

Proffitt, Harwell Interview 4-9-87

[Speaker 3]

This is an interview taped with Mr. Harwell Proffitt by Dr. Charles Johnson of the University of Tennessee History Department in Knoxville. The interview taped on April 9th, 1987. Just turn it on, let it run.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. Anyway, we were having all this trouble in Washington understanding when we superimposed the two. Well, you can set that back to Admiral King.

Then he started understanding some of our logistic problems. They had no concept. Absolutely none.

Now, during, and I don't remember what, this is going to be hard to determine, the war almost came to a standstill for a while when they thought McCarthy was going to run for president. And there wasn't a lot that happened there for a while. But he came over, he and Admiral Halsey, who had been up in Guadalcanal and became sort of a war hero.

You know, he took command. I can't even think of the Admiral's name that was relieved, but they were beat. I was in Guadalcanal on the way to Brisbane.

I've never seen such a bunch of, everybody was just beaten down. They just thought we'd lost the war. And Halsey came in, didn't have anything else, but he just psychologically turned the war around there.

And he promised the Army and the Marines that they would never, it was all Marines then, they would never be, he might, he couldn't stop bombings. He sure knew they weren't going to be shelled again. And sure enough, they had a big naval battle after that.

And the Marines could see them sinking Jap ships off the coast there. And so he became sort of a hero. He took all insignias off everybody.

You couldn't tell Army from Navy. Everybody was there together. Well, we were stupid.

They had five trucks, five different makes of trucks. None of the spare parts would work. You couldn't believe, I don't have any more.

First time some of the fighter planes got up to 30,000 feet, all their guns froze because the looping of the admin check was 30,000 feet. I mean, Admiral Halsey came over to see MacArthur, because MacArthur was senior. And so these are pictures in Brisbane when he landed.

And this is Commodore, he was Commodore, Commodore Colm Zinn. That's when Halsey and MacArthur got together. And here's a really good picture of Halsey.

[Speaker 3]

Boy, that's a nice shot of Halsey.

[Speaker 2]

And here's a pretty good picture of God himself, MacArthur.

[Speaker 3]

That's our living breed.

[Speaker 2]

Now, MacArthur.

[Speaker 3]

Is this Sutherland here?

[Speaker 2]

Yes.

[Speaker 3]

That's where I'm from. I had forgotten that.

[Speaker 2]

Kruger was the chief.

[Speaker 3]

Kruger was his only commander. Sutherland was his great eminence. The man with the long knife.

[Speaker 2]

Here's a painting, somebody's painting MacArthur. You know, he designed his own hat. And that's a picture.

They're illegal, but he designed them.

[Speaker 3]

We're just looking at glory there. Come on, let's go.

[Speaker 2]

Here's... Okay, now I've got just not much Yorktown stuff I want to give you. This is a kamikaze on the Missouri.

I believe it's Missouri. Or Kruger, I can't remember. Somebody gave me these.

They're in sequence. I did have a picture of the plane, but I couldn't find it. This guy crashed in.

There's what's left of it. It was a jet pilot. And what was interesting, he ended up...

One of the guns in his ship, I mean his aircraft, went right through the muzzle of the 40mm. This is a sequence of the attack. I don't know who took it.

I'd rather bury him and see what's left of him. I don't want to let that work.

[Speaker 3]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

We had over 5,000, as I recall, kamikazes. That's taken up off of Okinawa. You know, the Battle of Okinawa.

We had all the kamikazes. Yorktown got hit. Franklin, Lord, we hit all kinds of things.

[Speaker 3]

When did you get on board the Yorktown? I don't know. Wait a minute, I know.

[Speaker 2]

In August 1944. She came out of Bremerton Navy Yard. I reported and went back to the States.

I had 30 days leave. That's all I had during the war. And I reported to Bremerton Navy Yard on Yorktown.

It was either August or September. I can't remember when this happened, but this is a Jap hospital ship. They had painted it as a hospital ship.

We captured it some way. I don't know how. They were hauling people on it.

Here's the American flag above them. And they're making them come out. I'm sorry I can't remember more about it.

But it wasn't a hospital ship. And here's guns and stuff on it. And we just painted it as a hospital ship, but it wasn't.

They were hauling supplies and troops on it. And somehow we got word. You know we could break their code.

You know that story. So I think that's how we found out about it. There's a guy up there with the towers.

Another one. After I was on the Yorktown, Admiral Combs made, there's another one, Lanny Ross, made Admiral. And went over to be Chief of Staff Admiral Kincaid, who was Commander-in-Chief of the 7th Fleet.

Yeah. Again under MacArthur. We're back to MacArthur.

And so in the Philippines, what was interesting, there were two homes left in Manila Bay. I've got some pictures of the destruction in Manila. You may have all those.

No. That's what Manila looked like after they'd fall over. I've got a lot more.

These are some little market stands. Or churches. Left a bit.

Cathedrals I guess. There were two houses left. MacArthur being senior took his choice.

He took one out of swimming pool. And the JAP officers that lived in these homes, and they ran out, I mean as the troops moved in, they didn't have time to destroy these two homes. I've got pictures of ours.

I don't know if Phil didn't bring them. The Navy ended up and got this big Spanish home. Some Italian.

I'm not serious about it. They had walls and all. Mahogany floors, orange mahogany floors.

Well, it was fancy. So he took the one in the swimming pool. You know, it's hot as hell in the Philippines.

The Navy of course took a second choice. We got the other house for Admiral Kincaid. And about five officers.

Turned out the pool, they never could keep it from leaking. Turned out the house we had was air-conditioned upstairs. And the Navy of course had reefers and refrigerators.

And we had ships out in the harbor and plenty of repairmen and freon guests. They fixed it. And here we were sleeping in there.

Down there on the equator. MacArthur on there sweating with fans.

[Speaker 6]

He served his right.

[Speaker 2]

Did they find out about it? Oh yeah, but there wasn't anything he could do. This is the thing I was telling you about.

This is when they were planning the surrender. And I don't have a picture of this, of the Army colonel withdrawing his hand. He wouldn't shake hands with the jet.

He was sick. I think this was on Formosa. It was called then.

Which is Taiwan then. This is when they were landing. I had some other pictures.

I don't know. I must have given them to Yorktown Association. But this is where they're coming to negotiate what we're going to do about the surrender.

And I can't identify any names as far as the Army is concerned. They're representing MacArthur. These are all pictures of that.

And I see there's a civilian there. And there's, well you can see he's, I don't know what rank any of these JAP officers are. But that's when they came down.

They had a specially painted plane. The plane, as I recall, was white with a cross on it or something. And they flew down and started negotiations with MacArthur on what they were going to do.

And here's a blowup of that, but it's the same. It's the same thing. This, I'm sure you have, this is a thing, a replica of the Japanese surrender.

Do you have it? No, I don't have that. Where I got that?

I wasn't there. I was in Shanghai, China. So I didn't get to that.

This was planning for what, I mean this was working out the details of the surrender, these pictures, when they flew in. And that's the thing, a replica. I don't know who took that out.

[Speaker 3]

Washington documents.

[Speaker 2]

I got that out from Shanghai, China, but I don't know how or I don't remember. There may well be some around, but we don't have one. I haven't seen one before.

When we, I ended up after, I was in the Philippines and I was privileged to hear Admiral Sherman negotiating with MacArthur's people about the invasion of Japan. Nimitz moved down to Guam. And we flew him a whole PBY plane load of coconut shells over there for his orchids, because that was his hobby.

I remember that. To Guam. And from the Philippines.

But in Manila is where MacArthur was. So they started negotiations. MacArthur had always commanded everything.

He ran everything. The Navy was nothing to him. And so he insisted that the landing in Japan, that he was going to be in command of the landing.

Because he had always been in command of all landings. Admiral Barbee was his name. But he was amphibious under the 7th Fleet.

[Speaker 3]

He's Australian, isn't he?

[Speaker 2]

No, he's American. Oh, okay. But MacArthur had always run him, and he was, his people were in command.

Kruger and the rest of them. Sullivan, whoever, I don't remember. But anyway, we were under him always.

And he called all the shots. Well, Nimitz said, no way. But when MacArthur was ashore in Japan and radioed back that they were taking command, only then did they, as a general, had to radio back.

Then they were in command from then on, but never on the landing. Well, MacArthur didn't agree to that. So it went back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

And the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there was a guy named Red Turner, I believe. Was he? Amphibious under Nimitz.

I believe it was Red Turner.

[Speaker 6]

There were amphibious forces.

[Speaker 2]

I think that's his name. He just wouldn't agree to that at all. He said, that's a Navy job.

You don't know anything about it. Of course, they had a big castle over there. Anyway, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ruled in favor of Nimitz and their Navy, that they were indeed in command of all the landings.

Not either, just the landings. And when anybody ever says to me, and then they worked that out, like I said, when they radioed back, but any time I hear anybody fussing about dropping an A-bomb, they estimated, and I sat there every day, I used to take Sherman back to his plane to fly to Guam, and he fussed with me all the way over there about where he was putting that thing. But I sat there at the moment and heard him negotiate, and they estimated it'd be a million American casualties in that landing.

And somebody tells me they'd start a war anyway. But the A-bombs, the only thing that ever got their attention, because they had this Emperor's little plane fixed, and I think they'd have fought to the last child. I don't really think they'd ever surrender.

I really don't think they would. And it took two A-bombs, and that did it. They just made them do it.

So they were going to attach, according to the plans they were doing, that they had these Frogmen, they were going to put bombs on their back and come out and attach themselves to the landing crate. And I'm sure they took 5,000 kamikazes. Well, I'd say they had them.

So that would have been a bloody mess. So I've always defended it. I mean, I don't like it, but they'd have to end the war and save it.

I ended up then, we left and surrendered. We went up to the Senate Fleet, Kincaid. Holmes was the Chief of Staff, and Adam was his aide.

[Speaker 5]

You stayed as his aide, I take it, from...

[Speaker 2]

He was captain once, and then I wasn't an aide, because when he was captain on New Yorktown, that's a whole other story, but that's in his book. Of course, he was a captain, and he just asked if I'd like to go with him, and I said I sure would. So we became good friends.

So I did go with him to New Yorktown. Then when he made Admiral, he asked me to be his aide again. So I've had all those kamikazes.

I had one bomb missing me about two feet, and by the grace of God, I had it four seconds away. I killed a lot of guys below me. But anyway, we went then on the command ship, and I don't remember the name of it.

There were communication ships, maybe. We didn't have many of them. And we could communicate direct to Washington.

I don't even know whether we had the relay through Pearl Harbor. I'm not sure. But it was powerful.

They sent us to Shanghai, China to accept us there. And we ended up there with a senior, a friend of mine from Wangkou River there in Shanghai. General Dali, who was head of secret police, was sent in by General Ismail Khashoggi to be the mayor of Shanghai.

The British were there, and they were very unhappy. That was the first time I'd ever run into safe face. There was number one boy, number two boy, number three boy in Wangkou River.

Of course, the British were politely asked to move from one number one down to two or three, with their crews or whatever they brought in. They just had one token ship there. And we had carrier forces off the coast as we went up.

We had a lot of minesweepers, because we had mined that river in Wangkou. But anyway, we ended up. And they had this big dinner.

Well, this is a luncheon. I don't remember. Cafe, Hotel, something they took over.

That's an invitation. Oh, the Rocky Mount, that was the name of it. Here's an invitation.

This was sent to the flag lieutenant, Cafe, Hotel, which would be me. I don't remember that luncheon. But we entertained the Chinese.

They weren't going to be outdone. They brought their admiral fleet aboard. They had two little gunships.

And he had, let's see, Halsey and, I mean, Nimitz and McArthur had five stars, so he had eight stars, as I recall. And he came aboard with a little bitty gun. And he smiled.

He had firecrackers. He had a sailor with firecrackers and they lit those that came up. They were blowing all over the avenue.

He was mad. But we had several flight exchanges of things. And as I told you on the phone, we had presidential wheels on our communications ship there, because there was no State Department.

And we handled all the top secret stuff coming from Washington, from the president and the low secretary of state. Wiedemeyer, who was representing the State Department and the Army, they flew in 2,000 or 3,000 troops. The first night we went ashore and went into Cafe, Hotel, and Jeff was subbed with machine guns mounted on either side.

I never mentioned that. I thought we were crazy. They wouldn't give up.

They hadn't given up. They didn't shoot us.

[Speaker 3]

But they were still sending our two machine guns.

[Speaker 2]

But they finally, voluntarily, in a corral of them, released their prisoners and put them in the same stockade where we bluffed away. The Army's going to have the troops of running Marines. Maybe we just had this one ship.

A manship we didn't have. Maybe a cruiser destroyer we had. We didn't.

It carries off the coast, though, because of the management tax that they needed. Anyway, we had this state dinner that Dali had. And he, there were only five Americans, four Americans, two Asians and two Asians.

There wasn't anybody there to speak to. They had one interpreter. And they started all this, this whole magnificent homemade Shanghai dinner.

I had no idea what it was. Of course, we had drinks out there. And then we sat down.

They had a boy behind every one of us, a silver goblet, chopsticks, nothing else. You know, I never used chopsticks in my life. And they'd start toasting.

And they toasted victory. And then they'd say, and that meant bottoms up. That's the only Chinese word I know.

And you had to drink that wine and turn that goblet upside down. And that got quarterbacked. And they toasted the Roosevelt in the bed and the Truman and the Generalissimo.

I've never seen such a bunch of chopsticks in my life.

[Speaker 5]

You can't do that.

[Speaker 2]

You had to finish that goblet of that wine. And then they had all this food. And I couldn't take pictures.

This little Navy commander finally took pity on me. He took his chopstick and got me that smoked duck. I don't know where I'm going to pull that meat off my duck.

He was a hand-car diver. He never paid me. But I could go on all day.

I've got as much time as you've got. I don't know that much. Then we went up and accepted the surrender of the Japanese in Seoul.

I mean, went to it. We didn't accept it, but Admiral Kincaid went up to the same command ship we went up to Seoul with. I can't remember.

Incheon Harbor, I guess we called it.

[Speaker 3]

And then Seoul was eliminated.

[Speaker 2]

That was the town where they accepted it. The Russians, which we all resented, were coming to war. They were already pushing over the 38th Parallel.

They weren't even going to stay on their side. General Hodgson of Europe had come over. And he was sent up there to push the damn Russians and make them stay back on their side of the 38th Parallel.

Here they were our allies. Then the war, we threw the Parallel on them. Whatever.

They never fired a shot at anybody. While Admiral Combs and Kincaid were in Seoul with the Army accepting the surrender of the Japanese in Korea, I stayed aboard along with the ship's company and our command ship. While we were there, the Russians fired, it never hit the newspaper, on Admiral Barb with a machine gun.

I mean, with rockets, if you can believe it. They fired on the Navy. And Admiral Barb, who I mentioned to you, who had been commander of 7th Fleet, Antibes forces, still was.

He just, he was a senior officer present. He didn't go, he was their admiral, but he didn't go back to Kincaid up in Seoul. He just ordered the destroyer up anchor and went over there to the Russians who were on the other side of the harbor there.

And they just literally blew them out of the water and ran themselves up the mountain. That's the truth of the story. Here they were our allies.

I mean, I couldn't believe it. Nobody could believe it. But Barb, he didn't hesitate.

He ordered a destroyer up there with those 5-inch guns. I mean, they made them get out of there. I had a one-picture of Seoul, but I didn't.

I mean, Korea, I was ashore there once. Interesting.

[Speaker 3]

I never heard that story about the confrontation.

[Speaker 2]

That happened. And they, Hodge and Emmer, happened to push them back and get up there and take a stand on the 38th parallel. The Russians were having to change their stance.

I don't know. True story. I mean, the whole kamikaze.

You had that story of the kamikazes, I think. Some, yeah, but there's always... Well, they...

I was on a Yorktown then, and we had what you know about the picket ships. We always had a story of them before those guys when they couldn't find somebody to get to them. That was an awful beating, those guys did.

[Speaker 3]

Yeah, down at Patriot's Point, they got the last of you. And that was a picket ship.

[Speaker 2]

All right, well, they picked up, and of course, gave us plenty of radar notice. Of coming, so we could get planes up. But as I recall, they used the term of over 5,000 heater planes destroyed by hitting the water, hitting the ship, or us shooting at it.

We had a guy named George Earnshaw, who was a famous baseball player. He was our gunman officer. And I can still see him walking up and down one of the kamikazes.

We always hated cloudy days, because that's when they'd come when they could already announce the fire. They didn't have radar, and we did. We'd pick them up, but that's still our radar fire control and fire control.

We could, once in a while, we could get one like that. So when they'd dive on one side, they always had another one coming on the other side. And well, everybody's turning around looking at, you don't like center, the guy diving on the back.

I can still see George Earnshaw walking up and down there. On a carrier, Yorktown, Essex class, you always turn the starboard side to where the tide is, because that's the only side that had 5-inch guns. And on the port side of the ship, they only had 40 millipedes, maybe some 20s, but I don't know if they had 40s.

And old George would walk up and down that big old billy stick about this long, and he'd be somewhere, he'd turn around and try to look. He'd ring their bell with that. He'd come down, and he'd go.

And sure enough, we think that's why we only got hit once. And that was a guy that we, they shredded the bomb, had him under, even though they were willing to die, if you really had him under fire, they never did hit anybody. If you could really take them under fire, they just didn't stand all that telling.

They just had them. And so they shredded the bombs off this guy. And the bomb bounced off the starboard side, and that's where my battle station was.

It was a four-second delay. Of course, it would pierce on through, and that's why they didn't hurt the ship more, but it was on the outside, and it did blow all over the side of our ship. That's on top.

I said, unfortunately, I had a lot of good sequences, but they're all over Patriot Point, and that's the name of Yorktown, of missing us and under fire and all this. But the kamikazes were terrible. That was a terrible ordeal.

We went through that for a long time.

[Speaker 3]

Yeah, day after day.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah, every day. And then at night, they'd come and drop a flare to just keep us up all night.

[Speaker 3]

What was your post on New Yorktown?

[Speaker 2]

I was, I stood officer of the deck watches, so I was, of course, when you're under attack, the captain himself takes command. I mean, the lords come out and take command. So I used to have a 48 watch every morning, and I got in the nagging.

I just, when I went through the physical, I told you I got a platter commission, and I was standing out there, and meeting with all these guys. I went to New Orleans, which was the naval district there, to get the physical, and I was standing there in the news with all these guys, and I realized I couldn't even get back to them. If you had more glasses, you couldn't get one of these commissions.

So I just, it's around a member, I just don't collect watch charts, so I passed it. So I got ready to go, and I had to take another physical. They sent me to Nashville, and I got over there, and here was this Navy doctor, and he had, unfortunately, one of these flip charts, and those rolled, and I couldn't read them.

And he looked at his boss, the captain of the 36th Naval District, and he said, I don't understand something about a boss assigned to a captain, or whatever. He said, I don't understand something. He said, you can't understand a thing.

And I said, I had a bad night last night, doctor.

[Speaker 6]

I can't, I'm hungover.

[Speaker 2]

He said, all right, he just sent me. We were off in Japan one day, and I had the 4-8. It was just barely daylight, and we had a marine order from the captain.

You slept up on a ship, on your seat, and the captain said something like that. I mean, that's a bridge.

[Speaker 3]

Right behind the bridge.

[Speaker 2]

It must be 8 feet by 4 feet. It's a little old bed in the toilet. And this marine, I had two stories.

One, this marine, or the lieutenant, there was a jet mine out here. We had, they were, their sub was floating all these mines trying to get us to run into them, of course. It just wasn't quite daylight good, and here was this thing bobbing, and we came up hundreds of them.

So I'd sound the general quarters. That turned the whole way on this zigzag course. You know how they did at night, they had the zigzag path.

Of course, that was out, and when I reported, Admiral Radford had his flag aboard our ship. And so, it's just up above, but I reported to the whole fleet, the task force, 58.2, or whatever it was, fifth, fifth fleet, and then we were the first regiment to change. Yeah, I don't remember whether we were third or fifth, it doesn't matter.

And so I reported to Admiral, issues orders, or his chief of staff to change course and do all that. And as you recall, the discharges are still on the night screen, and they're miles out there. You know, before they get back.

And so, finally, it's way back there, and you can see them. Of course, any time you do this, you lose time where you're going to get off the zigzag path. It screws everything up.

Here they're shooting this thing. Finally, we're in. I sent a message.

I said, this is mine. It's a floating order. Roger, Admiral, get radio down.

Do a hell of a report on it. So they put GI glasses on me, I guess. It wasn't a month later that we were doing the same thing.

We were all still off the coast. Mom and them and the crew were the same. Reportedly, one more at the same time.

There's a sub between us and Missouri. Missouri is 2,000 yards. I starboarded and almost fell on the ship that close.

I went up there and I said, you're crazy. I looked down there and there was a guy who stuck his head out and came up and looked. You can imagine.

He's looking at Missouri on one side and New York down on the other. You trouble Lord of mercy. He slammed down and said, we couldn't shoot at him.

I couldn't order him to shoot because our guns wouldn't go down there or neither could the Missouri. So we just had to sit there and look at this son of a bitch. Obviously, nothing was working on that ship.

any question about that. I felt stupid. I dropped a smoke flare.

Of course, that doesn't mean anything. He's gone from that. The destroyers came in and they never did get him.

He got away. Because, again, the destroyers were way out on the screen. You can imagine this ship surfacing right between us.

I can imagine what that Missouri looked like. They weren't doing anything. They didn't have to have done that.

One might start to when the Yamamoto and I gave all that series. I have a photograph of that thing being blown up. But everybody, I mean, this was the last rest and they were coming down.

The Yamamoto and a couple of crews were destroyed. That was the last suicide mission. They had up way in advance by our cap planes and eventually by radar.

And here they were coming and so when it came time for attack, Admiral Radford ordered torpedo planes to be deployed. Well, we hadn't used torpedoes in about a year. We had many certain ships but she couldn't look at the ship.

Well, a good friend of mine who wrote all these memoirs and wrote this aircraft carrier book and wrote some other novel. He had tipped me out. He was on Admiral Radford's staff and they had their flag boys so Joe and I would see each other.

He'd gotten in with some Chief Petty Officer and it just had been going on for months and when they ordered and I'm up on the bridge with the Captain and I ordered to arm the torpedo plane. Joe stuck his head up, I mean looked down at me and he was but I'm not sure if he did because we knew that hell isn't. Torpedoes, They just never had a good record of running.

They were erratic and working their whole school back to school. They would kill everyone that dropped. Not only no good, they wouldn't have any alcohol to run on.

But we didn't know. We weren't back there. We didn't have much alcohol.

We'd been drinking that stuff for months. So they armed them. Our planes got in last.

The Yamamoto was still underway, but it had been badly damaged. But it was still going. As I recall, I don't remember if ten or nine planes got in.

They didn't all make it. I don't mean they were shot down. I don't think they just had troubles or something.

And had the highest hit ratio that they'd ever had, I think. We decided to throw them all during the war, but the torpedoes had too much alcohol in them. I don't see how these ever got there.

The chief told us later they didn't have enough alcohol in them that they were supposed to have. They must have pushed in closer than what they were supposed to. Well, the pilots didn't know this.

Oh, no, no, they did. Oh, no, God. We would have been court-martialed.

[Speaker 5]

But they really had them.

[Speaker 2]

And I had pictures of New Yorktown's torpedoes. Finally was the thing that blew the Yamamoto out of water. Spectacular pictures.

I had one that the guys had taken from his gun camera. And I was photographed across the fleet. I had some of those pictures.

I can't even set a camera now. We had one other funny thing. We had an interpreter aboard.

And the kamikazes, finally, they had a guy we called a whip. And he'd come down and watch them, and then he'd go back and forth. He never did that.

He'd stay way up high. And we kept picking him up on radar, and we started shooting some of them down because we put somebody up high, and he came in and was waiting on them. But one day, this kamikaze raid came in.

And the first thing we got, way up there high as you can see, was a cap. It seemed burning. And it came, along with the kamikazes.

One of these kamikazes was sailed down, and he bailed out. He used to have them chained and set out of order. This guy had a parachute.

He sailed out, and we picked him up. They brought him aboard our ship because of the interpreter. And he told this wild story I was going to tell you.

He told the interpreter, the interpreter lay right across from him. And he said that this guy told him that he was supposed to make this mission, and we bombed on one of our bombers there, and they had to delay it for a month because we couldn't come out there. And part of the ceremony, they had all this stuff, and they'd give them this woman, and he got some venereal disease, misgallegie, and they made him mad as hell.

So when he came down, he said, Hell with him. He bailed out. That's what he told me.

[Speaker 3]

But anyway, he bailed out. I saw him bail out. I know they brought him aboard.

So you were in it from 1942?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I wasn't in the war. I wasn't, of course, on the York one. No, I started.

I was in Pearl Harbor about 60 days after Pearl Harbor.

[Speaker 3]

Still pretty much in a mess.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, they were all scared to death at night. You couldn't go if you weren't ashore in Honolulu. You had to take gas masks with you.

Oh, we just can't, we just can't. We didn't have a gas mask. We didn't need it.

But they still figured the Germans were coming. Yeah, and at night, they had little blue lights. You couldn't see a car two feet in front of you.

And as they said, all they had to do was take Pearl Harbor. I was glad the band didn't take me because it was so beat up. But it was still real bad.

And I just ran and had to order to York, the old York town. He was in Pearl Harbor and they couldn't find it. We couldn't figure out why in the world.

He'd been sunk, but we didn't know whether the Japs knew they'd sunk it or not, so they wouldn't tell anybody. I guess he'd been sunk for a while. He had orders to us nobody could give.

That's all he did, spend every day at the offices. A guy named Bud Rogers was helping him in Standard Digging. He had a son in Florida.

But we were laughing about that. He carried his orders. He told me that he got a survivor's pay off of that thing.

And he never even afforded a boat ticket. Because he had orders and didn't get there in time to go to the Battle of Midway.

[Speaker 1]

Just as well. The York town.

[Speaker 2]

Well, I enjoyed it. I guess I better go.

[Speaker 1]

After the First World War, for all of these reasons, the British would prefer to take on German power at the edges, to strike at Germany where they're the weakest. What's called a peripheral strategy. Strike at the German periphery, the edge of power.

Norway, North Africa, Crete, eastern Mediterranean. Strike at the edges. And finally, then, when Germany is so weakened by these peripheral strikes, and by the blockade, and by air attacks, finally when Germany is staggering and can't make a good defense, then you land an overwhelming force in northern France and go rolling right into Germany and end the war in Europe within six months, at the most, of the landing in northern France.

Don't take on German power until they're so weak that there's no chance they're going to stop you and bog you down into the First World War. For the British, back there someplace, it's somebody saying, no more Solnitz. No more First World War.

No more Passchendaele. No more Flanders. We can't do that again.

We paid all the dues we could in the First World War. We can't do it again. So wait.

Weaken Germany by blockade, by air strikes, by kicking away at the outside of her power, and then go in with overwhelming force. Don't do World War I again. And besides, the British have been fighting since 1939.

They've been taking casualties. They took a real kicking around in the 40s. It's not that they're unwilling to pay dues in this war.

They are. By 1944, the British were drafting people out of their munitions factories, put in the Army. They're just running out of people.

They can't do the First World War again. So there's a basic disagreement in strategy, in grand strategy, on how best to do this. The Russians, insofar as they've got something to say about strategy, are much more in favor of the American approach than the British, because the Russians have been taking such tremendous casualties that they need a major assault to draw off some of Germany's power.

So the Russians urge a second front, a major landing in northern France as quickly as possible. The British say not so fast, and the Americans say as fast as we can. This is one of the things that strains relations between ourselves and the Russians during the war, our unwillingness or our inability to make that major landing as quickly as we promise we're going to make it.

In 1942, we go into North Africa. In 1943, we go into Sicily and Italy. It isn't until June of 1944 that we go into northern France, and that's less than a year before the war ends.

The Russians, not surprisingly, are somewhat grumpy about this. They say, you're fiddling around down here in some fairly unimportant stuff, and we're taking on the heart of German power. And again, you've got the casualty figures in your text, but let me emphasize, as you know already, the Russians aren't wimps about taking casualties.

When it comes to paying dues, the figures that strike me, and the ones I use in the survey course and in World War II and a variety of other places, total numbers of American dead in World War II, all causes, all combat-connected causes, Pacific, Mediterranean, European theater of operation, the whole thing from December 41 to September 45, American dead, about 400,000. That's a lot of empty places, but that's the total number of Americans killed, Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, 400,000 dead. Russian military dead in World War II, 8 million.

Russian civilian dead in World War II, another 12 million. That's a population that's not all that much larger than the United States. When this war started, American population was about 145 million, Russian population about 180 million.

20 million dead in World War II. So the Russians, insofar as allies have got a right to make demands of other allies, the Russians have a right. So at the very highest levels, there's a disagreement on how best to do this.

And the United States allows itself to be persuaded in 1942 by the British that we are not ready at this point to invade northern France, to make a major second front landing in northern France. As a military historian, I think that was a wise decision. They've always got to get some argument on it.

I really don't think we had the troops, leadership, equipment, the rest of it ready in 1942 to risk a landing that might well have been driven back into the Channel. The Russians, when that was suggested to them, said, So what? It gets driven back into the Channel.

How do you do it again in 1943? The Russians are unwilling to understand, being a land power, how complex an amphibious operation is. But they do have a point.

Instead, we go here. There aren't any Germans here, other than some military advisors and a variety of others. There are no German troops here.

In fact, there aren't even any Italian troops here. What you have here are French troops. And it's a kind of comment on how confusing World War II is.

If you watch one of the great movies of all time, any time recently, Casablanca, you can get some sort of sense of how confusing North Africa is here. When the French surrendered, the Germans had not occupied all of France in 1940. And the French government that was created in the summer of 1940 with its headquarters at Vichy, V-I-C-H-Y, Vichy here, rules this area, this hatch mark here, and the French Empire overseas, which includes Morocco and Algeria and Tunisia, these three states here, plus other parts of the French Empire, Indochina and other places.

Now, this is a collaborationist government. It's a French government, but they work with the Germans. They're not any choice.

The nation has been defeated. And so the troops that are here, in Morocco, in Algeria, those troops are French troops under the command of a government which is sympathetic to Germany, but which also might be sympathetic to the idea of being liberated from Germany. And we hoped, when we went ashore, that perhaps we wouldn't need to get shot at.

This might be a walk. We also go here because we want to clear the Mediterranean of German troops, German navy, German air. So it makes it much easier to come from the Pacific through the Suez Canal in the Mediterranean up this way to the British Isles, and going all the way down around Africa and up the other side makes it a shorter voyage.

In logistical terms, it's easier to supply the British Empire. To supply Great Britain from the British Empire overseas, if you can get through the Suez Canal, and through the Mediterranean. And it's a chance, ultimately, to kill some Germans and Japanese.

The British are under Montgomery, moving in this direction against the Germans and the Italians. We will move in this way. We'll try to catch the Germans and the Italians in the middle in between us.

The landings, which take place beginning in November 1942, under the overall command of General Eisenhower, his first major command, we put ashore 100,000 troops in a matter of just a few days. This is a major operation. Remember, about the same time in the Pacific, we're putting the 1st Marine Division ashore on Guadalcanal, and that's all we've got.

The 32nd Division goes ashore in New Guinea, and that's what we've got up there. We've got 100,000 men coming ashore in the first few days here. As I said, this is the major thrust of European theater as opposed to the Pacific.

And I think it's a good thing that we went up against troops that were unwilling to fight us very hard. The French do fight some, and we do take casualties. But in about three days, a ceasefire is arranged.

And then what's called the Race for Tunisia begins. The Italians and the Germans begin to pour troops into Tunisia as we move as quickly as we can going east in this direction and try to get there first. Given the distances involved, it's only logical that the Germans and the Italians win that particular race.

They fortify Tunisia before we can get in there. At the same time, the German Afrika Korps and the Italian divisions that are with the Germans are being driven in this direction by Montgomery's 8th Army. And so by the winter of 1942-43, by January of 43, the Germans and the Italians are pinned in with Tunisia here, with American and British troops coming from this direction and British troops coming from this direction.

We've got a lot to learn about warfare. Unfortunately, the way you learn that is by people making mistakes and people dying. And we make a fair number of those in North Africa.

None of them mortal, although the Americans receive a very bad scare in the Battle of Kasserine Pass, K-A-S-S-E-R-I-N-E, Kasserine Pass, where Rommel and some German troops drive through Kasserine Pass through some pretty unready Americans and appear to be...

[Speaker 6]

Ah, it's not worth it.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, nothing more to be said about your final exam unless you've got some questions.

[Speaker 4]

Just two essays, right?

[Speaker 1]

Two essays. Let me see. Why did I do an exam like that?

I was making up the exams yesterday, and on one of my exams I had three essays, and you had to try to do them, and I had two. That's two. Yeah, it's two, and you had to try to do one or the other.

And I think it's four out of six IDs, four out of six or four out of seven, and one out of two on the essays, that's right. One essay is broader in scope and covers most of the course. The other one is narrower and more specific.

And you can choose one or the other. And remember, it's at 7.50 in the morning in here on Monday. Sorry about that.

I don't make up the calendar. And you'll be done by 10 o'clock or before, or by this time for you. Again, if you want your grade early, bring a postcard.

I'll mail it out by Tuesday evening. Very quickly, through the last year of the war in the Pacific, once the movement began, it got increasingly rapid. By the summer of 1944, we had broken through what the Japanese considered to be their inner ring of defenses in the Marianas, Saipan, Tinian, Guam.

And late that year, October, November in the Philippine Islands, it was, while this was going on, while the advances were taking place, and we were either bypassing the Japanese or driving them off the islands that they were holding, we were at the same time with American submarines and surface vessels and aircrafts from carriers, we were isolating the home islands from any sort of outside supply and support.

It became increasingly dangerous for Japanese ships to travel through this area. Unfortunately, American submarines by 1944 were really very effective in stopping the flow of raw materials from further south. Unfortunately, American submarines also sank, and some planes sank, a fair number of Japanese ships carrying American prisoners of war from the Philippine Islands back to Japan.

And a good number of Americans didn't survive. Most of them. It's one of the terrible accidents of war.

But on balance, the attack was increasingly effective, isolating the Japanese, and the air raids with which we were punishing Japanese cities became also increasingly effective. We had learned a lot in Europe about bombardment by air, and we were putting it into practice and learning more in the Pacific.

[Speaker 4]

You bombed a city or rather something that caused fires where you get a vacuum of air?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, partially.

[Speaker 4]

What is that? Was that used in World War II?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, what happens in effective way, this is a point I'd like to make just a minute later, but I can certainly make it now. It happens first in Europe with cities like Hamburg and a number of others, and then later in the Pacific. If you go in with a large enough fleet of planes and begin with dropping high explosives, which blows things over and starts fires from gas mains and things that break, along with furnaces that get blown up and a whole variety of other bad stuff, and then succeeding waves of planes coming in and drop incendiary bombs, which are small little things, about yea long, that size, with a core of either magnesium or phosphorous or something like that that burns, and these things come filtering down by the hundreds of thousands, and wherever they land, they start to burn. Well, in any fire, you've got poisonous gases that come off sort of automatically, but what you're trying to do here, and what we do successfully create on a number of occasions in Japan, is what's called a firestorm, where the separate fires in a city coalesce into one enormous fire that then burns so fiercely that it sucks in oxygen at an increasingly high rate until you've got winds coming

into the center of the fire at 70, 80, 90 miles an hour, simply sucking it into this giant inferno in the middle, and everything in there dies.

It's whatever's in the center of the fire dies. Even if you're way down in some sort of bomb shelter someplace down under the ground, the oxygen's all gone, and then what you have is a whole stack of bodies sitting huddled in there, mummified, because they're all dried out, the whole thing's just... You jump into a lagoon in the city to try and get away from the fire, and the lagoon boils.

It's a... People do terrible things in there. And that's one of the things that happens.

While we are cutting off the Japanese from outside of supply, while we are advancing up the island chains, we are also then from, particularly from Tinian and Guam, two islands in the Marianas here, we're launching long-range bombing runs against the Japanese home islands. In order to do that more effectively, and to provide, well, to keep the bases out of Japanese hands and to provide places where damaged American bombers can land in emergencies, we decided it's necessary to capture Iwo Jima here in the volcano islands, where we land in Marines land, three divisions, landing in February of 45, and then out here in Okinawa, in the Ryukyus, in April of 45. The landing in Okinawa is, at least according to some historians, you can play with your numbers in a variety of ways, but it's at least as big as the Normandy landings in Europe.

The number of people and ships and planes and men involved, it's as big as the initial landings in Normandy. The follow-up landings in Normandy are very quickly much larger, but the initial onslaught in the first couple of days at Okinawa is arguably at least as big. The Japanese fiercely defend both of those islands.

Iwo Jima is the Marine Corps' most punishing operation, in terms of casualties. I've heard a variety of figures, but Japanese lose on the island roughly 20,000 troops that got dug in on this very small piece of ground. American dead, over 7,000.

Wounded, three times that. On Okinawa, it takes better than two months to capture the island. The advance on Okinawa averages something like, oh, about 75 yards a day.

That's heavy going. Some days less, some days more. Casualties in both places, very, very heavy.

Japanese tunnels had been around for quite a while. In the Palaus on Peleliu, before the Philippines landings in 1944, the Japanese had brought in over 2,000 civilian miners to simply dig tunnels and to connect bunkers underneath. The defenses on Okinawa and Iwo Jima were more sophisticated.

On Tarawa, it's mostly bunkers. There's some underground connection, but it gets more sophisticated as you get closer. Iwo Jima and Okinawa are the toughest that were forced to face.

You need to understand that when you try to read in the calculations that the American military takes as to how expensive it's going to be to conquer the home islands. That's one of the factors you run into that equation, that the resistance gets increasingly fierce as you get

closer to home. It's understood that if you have to invade a home island, it's going to be that much more difficult.

But it turns out we don't have to. The plan is to. The plan is to land on Southern Island, Hokkaido, Onshu here, I'm sorry, Kyushu here, and probably make a tentative shot at the landing there in late September.

With the major landings on the large islands that took place in 1946. But the combination of being cut off from outside supply, the losses that they've suffered, the incredibly intense bombing raids all through the spring and summer of 1945, combined in August of 1945 with the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on the 6th of August, the materials made over here in Oak Ridge, the 8th of August, the Russians declare war on Japan, the 9th of August, the second atomic bomb is dropped on Fat Man, the plutonium bomb made from material out of Hanford, Washington, dropped on Nagasaki. Those things combined, the atomic bombs, the continuing destruction, the Russian entry into the war, finally convinced Japanese leadership or most of it, and the emperor, that they must surrender. And on the 14th of August, the Japanese emperor surrenders his nation.

Excuse me? 14th. 14th of August.

Forty-five. The actual surrender document isn't signed until the 2nd of September in Tokyo, Tokyo, and Missouri, which is the date you usually see for ending the war, September 2nd.

[Speaker 4]

You say the bomb, Russia, and what else?

[Speaker 1]

The other bomb. The two bombs, Russian entry, and the whole wearing effect of the war before that, it's not just those things by themselves, it's everything that's happened before have conspired together. Of course together, you can't conspire apart.

Conspired to lead the Japanese to surrender the country. I've heard some criticism indicate that they think it wasn't necessary. What do you think about that?

Now the whole question of whether or not to drop the atomic bomb has been a matter of major concern for both historians and scientists who built it and a lot of other people. I don't have time to do a lot with it. My sense is if we had it earlier, we would have dropped it on the Germans.

It isn't just a racial thing. I don't think it is. Some historians believe that it is.

I'm not one of them. I think if we had it earlier, we would have used it earlier. We have it.

We use it as soon as it's available. Should we have used it? I think in terms of a political decision, whether or not you can expect a politician, a president, whatever, not to use a weapon like this when it is available, read the other scenario.

Put yourself back in 1945, after the Pearl Harbor attack, after the Bataan Death March, after all the business, fighting our way back into the home islands, and then for a president to say, well folks, we spent two and a half billion dollars on an awful lot of resources that we might

have spent otherwise to build this weapon, which will do the same thing that we've been doing before in Tokyo one night, one raid in May or early June of 1945 on Tokyo, killed more people and injured more people and destroyed more square miles of territory than did the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. In fact, the column of smoke coming up out of Tokyo could be seen literally hundreds of miles by the bombers as they were going home.

But we did all this, and we got this weapon, and we decided not to use it because it was too mean, and therefore your son has died on a landing here in Kyushu, and your husband has lost his legs, and your father is blind, because we didn't want to do this to the Japanese. I don't find that a persuasive kind of scenario. I simply don't think so.

[Speaker 5]

The estimate is 18 months.

[Speaker 1]

Actually, our intelligence isn't very good. The whole thing probably would have collapsed by the summer of 1946. But the Japanese did have the means with which to continue the war.

They have 3,000 kamikaze planes, pilots. They've got a lot of people still in the military. They are building defenses.

They're not as good as they might be, but they will be better before we land. But the Japanese choose not to continue the war. They could have.

They were not so prostrate they could not have continued. It is a decision that's made rather than is forced upon them. The estimates vary, but the extrapolation for what the casualties would be given the casualties that we had taken, the lowest number I've seen anybody come up with in 1945 was about 450,000, and the highest number is somewhere just under a million, depending on what headquarters you read.

That's killed woundedness. That's a price we were willing to pay. The argument is also made that we could have used a demonstration bomb somewhere to show the Japanese how terrible it was, and there were people who presented that idea.

One of the difficulties with that is that we only had three, and there were more coming along, but to use one in a demonstration was to waste, in that view, the weapon. And the Japanese might not have been impressed given some of the things that were happening at home, or impressed enough. They might have put American prisoners of war on the island or something like that.

It's not the kind of thing that you can work out very easily logistically in a war, especially when you're down to the knife with an enemy that you hate. It's hard to be reasonable about that. And beyond that, I think finally, this is a point Jonathan makes in our World War II course when he talks about this decision, where we have a lot more time to deal with it.

I'm just sort of sketching it in here. In a sense, it's a bureaucratic decision. Everything is on the rails here.

The way government works, the way big institutions work, is you put certain things in motion. And this decision has been in motion since 1942, when they started the project. And they've got their composite bombardment group out there.

Tibbets and his people have been practicing since 1943, and they're all down there in Tinian now, and they're ready to go. Everything is moving in that direction. If nobody does anything, it happens.

That's a bureaucratic decision. If nobody does anything, it happens. The...

Somebody has to stand up and say, no, we won't do this, we'll do it differently. And that's very hard to do. You've got momentum in an institution that pushes you in the direction that you've planned.

And then you're working hard to develop reasons for going ahead and doing that. It's harder to stop it or push it in another direction. Institutions are like that.

Yeah?

[Speaker 4]

How close were they to developing the bomb?

[Speaker 1]

They had taken some steps in that direction. They weren't as close as we were afraid they were. The German scientific effort had run off in a whole series of directions.

The American scientific effort was much more tightly organized and more effectively organized.

[Speaker 4]

Do we have some German scientists working on our bomb?

[Speaker 1]

We've got German scientists, Italian scientists, refugees, particularly Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in the 30s. Yeah. The British, other people are involved too, but we do have a fair number of German and Italian immigrants.

How did the Soviets decorate the war? There are historians who argue, who know Japan, who argue that they were more impressed by the Russian entry into the war than they were by the atomic bombs. There are people, Carl Perowitz leads them back, who say that the reason Harry Truman dropped the bomb was not to beat the Japanese, but to impress the Russians.

I don't find that a particularly persuasive argument. There are some historians who do. I think there's a lot of other reasons for doing that.

The Russians had promised at the ALTA conference in February, we had wanted this, that they would enter the war against Japan 60 to 90 days after Germany surrenders. The wording was, two or three months after Germany surrenders, the Russians will declare war on Japan. It's a point I hadn't planned on making, but I certainly probably should.

The Russian entry into the war is something the Americans want. We've been working to get solid commitment from Stalin for a long time. And that's exactly what happens.

Germany surrenders on the 8th of May, 1945. The Russians enter the war on the 8th of August, 1945. They reorient part of their forces, they bring them out through Siberia, they get them lined up here on the Amur River in Manchuria, and then they drive south.

And that's the idea. American intelligence says that the Japanese still have a million men in China, a million troops. If they can return some or all of those troops to the Japanese home islands to fight against the Americans, then casualties are going to be even heavier than we expect.

So, get the Russians into the war, have them fight the Japanese in Manchuria, then American casualties will be fewer. It's a very cold-blooded decision, folks. We wanted the Russians safely fighting off in Manchuria.

We didn't want them involved in the home island invasion. We figured they would do their part by killing Japanese and taking losses in Manchuria. Because the argument gets made very bluntly within the American military on the civilian side.

For every Russian who dies fighting Japanese, one fewer American dies. And as somebody said, and I say it in my survey course, let Ivan die a little. Ivan dies very well.

Ivan died in large numbers in Europe. Let Ivan die some against the Japanese. Americans die less.

It's a hard world out there, people. And that's not, hey, you know, we'd like you into the war because you're good folks then and whatever. And if we have to swap out a little bit, that's okay.

But we want you in there dying. So we don't have to die too many.

[Speaker 4]

Who was making some of the American decisions? Was it the military or was it the civilians?

[Speaker 1]

The decision ultimately is civilian. Roosevelt, the State Department, the War Department, Henry L. Stimson.

Certainly strongly influenced by military concerns, but the decisions really stay civilian. Those are civilian decisions.

[Speaker 4]

I don't think so.

[Speaker 1]

The argument is made, and this is a good way to get to it, the argument is made that we held off the second front landings in Europe until 1944 in order to have the Russians pay as heavily. I think not. I think there are a lot of other reasons for that happening.

And let me skip deftly over at least for a little while into the war in Europe, because it ends here in September of 1945. It doesn't end for everybody. Not all that long ago we had a Japanese soldier who had been hiding on Guam finally came out and returned to the home islands.

It was back in the late 70s, early 80s sometimes, 81, 82. They kept coming out all the way through the 50s, and every once in a while you'd see one in the 60s, and we thought that was the last Japanese holdout still. But there was one that came out just not very many years ago.

The war state... For the people who go through the war, the war lasts a long time anyway. For this guy it lasted more than a year.

Other half of the world in which more American troops get committed, more American power is brought to play. Different kind of war in many ways. And I need to say that by way of background, no matter how much of the military stuff I get into, the Pacific War we fight pretty much as we want to fight.

The British are involved over here in Burma. We have a few American troops over there. We've got some Australian and New Zealand troops.

We've got some British and Dutch naval vessels. But primarily it's an American war. The Pacific War goes as we want it to.

One final thought on the Pacific War. It was raised by something Mr. Edmunds said. The Russians, when the Japanese surrender, send a telegram to MacArthur saying, we've got all our troops in boats over here ready to come and land in Hokkaido to help you occupy our common enemy.

Where do you want us to land? And MacArthur's headquarters sends, and this is with the knowledge of the Truman administration, MacArthur's headquarters sends back saying, gee, thanks. But we know how busy you are.

And you've got a lot of things to do back home. And we're going to be able to handle this pretty well ourselves. And besides, there isn't any docking facilities available in Hokkaido.

And why don't you take your guys out of the boats again? And so that's what happened. The Russians do not land on the home islands.

The developments after the war in the Pacific are the developments that we want to make happen. Rightly, wrongly, however, that's the way the world war works out, finally. The nation with the troops on the ground besides what the governments are going to be like in that area after the war.

We rail against that in Eastern Europe when the Russians set up communist governments in Eastern Europe. But that's the way that war works out. You've got the troops on the ground.

You're going to make the decisions about how that territory is going to be run. So the war in Europe, it's a war with major allies. It's a war in which we don't and can't fight it exactly the way we want to.

We have less freedom of action in this war. The war has other kinds of tensions in it. We and the British and the Russians are fighting together against Germany and England.

And our views of strategy aren't exactly identical. The American strategic sense is that we need to come to grips with the heart of German power as quickly as we can. We need to take on German power in France, which is where a good part of the German armor is.

We need to come to grips with the heart of that power as quickly as we can. In 1942 if we can, in 1943 at the latest. The British operating out of a different historical experience and different demands on their population and the rest would prefer what's called a peripheral strategy.

Strike at German power at the outside edges or its weakest. Attack the Germans in Norway. Attack them in North Africa.

In Crete, Greece, Sardinia. Maybe up here in the Balkans. Attack at the edges of German power until Germany is so weakened by air attack, blockade, and the wasting effect of trying to maintain this empire and the Russians who are coming in from this side or who are fighting from this side.

Until Germany is so weakened that the Americans and the British can land an overwhelming force in Normandy, somewhere in northern France. Race through that thin shell of German troops. Drive through Berlin and end the war in just a matter of a few months or even a few weeks if possible.

I think for the British, this is partly their historic experience. They're a naval power. They tend to think in those terms anyway.

But beyond that, you have to remember the First World War. The British can't risk a situation in which they get bogged down again in trench warfare in France. They simply can't face that prospect.

So you don't land in northern France until you can punch on through and end the war quickly. Air power. Why doesn't trench warfare happen in World War II?

It's a combination. I think that combination is built around the internal combustion engine. In armor, in trucks, in air power, in a combination of things tied together by better communications.

All of those things bring mobility back to warfare. The Germans have demonstrated how it might be used in 39 and 40, Poland and France. We, the Russians, the British, use that new technology or the improved technology to make it possible to have mobile warfare.

Now it does get bogged down into what resembles trench warfare in Italy. There's a real resemblance between what goes on in Italy in 43, 44, 45 with what happened in Europe in the First World War. But it doesn't happen quite like that.

Although some of the slugging matches in the winter of 44, 45 resemble parts of trench warfare. Now the British want to do it one way, we want to do it another. And there is a fair amount of tension between us over this.

Allies always have tensions among them. It's hard to fight a war without this. You've got different goals, you've got different cultural backgrounds, different intentions, different ways of fighting.

It's hard for allies to work together. But we and the British, by and large, get along as well as allies ever do, better than many. Our third ally, the Soviet Union, taking incredible casualties out there fighting the Germans.

Once an American and British landing in northern France as quickly as possible. The slogan is Second Front Now. The first front is being fought in the east.

The Russians want a second front in northern France to draw off some of that German power. And we even have a plan laid out in 42 that if it looks like the Russians are collapsing, we will risk a landing in northern France, even though we're pretty sure it's going to be defeated, just in order to drive, get some of that pressure off the Soviet front. I wish I had an answer to that.

Because you said it very plainly in my comment that Germany can never face that situation again if he gets them right into it. I think the only answer is that he hopes to make peace with the British. He hopes that that war will end soon and he wants to take on the Russians while he still has the momentum going from his victories in the 40 and 30.

It's a mistake. It's plainly a mistake. Nobody knew that the British were going to hold out, but Hitler does not plan after the winter of 40-41, he does not plan an invasion of the British Isles.

The failure to knock out the RAF, that gets put on the shelf. Well, he gets sort of spooky towards the end. But by and large, the decisions are arguably rational.

He sometimes brings in all sorts of screwball mystical stuff into doing it. He's got an astrologer that comes in and advises him. Not that people don't read the astrology columns in the paper, but at the same time, to have a head of state basing decisions on things like that is scary.

The decisions are shrewd, amoral, and rational, by and large. He sort of goes around the bend towards the end sometimes, but that's not very likely. The decision to go east is still a very puzzling one.

What are his goals in the Soviet Union? The goals in the Soviet Union are at least to drive the Russians back to the Urals, to force a surrender on the Soviet Union, and acquire all of this territory down to the Caspian Sea. The whole Russian agricultural belt, and the oil in the Caucasus, and the rest.

And it's room for the German people to expand against the weaker, inferior, genetically inferior Slavic race. And he comes with an ace of pulling it off. Doesn't happen.

Now, the Russians want to land in here. They want to draw pressure off their front. And before one is too critical of the Russians for wanting that, you need to have some sense of the kind of casualties the Soviets are taking out there.

By most estimates, if you look at German power as it is applied in the west, the south, and the east, in the course of the war, and it changes some in what is where. There are a number of ways to go astray on this. But most of the estimates are that throughout most of the war, about two-thirds of all German power faced east.

About two-thirds of all German power was used against the Soviets. About one-third of German power was used against the Americans and the British. So the Russians were facing two-thirds of the German military strength, and taking casualties that are, for Americans, almost incomprehensible.

Part of it's their own fault. Stalin screwed up the army pretty badly back in the late 30s by killing off most of the upper officers. But beyond that, Russian military dead in the...

Well, the other half of it first. American military dead, I don't know if I've given you these figures before or not, but I'll emphasize them again. Total American dead in the war, 400,000.

That's Pacific, European theater, all theaters. American combat dead, 400,000 men. That's out of a population of about 140 million.

A population of 140 million, 400,000 dead. Russian combat dead in the war, including prisoners who were starved to death deliberately and arrested. But people who didn't come back from the war because of the war.

About 8 million. Russian dead, about 8 million. Russian civilian dead, deliberately starved to death in the siege of Leningrad.

Hung, exterminated, gassed, shot as partisans, whatever. Died of disease. Russian civilian dead, another 12 million.

12 million more. Russian dead in the war, 20 million. Out of a population of about 185 million.

You can see why the Russians, even now, see what they call the Great Patriotic War as the central event in the 20th century. And so when the Russians are saying, we need some help on the Eastern Front, it's not, it is understandable that they would put pressure on us to do that. And so you have these tensions swirling around generally.

[Speaker 4]

How did the Russian allies turn out in the Great Patriotic War in the 20th century?

[Speaker 1]

Unless you lost somebody you loved, unless you died in it, the war was not, it was not seriously harmful to the United States. We used up a lot of resources because we made a tremendous contribution to the supply that was so important in winning the war. But in

terms of the wrecking of the economy, no, we're strongest at the end of it than we are at the beginning.

In fact, we begin an enormous jump-off, 30 years of prosperity following that war, the growing other. When we do get actively involved in the fighting, it's relatively late. November 1942, the landings in North Africa.

Operation Torch landings under General Eisenhower. American and British troops coming ashore. Not against Germans or Italians, but against French troops, Vichy French.

When the French surrendered, a new government was set up in Vichy to control this area in southern France and the French input. And those were the troops we faced. It took about three days to get a ceasefire going.

Once we did, we moved as quickly as we could in this direction. The Germans and the Italians poured in lots of troops in central North Africa. The British under Montgomery and the Eighth Army were moving in from this direction.

They were caught in a kind of vice. It takes longer to squeeze it shut than we had planned. We got a lot to learn.

The Germans were perfectly willing to teach us. It's a route by land right along the coast. Originally, yeah, you have to go around.

You can get some convoys through the Mediterranean, but it's a very dangerous route. Most of it has to go around the Cape and up the other side. You see Rommel and the Afrika Korps, two particularly good combat divisions there.

The British and the Germans look back sort of fondly on that part of the war. If you read a history of World War II and about one-third of it is about North Africa, you can be sure it's a British author that put it together because that's the kind of war they like. It's handleable, it's understandable, and they win.

They're holding joint military reunions now. The Afrika Korps meets with the Eighth Army. The Eighth Army people are invited to the Afrika Korps reunions and vice versa.

That's one of the first times that's happened. It was the first time. I was very surprised at what a good program that was that was taped off of that.

I thought when Ed McMahon narrated it, it was going to be sort of Pierce Johnny kind of thing. It wasn't even close. That was first-rate show.

This operation is not finished until May of 1943. We capture about 250,000 German and Italian prisoners and the whole of North Africa is cleared. The question then, and the question had actually been resolved in January, what to do now in 43?

The decision was made with Churchill and Roosevelt meeting in Casablanca that the next move against the Germans and the Italians would be in Sicily, here. In the summer of 43. Possibly with an invasion of Italy.

Without prejudice to a landing in northern France. That's the wording of the communique. But that's diplomatic nicety.

Once you get committed to a landing in Sicily and everything that that involves, you're talking about putting 200,000 men ashore. You have 500 warships involved. It's a major effort.

Once you get committed to Sicily, it means you're not going into northern France in 43. You're not going to make that landing. We have the feeling we let the British talk us into it.

And we're not happy about that decision, but we go with it. The Russians, needless to say, are not overly excited about it either. Is it justifiable?

That's going to be one of those things military historians argue about. The 42 decision to go into North Africa, I think, is plainly reasonable. We weren't ready for a major landing in northern France in 42.

I think we would have run a very real risk of being driven right back into the channel. Or get bogged down on such a small beachhead that simply wouldn't have worked. That decision is made in January of 43.

We do it in July of 43. The 42 decision is understandable. And I think it's the right decision.

We don't have enough experienced troops. Nobody's been in combat. All of the folks that go ashore in November...