasts are fascinating. Japanese officers who spent decades slanging their superiors to their faces with impunity (true, all were in their cups) are company men to the last, while the Royal Navy types, Dartmouth-tied and stiff-upper-lippish, cheerfully blackguard their comrades. Marder notes that this difference plus the destruction of much Japanese archival material has made his analysis of the two organizations hard to balance. But it is the mark of the historian that he has achieved a balance, while never losing that sharp eye for the telling personal foible which also enlivened the five volumes of *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*.

The last third of Marder's work is titled "The Saga of Force Z," that ill-fated mini-task force that the Royal Navy was forced to use instead of sending the "main fleet to Singapore." Here Marder's control of his materials recalls his handling of Jutland in the third volume of his main work. The men and materiel are compared; the battle is well-charted and well-described; the summing up judicious and fair, although there is an ambiguous mention that the crew of the *Prince of Wales* was "a mixed one, mostly 'hostilities only,' and the latter could be difficult."

In concentrating on Admiral Phillips and his two capital ships, Marder does not scant the larger picture. Churchill really believed a few big ships alone could make a difference; he had never forgiven those who had allowed the *Goeben* to escape nor forgotten his own role in sending capital ships on the successful hunting of von Spee. Churchill had cited the roles of the *Bismarck*