

1943 the Years that Decided the Outcome of WW2

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Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein. What Happens Next is a podcast which covers economics, finance, history, politics and current events.

Today's session is the third part of our ongoing history of World War 2.

Our speaker is Paul Kennedy is the J Richardson Dilworth Professor of History at Yale. He has a new book out entitled Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in WW2.

This episode Part 3 will focus on the fateful year 1943 when the war was won. Paul will tell us why the US decided to invade North Africa instead of Europe, as a trial balloon. Why North Africa was followed up with an invasion of Italy that subsequently knocked Mussolini of the war. We will learn about the internal strife within the allied alliance, the disputes between the armed services, and why the allies won.

Let's begin.

I am here with Paul Kennedy the Yale Historian who is the author of a new book entitled Victory at Sea. We ended our last discussion on What Happens Next of World War 2 with the Battle of Crete that ended in a German victory in May 1941. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the Battle in the Atlantic was raging, U-Boats were successfully torpedoing our merchant ships that were heading to resupply England. Let's begin with a review of the Anglo-American war strategy, and why FDR and Churchill decided to prioritize defeating Germany first?

Paul Kennedy:

In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, after Churchill had come to the White House, the Grand Alliance was facing three enemies: Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and Japan.

You couldn't take all three of them on at once, certainly not in 1941 to 1942. So, what is the batting order? You have to understand where the two great combatants on the Western Ally side are sitting. For the United States, a terrible attack on Pearl Harbor, and there was pressure from Congressmen, from the public, from the US Navy to make the Pacific campaign by far number one.

For the British, they had just escaped invasion the year before. They were in the fight against Nazi Germany and its buddy Italy, and they wanted a European-centric war and the Pacific coming next. Thank heavens by 1943, US productivity is such it can have both. But it couldn't then.

Now let's get to the three-armed services of the United States.

The US Navy, it not only wants to be in the Pacific first, because it feels so badly hurt by Pearl Harbor, but because in the Pacific, it's likely that Pacific commanders, like Admiral Nimitz, would have the main role. For the two other US armed services, the Europe first strategy was attractive. For the US Army it was attractive because these dinky little islands in the Pacific offered no chance of putting a million strong American soldiers in.

The European campaign, the US Army would be the lead service. For the US Air Force under Hap Arnold is certainly intent upon building these enormous, long range, four engine, strategic bombers to blast the enemy's economy, railway systems, productivity, and get victory in the war that way. And it was hard to imagine anywhere in the Pacific where you could have air bases to put 2,000 B-17 and B-24s, whereas if the Air Force went to join the Royal Air Force Bomber Command, it could start the systematic attacks upon German industry.

When you looked at the techno-industrial capacities of the three Axis powers, Germany was the country which was most likely, Larry, to deal you a really severe blow if it developed some of its super weapons.

Remember by 1941, '42, there was even a great apprehension fueled by Einstein's urgent messages to Roosevelt that Germany might acquire the atomic bomb. So, there were a lot of reasons why it was Germany first.

Larry Bernstein:

The UK and France were allies against the Nazis. But after France surrenders in June 1940, the question arises, what should the British do about the French Fleet? God forbid, it ends up in the German hands. Ultimately, the British decide to sink the French fleet in the harbor at Mers-el-Kebir. What happened?

Paul Kennedy:

So, this awful decision of June, 1940 to go ahead and give an ultimatum to the leaders of the French fleet in North Africa and the Mediterranean. It is affected by the fear of what Adolf Hitler would do next. Remember they had just taken over Poland in the East, and then in April of 1940, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well as knocking out France. And everywhere they took over, they tried to grab the military assets of the defeated country to turn them against Great Britain.

So, it's not surprising that there was deep concern on the part of Churchill and the British Admiralty about what would the Germans do if they got their hands on the great French battle fleet? Because it was the fourth largest navy in the world in 1940.

The French leadership was now under Marshal Petain, a German satellite. The possibility of this French fleet tilting in the direction of the Germans weighed heavy on Churchill's mind. We also have to remember that for many, many years, Churchill was regarded as the most Francophile of all of the senior British politicians.

He'd been a Francophile in the First World War. He'd wanted Britain and France to stand firm together in 1938, '39 against Nazi Germany. The irony of Churchill ordering the British Admiralty to reinforcing the British Admiralty with large warships from the home fleet, and then ordering them into the Mediterranean to send a diplomatic political message to the French leadership and admirals in the great harbors of Mers-el-Kebir, and say "Look, you have one of three choices here. "You can either join us in the fight against the Nazis, and please do, or you can sail across to French colonies in the West Indies and be demobilized. Or you can sail to a neutral place like the United States and be demobilized. But if none of these are acceptable to you and you are continuing to keep your battleships, then our fear is so great that we're going to come in and attack you." The French decline to accept the ultimatum, then on those fateful mornings in early July, 1940, the reinforced Mediterranean fleet starts bombarding the French fleet, especially in the main base in North Africa, at a place called Mers-el-Kebir, inflicting extraordinarily heavy casualties on the navy which had been its allies, Larry, just two months earlier. Pretty tragic.

Larry Bernstein:

Two years later in November 1942 the US and Britain invaded French North Africa code named Operation Torch. Why did the US choose to fight in North Africa? The head of the US Army, George Marshall opposed the invasion of North Africa but Churchill and Roosevelt ultimately decided to go forward with Operation Torch? What happened?

Paul Kennedy:

Here's my hypothesis. The US army strategy when it came to European operations was to think big. If the Americans are going to put a large number of big divisions on the Western shores of France, it would just go bang, bang, bang, kicking all the way through to Berlin and the war would be over. This was a strategy of direct attack with big, big forces. The idea that there was going to be something outside the main invasion of France, a distraction as Marshall saw it, into North Africa was something that alarmed him.

In 1942, three things counted against Marshall's hopes of a more direct offensive against the Third Reich? The first is that the US army was not ready for the huge invasion, which would need to come on the Normandy beaches. It better get some practice in. Secondly, the Battle of Atlantic discussed was not yet won. How are you going to get 2 million American GI's safely to the UK, to their bases there and then supply them? And air control over Europe was not yet won.

For all these reasons, an attack knocking out the Vichy France regime in North Africa, which was seen as like a fourth partner in the Axis Alliance, and getting a springboard and releasing the Mediterranean shores to make them more secure for the routes to Malta, this all seemed a good idea.

Also, there was the political calculation of Mr. Roosevelt. He wanted to tell the American public by the midterm elections of 1942 that the US was on the go, that the US was taking steps forward. And North Africa was the way to go.

Larry Bernstein:

How were the Americans and Brits able to invade North Africa with the U-Boats running wild in the Atlantic?

Paul Kennedy:

Operation Torch is a major American and British landing on the shores of North Africa in November, 1942. To make sure that this vast amphibious operation is going to be uninterrupted, the allied Navies have just enormous amount of protection in terms of surface warships from heavy battleships and heavy cruisers down to light cruiser squadrons down to dozens and dozens of destroyers and frigates. The ships going across with like 15,000 American GI's, moving out of Glasgow in Scotland, down into Gibraltar and through and Mediterranean to the Northern shore of Algeria and the Atlantic coastline of Morocco and Algeria. There's no major disaster to the troop convoys going to North Africa as there was to some of the commercial convoys going from New York and Newfoundland to the British Isles.

Larry Bernstein:

In Eisenhower's book, Crusade of Europe, he mentions the importance of logistics to the success of the North African invasion. One fascinating detail is that the Americans landed locomotives at the Casablanca port, and sent the army on rail directly from the port all the way to Tunisia to attack Rommel's forces hundreds of miles away.

Paul Kennedy:

Operation Torch is the first big amphibious operation of the Western Allies. So, they have an awful lot to learn. The invasion is successful; there were many setbacks and many issues about newer technology. You had to have better command and control over landing beaches.

All of this was a learning experience. Wasn't it a good thing that you tried it out on the wavering wobbly Vichy French rather than trying your first operation against tough German held divisions on the shores of Western Europe? Amphibious operations, Larry, are the most difficult ones of all, cause you have to come across a sea, which is an unpredictable element. You have to get the timing right. It's not just needing command and control of the air.

You have to get your logistics perfect. And in some cases, you may have to fight your way onto the shore. So, you're advancing against French forces which laid down their arms, because there was already talk of a settlement, which is going to come within another few days.

Torch is wonderfully successful. On the whole it's over with by December. So, in January, Larry, you get this historic meeting of FDR and Winston Churchill meeting at Casablanca. And nothing could be more symbolic of the way the allies are coming back. This is terribly important for Roosevelt, it's the first major European theater operation the US has been able to undertake.

And now as you go into 1943, the two allied leaders and their advisors can be taking a stroll alongside the shore of Casablanca when they're not meeting in the intensive plans for the recovery of Europe.

Larry Bernstein:

After Operation Torch, Churchill gives a famous speech. He says "this is not the end. It is not even the beginning to the end, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning? What does Churchill mean by that?"

Paul Kennedy:

Let's do a little play on that interesting, almost Shakespearean sentence, Larry. It is repeated by Churchill's great military advisor Alanbrooke in his diaries. He looks at the success of the North American landings and he says, "this is not the beginning of the end." In other words, there's a lot of fighting to go all the way to get to the Hitler bunker in two years' time, it's not the beginning of the end, but it's the end of the beginning." And the beginning, when you look at the six years of the European war, the beginning has indeed stretched from the phony war of 1939, the fall of France in 1940, to the Atlantic in 1941, and then the beginnings of the Allied recovery now that the United States is in the war, the first successful steps in the advance towards Rome and Berlin.

It is one of Churchill's biographers who says, "Winston Churchill mobilized the English language and sent it out to fight."

Churchill's speeches are calibrated both to support the morale of his British nation and the entire British Empire to Australia and New Zealand and South Africa, but also with a message to the American listenership, because he recognizes there's a battle for the empathies of the British public and he wants them to see the battle through English eyes.

Larry Bernstein:

My grandparents and my mom were Austrian Jews on the run and in November 1942 my family was hiding in a farm house in a rural area outside of Marseille in Vichy France. The French did not put up much of a fight in Operation Torch in North Africa, so the Nazis decided that they needed to send German Troops to Southern France to prevent an American invasion there.

My grandfather, in his memoir, wrote that Churchill said it was the end of the beginning for the allied war effort but that he felt for our family, Operation Torch was probably the beginning of the end. My grandfather witnessed German soldiers goosestepping into Marseille and knew that he had to leave France immediately, even without the requisite French Exit Visa. He evacuated Marseille within days and just six weeks later, the French government did a roundup of all the Jews in Marseille during the middle of a night in January 1943 who were subsequently sent to Auschwitz.

My grandparents and my mother, who was a small child at the time, rushed to the French-Spanish border. They climbed the Pyrenees at night with the help of the French resistance, the Maquis.

Paul Kennedy:

Wow.

Larry Bernstein:

At that time of the war, in January 1943, the French resistance was a very small effort, just a handful of men and women helping mostly crashed British air force pilots cross into Spain to get back to England to rejoin the fight. Can you explain the importance of resistance movements to the allied success in the war?

Paul Kennedy:

Yes. The British Special Operations Executive, SOE reach out to a smallish number of French who wish to fight. The British are reaching out to a resistance in occupied Norway, in the Netherlands, and in Crete and Greece, because there you have fighting men and might have a better chance of developing some resistance.

The early stages of the French Resistance, there might be a lot of people in France who dislike the Germans, but they're terrified that the Germans will come and knock on the door.

So, it's very brave men and women who decide to start off a resistance. As soon as they do, then Special Operations wants to fly in its own operators, drop radio equipment, and get a network. It's not going to be really ready for resistance until it is assured that the allied armies are coming in.

It is interesting, on the morning after June the 6th, 1944, how the resistance rises up in a whole number of places in France, believing that the liberation of France is coming, and they want to be able to declare themselves victors in this fight.

Larry Bernstein:

When I was in junior high school in 1980, my mother bought a 25-volume set of Encyclopedia Britannica at a garage sale. It was a bit dated; it was published in 1943. I read the entry on WW2 and the war was then raging. The editors of the Encyclopedia were cautiously optimistic. At the time, it was not obvious that the allies were going to win and it certainly was not inevitable. What were the allied leadership thinking at the time?

Paul Kennedy:

First of all, it seems as if Roosevelt had such profound faith that the United States was going to win. But Churchill wasn't even sure if you were going to win the Battle of the Atlantic? He wasn't even sure if you were going to get control of the air over France in 1942.

So, there was a long way to go. We come back to Churchill and Alanbrooke's remark that taking over North Africa might be the end of the beginning, but it isn't the beginning of the end. And what's more, the war could go in another direction. Who knows? Readers of my most recent book *Victory at Sea*, will notice that I place an awful amount of emphasis on the winning of the war in 1943. 1943 is not surprisingly, Larry, the year in which the huge American investment in production of aircraft and surface ships, that huge American investment reaches fruition by the middle of 1943. That's when the US is producing one aircraft carrier a month, unbelievable. That's when the US is producing, 84,000 aircraft. Again, inconceivable today. And many observers, including those acute editors-

Larry Bernstein:
(laughs)

Paul Kennedy:
...of the Encyclopedia Britannica, don't quite know. They're supposed to be objective and authoritative. And they haven't been told of the next Allied plan, (laughs) which is to ...move on Sicily in July 1943, to keep rolling against the Axis powers. When they look at the Pacific, all they see is, yes, you've had this nice aircraft carrier battle at Midway in June 1942, and yet you haven't made much more in terms of advances by the end of 1942 or going into 1943, and the Japanese still have more aircraft carriers in the Pacific War until June 1943. So, it's not surprising those editors want to write cautiously.

Larry Bernstein:
You have described the vision of Roosevelt and Churchill. But let's look through the eyes of an American General and specifically George Patton. In his biographical film during Operation Torch, he looks through his field glasses and screams out, "Rommel, you magnificent bastard. I read your book." Patton leads his ground forces against Rommel in North Africa and then the invasion of Sicily. What happened?

Paul Kennedy:
Well, we know for sure (laughs), not just from that movie and George C. Scott's performance, that the most colorful of the American generals in the European theater was certainly George Patton. In the chain of command, Patton is under Eisenhower, as the Supreme Allied Commander of the Anglo-American Forces in North Africa. And Eisenhower is under the control of the American and the British Chiefs of Staff. There's a line of command here, and Patton is just one of the American generals, including, fellow rival, General Bradley.

But nonetheless, Patton is the most dynamic, which is why we have featured so much upon him, because we like dynamic guys. We don't like slow, thoughtful guys.

Either way, the North African Torch Operation is the first in which this untried General Eisenhower, who Marshall supports, is given command. But since it works out so well and because Churchill is pushing for further adventures in the Mediterranean theater, saying, "We have all of these troops, why don't we just move on? The next step from North Africa is just a

few hundred miles to Sicily." Again, Marshall is a bit alarmed at this distraction away from a French landing, but there's the persuasiveness of Churchill, you've got all of these landing craft, and now battle trained armies in North Africa, and the Italian regime is so wobbly, why not go ahead and have another larger amphibious operation against the poorly held island of Sicily? And this would allow Patton to show himself once again. He can land his troops can roam very quickly over the Western part of Sicily, while the slower-moving British forces under Montgomery can advance on the Eastern shores of Sicily. And Patton can show what a decisive Rommel-like figure he is. It's not surprising that he wants to shout out to Rommel, "I know you."

"I read your book, I'm coming after you." it's self-glorification, which is why he drove the other generals nuts.

Larry Bernstein:

So, knocking Italy out of the war is the allies next objective. And Hitler is obviously very concerned that Italy will sue for peace. After Italy surrenders, how do the Nazis respond?

Paul Kennedy:

The Allies have the political success of getting a neutralist group of Italian generals to push Mussolini out of the war and to end the fascist control of Italy.

There is a very successful and impressive German General, Alfred Kesselring, who not only is willing to try much more serious counterattacks upon the Allied invading forces but is able to persuade Hitler that, "Look, if you give us sufficient forces and you rush them into Italy, because of the geographic nature of the Italian countryside and that great mountain spine running all the way down the center of Italy, we can slow them down. And what's more, we can suck in dozens and dozens of Allied divisions to fight in the Italian mountains and not get very far. And after a while, we'll drop back another 50 miles, and we've already constructed a next line of defenses, and, we can do that for ages while you win the war on the Eastern Front.

So, the military campaign in Italy is a long-lasting slog, and it's only in May 1945, just as the Third Reich is coming to an end that the Allied forces get to Northern Italy itself.

Larry Bernstein:

How would you evaluate Italy's performance during the war? Churchill supposedly said that it was only fair, as Italy had fought with the allies in the first world war? Did Italy materially help the axis cause?

Paul Kennedy:

Italy, with its geographical strengths, some strengths in a modern fleet and air force, weaknesses in that the Italian Army is not very effective at all, and the Italian economy is terribly weak in terms of modern industrial production. It doesn't have any coal. Which is a tough in the age of the Industrial Revolution, right? It needs railway coal supplies all the time. Italy is a country which both the Germans and the British even before the war, considered is it

better for Italy to be on our side? We have to supply the Italian economy and therefore divert from our resources. Or, do we want Italy to be on the other side because it will suck the other side's resources?

There's a lot of jokes, the weakness and ineffectiveness of Italy as a fighting partner in the Second World War. It has to be said that from the viewpoint of the British Empire in the Mediterranean and Egypt in North Africa, Italy coming into the war was serious business. You had to pull your main fleet out of Malta. It was too unprotected from Italian air attack. You had an Italian army attempting to invade Egypt almost immediately after the fall of France, you're taking British divisions to North Africa because you've got this double disaster. France falls, and Italy comes in. This is serious business.

Italy may not have any aircraft carriers, but Italy and Sicily have geopolitical control of the central Mediterranean and a lot of airbases and a big fleet. So, knocking Italy out of the war is a positive step forward. There's no doubt about that.

Larry Bernstein:

This truly was a world war. What role did the British colonial empire play in WW2?

Paul Kennedy:

India which was regarded as the crown jewel of the British Empire was a great drain on British resources once Japan came into the war because you had to try to protect the frontiers of India, and the Japanese army had moved all the way to the outskirts of India.

There was a very large Indian army, which had been recruited and trained according to British regimental tactics in the inter-war years. They had a British Officer Corps. So, it wasn't entirely an Indian division which fought under Montgomery at the Battle of Alamein. But the Fifth Indian Division, and other ones like that, fought significantly in North Africa, from the Battle of Alamein on, including fighting in the Italian Peninsula itself.

On the whole, a strategic plus for the British was that they could call upon not just Canadian, Australian, New Zealand divisions to help in the fight against the Axis. They could call upon these colonial armies that they had created in the inter-war years. And some of them fought very, very well indeed.

A number of Indian divisions have soldiers in them who won the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry. And among those Indian divisions was the famous Gurkha Brigades which were probably the single best fighting troops of the entire Second World War.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned that the British war aims included protecting Malta and Alexandria, but the ultimate true objective was maintaining Britain's trade routes with India.

Paul Kennedy:

When you look at the British Empire as a whole, and its strategic aims, you see that the British had heavily invested in two places, going all the way back to the Victorian times and coming forward to 1940, the beginning of the war.

The two places were the British Empire of India and the British position in the Middle East. In the Levant, in Egypt, in Palestine, in Iraq, in Sudan. And there was a huge British military establishment in Egypt to sustain that presence.

Before the Italians closed the Mediterranean, most British merchant ships going to India are going through the Mediterranean not around the Cape at the bottom of South Africa. Malta, the Suez Canal and all of British held Middle East is important.

Larry Bernstein:

And why is it important?

Paul Kennedy:

Well, it's partly nostalgia. This is where the British Empire under Disraeli planted its feet, in the Victorian times. It's partly because of trade. The British have a massive trade surplus with their empire, even as they have a trade deficit in their trading relations with the more advanced nations and economies of the world.

Larry Bernstein:

Was maintaining access to oil the primary British concern in the Middle East?

Paul Kennedy:

Oil had become significant strategically.

But you needed to have control of the oilfields themselves. It was all right for the Americans, because the Americans are in such surplus of oilfields. British oil supplies came either from Venezuela or the Persian Gulf.

From 1914 onwards, the British were in the Persian Gulf getting control of those Arab Emirates, because that was where the oil was. You had to keep a firm hold of the oil supplies of the Middle East for your British Empire strategic aims.

Larry Bernstein:

Explain the role of the Allied Air Force in helping win the war?

Paul Kennedy:

By June 1940, with the fall of France, German generals having got to the shores of the English Channel, and they're looking with their binoculars across the English Channel at the White Cliffs of Dover.

There were two big factors against any German invasion of United Kingdom, Operation Sea Lion. This wasn't going to work because the Royal Navy was substantially bigger than the battered German Surface Fleet, which had lost so many of its ships in its successful takeover of Norway.

The second thing, is the Germans had to get control of the air over the English Channel and southern England, for any successful invasion.

You had no chance of invading if the enemy was in control of air. For the first time, the Luftwaffe finds itself against an air force which is numerically as strong as itself. And is getting a supply of new Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons faster than the German Luftwaffe is getting Messerschmidt squadrons. It has the advantages of being on the home side. It had the superior advantage which the Germans don't have, of this new system of detection of oncoming aircraft using radar. British pilots can rest on the ground until only about 45 minutes before they go into the air to fight against the Germans, and the German aircraft only a limited amount of fuel left by the time they get over London.

So you're taking on a country which has great strength and depth. It would take a far, far bigger Luftwaffe than was around in 1940 to be able to dominate Britain over the air.

Larry Bernstein:

What was the Allied bombing strategy against the Germans?

Paul Kennedy:

The British and later on, the Americans invest hugely in very large, long-range strategic bombing air force. the US Ace Army Air Force, and then the Mediterranean, the 15th Air Force, and the British Bomber Command. This is not the Fighter Command, which wins the defensive battle over the fields of Southern England in 1940. It's not the long-range coastal command, which goes out to help the convoys.

This is something different, independent air forces. They have an enormous challenge in trying to take the bombing war to the Third Reich by 1942 and 1943. Germany was creating an enormous anti-air force army of like a million and a half men and tens of thousands of advanced, high level antiaircraft guns to protect the Third Reich's industry from strategic bombing of the British and American bombers.

The casualty rate in the aerial campaign against Germany turned out to be huge.

In August and October, 1943, an aerial daylight bombing, which the Americans go over Germany against the strategic ball bearings plants of a city called Schweinfurt in West Germany, lead to on that morning, 60 B-17 aircraft being shot out of the sky. That is 60 times 11 trained crewmen. The casualty rates of the strategic bombing air forces and on the British side, the nighttime campaigns against industrial Germany were incredibly high. You're losing the crews which you spent a year or so training.

Larry Bernstein:

Was the air force bombardment of German industrial plants effective?

Paul Kennedy:

Both the British and the American strategic bombing services had the strategic argument that they alone, flying for a thousand miles into enemy held territory, you could unleash your bombs onto the railway lines, power stations, the oil refinery supplies, the shipyard works or the ball bearing works, and deal the enemy a blow on their home industrial front.

This will bring your enemy's economy grinding to a halt. This was the air force strategic bombing philosophy; you didn't need a large army to invade. You're not going to have a war on the Western Front like in 1918, and you hardly needed much in the way of a navy, either. The air force mavens here were very, very arrogant people. The air forces would do it, and what's more, we could do it with pinpoint strategic bombing so that we wouldn't raise the issues already raised in international law and human rights debates and in Geneva Conventions. We wouldn't be able to get involved in doing something which was morally offensive.

The British bomber command enters the Second World War thinking that it can do pinpoint strategic bombing, and realizes in daytime when it flies over Germany in 1939, 1940, it gets shot down, and so it moves to nighttime bombing, which means you need more advanced technical steering and navigational systems to do it.

So, if you're strategic bombers are up there 30,000 feet, and you don't have the technical equipment to figure out where your precise target is, you steadily begin moving to area bombing or carpet bombing, and that means you're going to be hitting whole cities with their vast civilian populations, and you're not so likely to knock out by pinpoint bombing the other side's industrial capacity. So, you lose on the moral and the effectiveness grounds.

Larry Bernstein:

Albert Speer led Germany's industrial production. How did Speer respond to the Allied air attacks?

Paul Kennedy:

When the Luftwaffe begins its attacks upon English cities and ports and railway lines and productive facilities after the summer of 1940, the British not only increased defensive capacities with antiaircraft guns and detection systems, they move a whole lot of their new industries further north and northeast, where it cannot be reached by German bombers.

In the same way Speer can do all of those defensive steps, relocate a considerable amount of German industry further to the east, because the Russians don't have a strategic bombing air force and then make the argument to Hitler that you want ever more men and resources for the antiaircraft systems of the Third Reich.

Larry Bernstein:

Let's wrap up our third installment together of What Happens Next with an explanation of why 1943 was the most important year of the war.

Paul Kennedy:

So, we're looking at the Allied campaign in the European and Mediterranean theaters, quite separate from what is going on against Japan, and the first significant steps have been taken at what Churchill and what Alanbrooke call the beginning of the end. You have defended British Isles, and there's no chance of a big German invasion there. You have control of the air over British airspace, the English Channel and Northwest Europe.

Your Allied convoys are coming across the Atlantic. They're encountering intensive attacks of U-boats, but you're still battling on. And then, in North Africa a shining light, you've got the first big step forward.

Roosevelt is reinforced politically by this. The Americans are taking the war against the Germans. Churchill and the British planners are relieved that you're going to knock not only Vichy France out of the war but Italy itself.

By the summer of 1943 after the decisive convoy battles in the North Atlantic of May and June, 1943, you have defeated the U-Boats. you're beginning to increase the supply of American army and armed forces into Great Britain. You're beginning the large, long range strategic bombing campaign of both American and British strategic bombers. You're not winning that fight over Germany, but you're straining the enemy.

And the Mediterranean, you're so successful that after the Allied invasion of Sicily in July, 1943 the regime of Mussolini's fascist Italy will fall and the Italian surface fleet will surrender to the Allies.

If you like it, one down, and two much larger Axis powers to defeat.