

OUTLINE FOR TV SHOW ON "THE BOMBER WAR"

1. How many books have you written on military history, what subjects you particularly concentrated on (e.g., WWII), and which of your books have been published in the U.S. too?
 - A. How could someone get a list of your books, and order or directly buy one or more of them?
2. Explain your unique professional and educational background. (Include the story of the university interviewer who asked you to sign his copies of your books.)
3. Explain why you decided to write "The Bomber War" after finishing "The Great War Generals on the Western Front."
 - A. Would you disagree that, although you say people have a mistaken view of the Great War generals, and wrongly think they were "donkeys", in fact you yourself often (at least orally) describe actions they took as lunacy or in some other way quite hopeless?
 - B. Is there possibly a different view in the UK than in the U.S. of the bomber war against Germany in general and of Arthur Harris in particular? (I do not generally remember hearing such powerful criticism in the U.S. of the bomber war as being immoral and, for that matter, even ineffective, criticism that you seem to say exists extensively in Britain.) If there is a different view in the U.S. than in Britain, what do you think the reason is? -- Is it the American claim that we engaged in precision bombing? If that is the reason, whereas practical and technological factors caused our bombing to *defacto* be the equivalent of area bombing, does the American view reflect a certain American blindness?
 - (i) You describe the end of WWII as being the end of the great air fleets. But what of the bomber armadas we later sent against the North Vietnamese? These armadas were of course much smaller in number (there were no 300 or 1,000 plane raids, were there?), but, on the other hand, isn't it true that the tonnage of bombs was *much* heavier per plane, and overall, because of the far greater carrying capacity possessed by B52s?
 - (ii) You say that the claim of precision bombing initially made by the

British in WWII (before they learned better), and then made by the Americans, was grossly inaccurate (to make a pun). After World War II, the Americans have -- perhaps increasingly -- made such claims for their bombing and use of missiles in places like Iraq during Gulf Wars I and II and in Kosovo. Yet, although American television will not show it and American print media rarely print it, we know American bombs and missiles have often hit civilian targets. This leads to the question of whether, despite this, American bombing, in the last 15 years or so, has in truth become far more "precisionistic" (so to speak) than in World War II, or whether claims of precision are just so much propaganda. What is your opinion?

(a) If our bombing is more accurate today, what are the reasons? Global positioning systems? Radar or laser guided bombs and missiles? Other things?

(A) But grave errors still occur, do they not, and lots of civilians still get killed, don't they?

4 Explain the development of "the bomber dream" from the dawn of powered, heavier than air flight, until the beginning of WWII. Include, among other things that you may choose to discuss, such matters as:

- A. The theories and battles of Trenchard, Mitchell and Douhet.
- B. As a matter of color, the fact that Orville Wright taught Hap Arnold how to fly (and who Arnold was).
- C. The first use of bombers in WWI.
- D. The "bomber dream" of winning a war without need for the great land battles that killed ten million people in WWI. (There was even a thought, wasn't there, that bombers might render war unthinkable?) Americans of today really don't understand, do we, at least not viscerally, the psychological impact of this horrendous blood letting on Britain and France? I believe you said to me, didn't you, that you think the lasting impact of WWI on Britain was greater than that of WWII?
- E. The failure in the 1920s and 1930s to develop planes, navigation aids, aiming devices, better weather forecasting and tactics that would enable the allies, in the first part of WWII, to make a success of the pursuit of the bomber dream

even to make strategic bombing useful. How did this happen? That is, how did Britain, *especially* starting around perhaps 1937 or 1938, not mount a crash program to develop all of these things? You point out that British airmen were sometimes unable to find British cities in good weather in broad daylight, so how did Britain remain unaware that the practical facts undercut the theory of the bomber dream?

- F. Explain the kind of essentially tactical air arm developed by the Germans to further blitzkrieg warfare, Goering's "Maier" boasting, and the fact that the Germans bombed London during the blitz notwithstanding the lack of a true strategic bomber force (if I am not mistaken).
 - (i) Explain that the Germans themselves found out that daylight bombing was too dangerous to their own forces to be continued and therefore switched to night raids.
 - G. Explain that in Warsaw, Rotterdam, Coventry, London (and Guernica?) the Germans -- and in Nanking and elsewhere the Japanese too -- sowed the wind, only to reap the whirlwind in later years.
5. Explain how doctrines based on moral qualms about killing civilians eventually gave way in the face of practical facts of the real world. That is, precision bombing proved impossible with only the knowledge and technology of the time, so it gave way to area bombing. (Describe Arthur Harris' view that to be sure of destroying any given part of an area, you had to destroy all of it.) Include the following matters among others you may choose to discuss:
- A. "Technical" problems.
 - (i) As mentioned above, navigation, locating and aiming problems. Also, creepback (explain this).
 - (ii) The growth and increasingly sophisticated use by the Germans of fighter defense forces, including the use of boxes, attacks from 12 o'clock high (before machine guns pointing there were placed on the bombers), attacks from behind and below (six o'clock low?), picking off stragglers who slipped out of the bomber stream. (Explain the idea of the bomber stream.)
 - (iii) The growth and use of anti-aircraft artillery by the Germans.
 - (iv) The practical failure of the American tactic of using huge fleets to

create immense machine gun firepower for protection. (The numbers of fighters that the bombers claimed to have knocked down were something like the American body count figures in Viet Nam, weren't they? (Is there a lesson here?))

- (v) The continuing scientific war -- the development and counter-development of radar aids, beams, jamming, etc., etc.
- (vi) The fact that the weather over Europe, regularly being cloudy, was far different from the weather experienced in American training in the vast, often cloudless skies of the American far midwest, southwest, and west.
- (vii) The bombers' need to fight their way to *and* from targets. Also, the weather, especially the clouds, often negated the famous Norden bombsight.

B. Theoretical and moral matters.

- (i) The view, held despite evidence to the contrary, that massive bombing would destroy enemy civilian morale, and would cause the Germans to give up the war in the knowledge that they couldn't win it and because the destruction was too much to bear in such circumstances.
 - (a) Explain that the morale of Londoners had not been crushed by bombing, and that what German civilians thought was quite irrelevant because they were in the grasp of a horrendous dictatorship.
- (ii) The idea that it would be possible to destroy Germany's war making industry -- its aircraft, tank, gun and munitions factories, its oil supply, its transport system, etc.
 - (a) Actually, until near the end of the war, Germany's production, including production of aircraft, increased for a number of reasons, including dispersal of plants, Germany's economy (amazingly enough) had been using only one shift, so all it had to do was double the shifts, the ability to put plants back into production rapidly, etc. I have read that the USSBS says that after allied strategic bombing began in earnest, German production rose dramatically: half the ME-109s were built in 1944 and early 1945, 1,400 ME-262 fighter jets were built in

1944 and 1945, annual tank production rose from 3,000 to 17,000 and munitions production rose from 540,000 to 3,250,000 tons between 1941 and 1944, and in 1944, the war production machine produced enough to equip 228 infantry and 45 armored divisions, which were more troops than Germany had in the field: These figures would indicate that strategic bombing to stop war production was a failure.

- (A) Ultimately, the Luftwaffe suffered enormous losses in *pilots*. This was crucial. Also, a lot of soldiers were tied up in home defense.
- (iii) The idea -- which Churchill and Roosevelt both believed in, didn't they? -- that Germany (like Japan) had to "be taught a lesson which they and the world will never forget." (I think I've got the quote right -- it's from Churchill's speech to Congress in late December, 1941, I believe.) As you say, all of Germany's aggressive wars had been fought on *other* countries' soil -- Denmark and Austria in the 1860s, France in 1870-71, the Low Countries and France and Russia in WWI (with a bit of fighting in the far eastern parts of Germany I believe, but mainly in Russian territory on the eastern front), Poland, the Low Countries and France in the first part of WWII. It was thought necessary to teach the Germans and the Japanese to hate, fear, and wish to avoid war as much as their victims did.
- (a) This worked, did it not? It could be argued, couldn't it, that for 50 years after WWII, the Germans and the Japanese were among the most pacific of peoples? Maybe they still are, although some are questioning the Japanese these days.
- (iv) The need to show the Russians that Britain and the U.S. were doing everything they could while the Russians were bearing the major burden of the ground war, as I would argue they continued to do right up until Germany's surrender.
- (A) I don't think it irrelevant that, as you point out, although the Versailles treaty created German grievances, WWI gravely harmed lots of European nations in many ways, but only Germany turned to a policy of murder. This kind of thinking seems to have been beaten out of the Germans by the destruction of their country in WWII.

- (v) Although it seems not to have been a matter of “official” doctrine -- though you have very properly mentioned it -- the entire question of why the lives of “innocent” women, children and old people are worth more, as a moral matter, than the lives of our young fighting men -- and, for that matter, even the enemy’s fighting men.
 - (a) Is it possible that we almost automatically take the position we do regarding civilians because, if one does not, then there will be no moral restraints against creating holocausts? Is it possible that we maintain the position for this reason even though we know that, as a practical matter, civilians *are* being killed, and in droves? (*Far* more civilians than military people were killed in WWII, weren’t they?)
 - (vi) The very fact that there was a war on, and it was truly a battle for civilization. The worst and most immoral possible thing would have been to *lose* to the Nazis.
 - (vii) Striking back against Germany via bombing was helpful to British (and American?) morale. The British, after all, had suffered under the blitz, had seen almost all of Europe go under the fascist thumb, were fighting all alone (before the U.S. got hit at Pearl), and something was needed to buck up morale.
 - (ix) Because German industry was located in cities (until dispersed), if industry was to be attacked, it was unavoidable, given the technology of the time, that civilian sections of cities would be hit also.
 - (a) I take that you disagree that moral culpability, *if any*, is less because one is not *aiming* at civilian targets in situations where one knows it is inevitable that civilian targets will be hit. (At Hiroshima, I note, we *pretended* the city was a military target because of the presence of some barracks.
- 6(a). Describe some of the tactics that the bomber forces developed to combat the technical problems of locating and accurately bombing targets. Include, among others, electronic beams, pathfinders, master bombers, all planes dropping their bombs simultaneously.
- A. Describe what was done to destroy the Ruhr dams.

- (b). Also, the development of the P51 Mustang long range fighter, which could give fighter cover all the way to and from the target, was *crucial* to effective strategic bombing, wasn't it. It was in effect a new bomber war with the P51, wasn't it?
- A. The Germans developed and by the end of 1944 were using jet fighters. Why weren't they more effective? (I gather they were invulnerable in the air, so that we bombed their runways to make them unusable.)
- (c). In the long run, the only pre-atomic bomb tactic that *really* worked, wasn't it, was the overwhelmingly massive, sudden and, when necessary, repeated bombing of a single city -- Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo -- that, with or without the use of incendiaries, caused fantastic firestorms that suddenly and shockingly destroyed whole cities at once.
- A. Explain how Hitler and the Germany tried to cover up the news of Hamburg, and how (and why) Goering was called "Maier" by its citizens.
- B. The problem with trying to use strategic bombing to defeat Germany in this (or other) ways, however, was that there was not a big enough bomber force to do it. It was variously estimated that it would take 6,000 bombers -- or even up to 20,000? -- to do it. There were not enough bombers, and extensive resources sometimes including bombers themselves), had to be put into other endeavors - - fighting the U-boats, paving the way for landings in North Africa and Normandy, assisting crucially in the St. Lo breakout, sowing mine fields, etc. Also, lots of the top brass thought the bomber dream would not work anyway, and were unwilling to see more resources put into strategic bombing, right?
- (i) In the long run it was the combined efforts of several arms of the services that defeated Germany and Japan, wasn't it?
- (ii) The Normandy landings were the end of the bomber dream, weren't they? After that, is it harder to understand some of Harris' decisions?
- C. Even with regard to strategic bombing itself, there were major arguments among the top brass over what the priority of categories of targets should be: oil, transportation, cities, enemy morale, etc.
- (i) As well, directives of higher ups were worded in loose and contradictory ways that gave Arthur Harris scope to do, not entirely what he wanted, but much of what he wanted.

- (ii) Yet, in your view, it is entirely improper for critics, and politicians of the time, to try to pin upon Harris full responsibility for the Dresden raid and to consider that raid a monstrosity. Explain why you believe that, although they fled from responsibility, Churchill and the Joint Chiefs were *at least* equally responsible for the Dresden raid (directives even mentioned the city) and Dresden was a major transport center for troops going to and from the eastern front to fight the Russians (who were less than 100 miles from Dresden when the city was destroyed, weren't they?).
- (iii) Strategic bombing did, in the last year of the war, play a major role in bringing down Germany, didn't it? Railway transportation was pretty well smashed in France (by about 70%) in order to assist the Normandy landings, and ultimately Germany's oil supply was smashed too, which made a big difference in the Battle of the Bulge. Also, Germany's work at Peenemunde was set back by three months or so. Explain what this meant, and also that the Peenemunde raid was *intended* to kill civilians who were scientists.
- (iv) Explain how the Germans had dispersed their synthetic oil industry, and why the size, scope and far distance of Ploesti from allied air bases made it difficult to destroy oil production there until the very end.
- (v) The 15th Air Force, which smashed Ploesti, receives little mention in your book, which focuses on RAF Bomber Command and, to a lesser but still considerable extent, on the U.S. 8th Air Force. Why did the 15th receive so little mention?
- (vi) Incidentally, your use of lengthy quotes from veterans of Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force is the best I've seen since I read, and is the only good use I've read apart from, Donald Miller's use of them in his recent, massive, thoroughgoing revision of Commager's history of WWII (originally produced about 1946 or so). How did you find the people to be interviewed and how did you go about interviewing them?
- (vii) It is generally thought that the sudden shock and total destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki (like the same at Hamburg and Dresden) caused the Japanese to sue for surrender. Yet there are those who think it was not the A bomb, but the entry of Russia into the war, that caused the surrender. What is your opinion?

- (viii) The allied leaders said it was not possible to bomb the concentration camps even had they known where the camps were (and lots of us believe, on the basis of evidence, that the allied leaders did know about the camps and where they were). Yet it is now known, isn't it, that the allies bombed Oswiecim (spelling?), which is the village right near Auschwitz. How is it possible to justify not attempting to destroy the rail lines, the gas chambers, the crematoria?
7. I don't know if it is generally realized just how dangerous it was to fly in the strategic bombing force. It was almost, one might say, a one way ticket to the grave, and the statistical chances of surviving 30 operations in the RAF, or first 25 and then 35 in the USAAF, were low. Something like 51 percent of Bomber Command or a total of about 55,000 men, got killed (8,300 got killed in training accidents alone), and perhaps 25 percent of the 8th Air Force (or 26,000 men), which was in the war only about half the time of Bomber Command, got killed. (Bomber command lost 9,000 planes.) On individual missions, four percent losses were regarded as acceptable, and losses often were eight or ten percent, and were even 19 or 20 --or even 30 -- percent. Describe all this.
8. One further point which I think is often overlooked when critics say the bombing did not contribute heavily towards winning the war, is the extent to which it forced the Germans to tie up enormous amounts of men, guns, and ammunition in defense of the homeland instead of using them against the Russians, or against the British and Americans in North Africa and France. (This is what economists' would call the Germans' opportunity cost.) Apparently, thousands of 88s -- the Germans best artillery piece (and anti-tank weapon), a million men, about 850 fighter planes, and 30 percent of artillery ammunition got tied up in defense of the homeland. This is a *lot*. (I was, incidentally, shocked to read that the Germans had only 34 or 38 88s in North Africa.)
- A. On the other hand, although much equipment got tied up defending the homeland, the USSBS' figures indicate that Germany suffered no lack of equipment.
- 9(a). Has there ever been a case in which bombing played the lead role in a war? How about Kosovo -- or did the Serbs back off not because of the bombing (which destroyed only 10 or 12 of their tanks (not hundreds) and killed "only" about 400) but because of the Russian withdrawal of support for the Serbs? How about the Six Day War, in the sense that the destruction of Arab air forces on the ground paved the way for a quick victory (as did the use of tactical air against Arab troops)? How about the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi -- didn't it at least bring a temporary respite in the

Viet Nam War? Or was it just that the North Viet Nameese ran out of SAMS shortly before we would otherwise have had to quit bombing them, and anyway simply decided, in accordance with their long term goals and strategy, to exercise some patience because they know they would win in the end?

- (b). Do you think that the bomber dream is conceivably possible of realization today? It is hard to see how it could be made realizable by nuclear weapons, since their use is regarded as unthinkable. Could it be realizable because of "smart" bombs and missiles and the like? -- Kosovo, Iraq I and Iraq II would seem to argue in the negative, but our government always tells us we will succeed easily because "smart" weapons will "cut off the enemy's head" -- its "command and control" -- and will destroy its military capacity with a minimum of civilian casualties -- about whom most Americans do not seem to care anyway. What is your own view about whether the bomber dream is alive and realizable today?

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