

EISENHOWER DISCUSSES THE WAR



When Gen. Eisenhower hit New York its people gave him a great welcome as he rode through the streets.

IN two full-dress interviews in Paris and Washington, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower talked about some of the high spots of the campaign for Europe and about certain post-VE-Day questions. It's been generally agreed that the interviews were pretty historic. Here are highlights of the general's talks to the press in the two Allied capitals.

From the standpoint of the soldiers, they are tired of the war. They are tired of it, of course—all of them, British, American and French. They are not articulate about it, but I know one thing: They have got an earnest hope for peace. It is my conviction that they believe that if the same forbearance and good-will is applied all through our countries, the United Nations, in meeting the problems of peace, we ought to be fully as successful in peace as we were in war.

There is going to be a lot written about this war. Many of you here present are going to analyze various methods through your acquaintance with staff officers, and with what had happened you are going to know much about the basis of decisions—when they were taken, why they were taken and other things that other people don't know. . . . If I could urge upon you one thing to study carefully, it is this: the value of integrated tactical power in war.

Now, I don't mean to use 10-dollar expressions. What I am trying to get at is this: There is no such thing as a separate "air" war or a separate "sea" war or "logistic" war or any other branch.

One thing I think I have a right to speak about since the war in Europe is done is to refer briefly to the Japanese war. The reason I would like to put in a boost in pulling for maximum effort against Japan is based strictly upon my own experience. When you apply maximum effort, your losses are minimized. If you put one regiment to attack a well-defended battalion you are going to have serious losses, but when you apply overwhelming force, overwhelming artillery, overwhelming air power to that thing, you have no losses. They are negligible, at least. No one arm, no service, no two can do the job alone. If we have proved anything in Europe, we have proved that in the integration of the fighting services and supply come efficiency, rapidity in operations and a minimum in losses, and I am certain that we now as citizens—because in looking at that [Pacific] war I have no part in it officially; I am just another citizen—looking at it I believe that everyone of us that studies this business of war and believes he understands it in the slightest bit should pump and pull for maximum effort to get the thing done with and save lives.

After making formal statements to the press in Paris and Washington, Gen. Eisenhower threw the interviews open to questions and answers. Here are some of them.

Q. There seems to be a large campaign in a number of places to talk about a "Russo-American war." There is nothing in your experience with the Russians that leads you to feel we can't cooperate with them perfectly?

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A. On my level, none. I have found the individual Russian one of the friendliest persons in the world. He likes to talk with us, laugh with us. He loves to laugh, and I have talked to many British officers and they find him the same way.

In an atmosphere of that kind, it has its effects. The peace lies, when you get down to it, with all the peoples of the world, not just for the moment with some political leader who is trying to direct the destiny of a country along a certain line. If all the peoples are friendly, we are going to have peace.

Q. With tens of thousands of your men going across the country to the Pacific in the next few months, have you any tip you would like to give the home folks about what we can give them?

A. The only thing is for goodness sake don't psychoanalyze them. They are perfectly normal human beings. They have been through a lot and very naturally they want a pat on the back and they want to be told they are pretty good fellows, and they are. But they want to be treated just like they were treated when they went away.

Q. From the enemy's viewpoint, which day and what event would you say constituted the last straw that broke the camel's back? When was it perfectly obvious that the jig was up?

A. From everything that we can find, from their own statements, they knew it—the professionals knew the jig was up—on the third day after the Rundstedt offensive had started in the Ardennes. They knew then that they could not go where they intended. If they could not get complete surprise and drive clear through to Liege and then drive on behind Antwerp, then there was not much they could do.

Q. What was the most worried night you had in the last three years?

A. Well, to tell you the truth, I believe it was the night we first attacked in North Africa. There were so many confusing factors involved.

Remember, we went in there as friends. We hoped to make an ally. But we had to go prepared to fight if necessary to make a great show of strength. We hoped that if we made a show of overpowering strength, the Germans would not hold that part of France that was then unoccupied and would let it alone.

That was one thing. The next, it was an amphibious operation I undertook and all of us were more nervous about it, I think, than later we became.

Lastly, we were trying to do a lot with very little and the weather on the west coast was abominable, and we did not know what we were going to run into over there. And a fourth reason, communications were so poor. In the Mediterranean we found that the radio practically does not work. I should say that the most worried night I spent during the war was the night of November 7 or 8—November 7, I believe—1942.

Q. Are you convinced Hitler is dead?

A. Well, to tell you the truth, I'm not. I was at first. I thought the evidence was quite clear. But when I actually got to talk to my Russian friends, I found they weren't convinced. . . . I don't know. The only thing I am sure of is what I said in my Paris interview: If he is not dead, he must be leading a terrible life for a man that was the arrogant dictator of 250,000,000 people, to be hunted like a criminal and afraid of the next touch on his shoulder.

Q. General, had you expected the war to end in Europe when it did?

A. No. For once in my life I am going to defend myself. On October 20, 1943, I made a bet that the war in Europe would terminate in 1944. Well, I have been jeered at a little bit because I missed it four months. But I just want to ask you this: Under the conditions, if you will go back to October, 1943, how many people believed that we were going to be able to invade Europe successfully and rush forward like we did? What I was expressing was a tremendous confidence in our ability to get across the Channel and whip the German. I thought we could do it in the next year. Well, I was wrong by four months.

Q. Would you care to go back to 1942 and give some evaluation of the German commanders who opposed you?

A. To my mind, Gen. von Rundstedt was the most accomplished soldier we met.