

- William, whenever you're ready I'm going to say over to you and thank you.
- My pleasure. Thank you.
- [Wendy] Thank you.
- And welcome. And welcome to-
- Sorry not to be there with you.
- That's fine. We'll see you next time.
- Yeah, see you next time. Thank you so much. Bye.
- Bye-Bye. And welcome to everyone who's Zooming in this evening for this talk about the Fourth Reich to Surrender. It's a fascinating aspect of the end of World War II, but I'm going to begin with a reference to World War I. 1918, 1919 saw Germany implode at the end of the First World War and this was followed by a virtual civil war in Germany between the Marxist left and indeed for a short moment of time, Munich and Bavaria actually had a Marxist government and the far right, which eventually under Nazism won out in 1933 when Hitler came to power. And the relatively short-lived Democratic Weimar Republic came to an abrupt end. We know that story.

One of the things that often annoys me hearing other historians speak, particularly those teaching in schools and universities, is they do things in blocks. The block is this term is World War I, next term is World War. One, it doesn't work like that. Just over only quarter of a century after the catastrophe faced by the German people in the aftermath of First World War, they faced the same again in the aftermath of the Second World War. That's why some historians today refer to the two wars together as the Great European War of the 20th century.

In respect of the end of the Second World War, there was a flood tide of German humanity fleeing as fast as they could with whatever they could carry from the advancing Russians in the east, and they fled towards the advancing allies in the West. In a most interesting book, a relatively recent book called, "Promise Me You'll Shoot Yourself," by Florian Huber. It's on my blog under a short book list for 1945.

In this book, which is subtitled The Downfall of Ordinary Germans in 1945, he begins by telling this story. "Irene Broker was a 23-year-old woman who in late April, 1945 was fleeing with her family or what was left of it from the northeastern city of Stettin. Her husband, Werner Walter had been missing since the previous autumn and she'd been separated from her parents,

father-in-law and sister-in-law, during an air raid the day before as they passed through the town of Anklam. Her parents' carriage had been left behind with a broken wheel while she was shunted out of town in her car, caught up in the dense flow of vehicles, people and horses. When she looked for her family later, she couldn't find them. Only little Holger, her two-year-old son was still with her. She was careful not to let him stray from her side."

And Huber goes on to say, "Towards morning they arrived in Demmin. For Irene Broker is just another name on the escape route. The town surrounding the red brick church tower that dominated the landscape for miles around held neither memories nor meaning for her. The end of her march lay further west beyond the reach of the Russian soldiers."

Demmin is a fascinating history at this point. It's a tiny place, but it's becomes known in these days as a sight of mass suicide as people found themselves unable to escape further west abandoned by the Wehrmacht, and rather than fall prey to the advancing Russians, the majority of the suicides, and we don't know how many, the current academic German assessments are anything between 702 and two and half thousand people committed suicide. The majority of whom we believe threw themselves into the town's river.

Huber writes further in this way, the same day that the same day that we'd been looking at with Irene Broker, "The same day, Gustav Skibbe noted in his war journal that his unit. He's with the Wehrmacht was to abandon its garrison. There was to be no final battle in the town. The Wehrmacht was clearing all its bases. To his delight, Skibbe had received an extra vehicle for withdraw purposes. After a sleep this night, he drove to the army's food stores where the liquidation of the base was well underway. Broken and empty packing cases were strew all over the place. Meat, cigars, schnapps, soldiers and civilians were carting off sacks of potatoes and whole cartons of cigarettes, slapping and shouting at each other, tearing the loop out of each other's hands and laying into one another. He wrote in his journal, murder, manslaughter. He packed what he could for himself and his men. It was a hasty retreat rather than an oddly withdrawal. The first aircraft buzzing the town, the first dead. The war had reached Demmin. It was the 29th of April, mum's birthday he wrote, what gloomy thoughts drift out to her. Office cleared amid bombing low-flying aircraft, several deaths among refugees. Russia, one unit came flooding back, a hideous to do. Moved overnight to a bridge by the harbour. No one to be allowed out. Retreating without a fight had its price. Civilians were surrendered to the enemy with no means of defence. Residents and refugees alike were prevented from leaving town on the roads west, so as not to hold up the withdrawing army. The soldiers began their retreat over the river. Once on the other side, they blew up the bridges."

It's the chaos at the end of World War II, which is similar to the chaos at the end of World War I. And this small town today on the German-Polish border saw mass deaths. They were buried in mass graves, but the Russians as this was to fall into East Germany of course, the Russians never marked it, and it's why present day German historians are seeking to find out and to write of the truth of this event. One day after the diary entry that I've just read, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin the 30th of April, 1945. And many other Germans followed his

example as we've just been talking about of suicide.

And I'll leave the last comment to Florian Huber who writes this. "Some decided in the town of Demmin, some decided to anticipate the town's capture and the end of the world as they knew it. 27-year-old Luther Buckner of the National Labour Service was dead even before Russian soldiers reached his house in Yardsvasse He'd hanged himself had as had his wife, his sister, and their mother and grandmother. Before that happened though, one of them had first put a noose around the neck of three-year-old George Peter. Something similar took place in the house of 71 year old director of the general local health insurance fund. Before he and his wife and their grown up daughter hang themselves, his two grandchildren aged two and nine died in the same way. The young wife of a first left tenant who lived alone with her three-year-old son somehow summoned the will to loop a noose around the boy's neck and hang him before doing the same to herself. Within these same few hours, an elderly policeman and his wife also hang themselves. The wife of a chief police constable hanged herself. Her two grown daughters hang themselves. Only three people. The 47-year-old carpenter and his wife and daughter of a landowner west of the river chose another way out. They shot themselves in the head."

Now I'll tell these stories of this one town, which are true stories, not to generate a false sense of sympathy, but merely to illustrate with facts and not opinions what war or war in Germany begun twice in a generation by the leaders of the German state had done to the people and to the land self-inflicted German wounds on the German people. You may well say, but they had inflicted many wounds on many other people. That's absolutely true, of course, and no one denies that. But war, war doesn't distinguish between the innocent and the guilty between the old and the young, between victor and vanquished. War destroys everything it can like a fire in its path. The message of course, that this piece of history brings to all of us wherever we are, is that war should always, always be avoided.

Talk, talk, jaw, jaw said Churchill, rather than war war. And there are today, of course, as we all know, many wars being fought across the globe with terrible, terrible consequences. We've all seen pictures of children in the Yemen, for example. War is a nasty, horrible thing.

Fear of the advancing Red Army preceded the Russians into the very heart of Berlin on the day of Hitler's suicide. And this gives an added portion to the story of Europe post 1945. These Germans who killed themselves, killed themselves not because the Americans or the British or the French or the Canadians or whoever were coming after the surrender of German armies. At this point, the German army had it surrender, but they were fleeing because they feared the Red Army. They feared not just death, but torture and death, rape, you name it. And it was the Red Army that was a great fear.

Most of us are probably of an age where we remember the phrase, reds under the bed. They saw the reds down the road and their response, mass suicide. I'm using a book called, "After Hitler" by the historian Michael Jones, and he writes as though it's in the present tense. The 30th of April, which is the day we're talking about. 30th of April, 1945, Red Army forces break

into the Reichstag. Although fighting within the building will continue for another two days. Russian troops are now within 400 metres of the Reich Chancellery and the Fuhrerbunker, Hitler and Eva Braun commits suicide at around 3:45 PM. But it isn't over. In popular imagination, the suicide of a monster Hitler ends the war. It does not end the war. It does not end the war.

Michael Jones goes on to write in his book, "After Hitler," the following. At 6:00 AM on the 30th, so this is before Hitler suicide. And at 6:00 AM on the 30th April, 1944, Mohnke's forces, General Wilhelm Mohnke, Mohnke's forces were responsible for defending this government quarter as a last stand within Berlin. And he goes and meets Hitler for the last time. And he writes this, after the war. Hitler sat on a chair beside his bed. Over his pyjamas he was wearing a black military greatcoat. His left hand shook incessantly and yet he exuded a strange sense of calm as if his thoughts were collected and he'd slept well, which of course he had not. Hitler was precise. Mohnke says, he began, Mohnke, how long can we hold out? I answered 24 hours, my Fuhrer no longer than that. I then described the military situation.

The Russians had reached the Wilhelmstrasse and advanced through the U-Bahn Tunnel under the Friedrichstrasse. Most of the tear garden was in their hands and they'd fought right up to the potstaler plants only 300 metres from the bunker. Hitler digested this calmly. It's the Russians that took Berlin. Stalin had been determined from the very beginning that it would be Russia that stormed the Fuhrerbunker. For two reasons. One, he wanted to repair the damage done by the Western Allies in 1918, 1919, where they did not insist on an unconditional surrender. But you remember, it was a mere arms test, he wanted an unconditional surrender. He wanted newsreel pictures of that fall of Berlin to be broadcast across Russia. And secondly, he has no intention of giving up any territory. For example, Poland and the Baltic states and in indeed East Germany, through which the Red Army has advanced.

Michael Jones writes something else which I wanted to share. This is a piece written by Huizendorf. who was a personal assistant, a PA, to Joseph Goebbels. Huizendorf writes, by the 30th of April, it was obvious to everyone that further defence of Berlin was hopeless. Germany was split into several paths by Anglo-American and Russian armies. Not Berlin, Germany was split. She hoped for clash between them, had never in fact materialised. Our army high command no longer existed in as a meaningful force. Its resources were scattered in all directions by the rapid advanced of our opponents, the machinery of government of virtue collapsed. Our last resort had been pull out one of our armies from its defence in the air turning its back on the American troops on the far side of the river, and instead push it towards Berlin.

But by the 30th, it was clear that these men were unable to reach Berlin. In such circumstances to tried to hold out any longer against the well equipped Russian forces of Marshall Zhukov was utterly pointless. And so Berlin falls to the Russians. And the day after Hitler suicide, that is the 1st of May, 1945, General Krebs began negotiating with the Russians for the surrender of the German troops in Berlin. But Goebbels refused Krebs permission to surrender. But later that day, Goebbels and his wife killed their six children before committing suicide themselves. Hitler had indeed written a will and he'd handed over the position of Fuhrer to Admiral Doenitz who'd

been in charge of the U-boats during the war, and he is stationed up on the German-Danish border, the Baltic and messages are sent from Berlin to Doenitz, who is frankly according to his own account, very surprised to be nominated. It is when Doenitz has appointed the new Fuhrer by the will of Adolf Hitler that some historians they call the next few weeks the Fourth Reich. Doesn't matter whether it's the third or the fourth, he's not going to last long.

On the 3rd of May, Doenitz established his headquarters at Flensburg on the Danish water and on the Baltic, and he opened negotiations with Montgomery. And on the 4th of May, as Jones writes in his introduction. 4th of May, 1945, Montgomery received an unconditional surrender of German forces in Holstein, Western Holland and Denmark to be effective from eight o'clock in the morning on the 5th of May. It has estimated the more than half a million German troops are involved who were past another half a million, who joined another half a million who had surrendered in the last 48 hours. What does Doenitz himself say. We have Doenitz's memoirs, which were written after his imprisonment following his trial at Nuremberg.

Now always with Nazi, well with any memoirs, but particularly with Nazi memoirs, you have to take them not just with a pinch of salt, but with a bucket of salt because they're always trying to say, I didn't know, it wasn't me. But putting that aside, Doenitz was a professional career naval man, and so when he talks about facts and you give dates and times, there is no reason ever to doubt him. It's only when he tries to explain away his involvement with Nazism that you begin to wonder how reliable they are.

But he wrote this, and I will share this with you if I may. On the morning of the 4th of May 45, I gave Admiral Friedeburg full authority to accept Montgomery's conditions. He flew back to British headquarters with instructions that as soon as the formalities of the separate surrenders for Montgomery had been completed, he was to fly onto Eisenhower in Reims. Reims in France is the headquarters of the Western Allies and Eisenhower's commander in chief is at Reims, and offer him in the same manner, the separate surrender, our forces in the American sector. Friedeburg's report on May the 4th, it come as a great belief to us. The first step towards a separate surrender to the West had been accomplished without our having been forced to abandon German soldiers and civilians to the mercy of the Russians.

Now, we enter very interesting territory indeed, because what Doenitz is saying is let's surrender to the Western allies first because we've got a real problem with the Russians because the Russians will advance killing and raping wherever they go. So if we surrender to to the allies, we are only fighting on one front and they're still thinking in terms of fighting, okay, a retreat fight.

Now of course, Montgomery and Eisenhower are only too pleased to stop the fighting in their sectors and no more deaths is something that they are all committed to. But Stalin is not pleased. Stalin wants, remember World War I. Stalin wants a total international unconditional surrender instead of which Doenitz is organising an unconditional surrender to the British and to the Americans. And that poses a problem. The same day as that is signed with Montgomery American troops enter Berchtesgaden, Hitler's Bavarian retreat.

On the 5th of May, further German forces surrender to the Americans. And in Holland the German forces surrendered to the Canadian General Foulkes. On the 6th of May, Doenitz sacked Himmler from all offices of state. And this is one of the sort of interesting bits I was referring to just now about can you find the memoirs reliable.

Doenitz writes, with Germany completely occupied, however, the whole situation has changed. On May the 6th, I dismissed Himmler from all the posts that he held. When later I heard more about all the atrocities that have been committed in the concentration camps, I regretted I had let him go free for I felt that this was a purely German affair which we ourselves should investigate and then bring to justice those who've been responsible for the inhuman enormities that had taken place.

Do you believe him? Was he telling the truth or was he trying to adjust the truth having escaped the death sentence at Nuremberg and having sold that line at Nuremberg. Is that what he's doing? Oddly not, no. I find it very difficult. I find that very difficult to believe. And that's the sort of paragraph, well, buckets of salt at hand. Some of you may be more believing than I am, but that's what he wrote, and you must make your own judgement on that.

On the 7th of May, General Jodl signs the instrument of surrender unconditional at Reims with Eisenhower. So, everything's now being tidied up. On the West it's being tidied up. 7th of May, Russia then informs the Western allies it's not prepared to accept this. It wishes for a new treaty, a revised treaty to be signed the next day iconically in the Russian held city of Berlin. Russia demands there is one unconditional surrender treaty at which all the allies are present and it is to be held in Berlin. Cameras flashing from Moscow all the way round.

On the same day Jodl is arrested by the Americans. Now we get that interesting division. On the 8th of May, the Western allies celebrate V.E Day, Victory in Europe Day. The German surrender is ratified in this second signing in Berlin. The following day, the 9th of May, 1945 is V.E day in Russia, 8th in the west, 9th in the east. Because of Stalin's insistence on this one has to say in fairness to Stalin that it was a major mistake with hindsight in 1918 not to have pressed onto Berlin and not to have got an unconditional surrender of Germany because it was that that allowed Hitler and the stab in the back theory to be promulgated in the 1930s.

So in that case, Stalin was right, but Stalin, horrendous man that he was isn't stupid and Stalin's playing a bigger game. Stalin's playing the game that the czars of Russia played since the 18th century. It is the expansion of Russia and the expansion of Russian influence. And by the end of 1945, Russia has never been as large and has never had more influence over neighbouring countries than it had then.

And that is something that bugs Putin of course, hence his annexation of the Crimea, his funding of terrorism. And more than that in east Ukraine, his threatening over the three Baltic states and indeed over Poland. He's another czar who wants mother Russia to be larger and

larger with more and more influence. And in particular to have buffer states. That's what gets Putin. Stalin had buffer states in Eastern Europe between him and the West, Poland, Hungary, et cetera. Putin doesn't have that. He has NATO on his very borders. The Baltic states, Poland right on his borders. That's what gets him.

So this is another example of how history relates to the present and how individuals or countries look back on history and interpret it for their peoples in ways that justify their actions in the present. And if we are dealing with other people, we cannot forget the history they have and in particular the history they have with us.

20th of May, 1945 is the final surrender of the last German armed forces in Europe. They're on the northern Dutch island of Texel, written Texel, T-E-X-E-L, where the sheep come from, Texel sheep. And there on the 20th of May, the final German forces surrender to the advancing Canadians who've already taken the surrender in Holland, in the Netherlands as a whole. On the 23rd of May, the Western allies arrests Doenitz government. and Himmler commits suicide. Doenitz had harboured hopes that the Western allies would allow his temporary government to continue, so that there would be a easier handling of the situation of the defeat of Germany.

Now you can think what you like about Doenitz and he is a complex character making mind up about, but that's what he's been doing. Now he says himself this and this is where it gets, I mean, absolutely fascinating. This is Doenitz writing in his memoirs. I had at first regarded my appointment merely as a means to enable me to put an end to the war. But now I realise that come what might I and my provisional government could not voluntarily resign. If we did, the victors could say with justification, since the property constituted government of all four zones of Germany. British, American, French, Russian. Of all four zones of Germany has run away, we have no option but to set up independent German governments in the individual zones and to allow our military government to exercise sovereign authority over all of them. In other words,

Doenitz is scared that Germany unified only in 1870, gosh, amazing isn't it? Less than a hundred years before. It's now going to be broken up into four parts. And of course he's not wrong because although it isn't broken up into four parts, it is going to be broken up into two parts, West Germany and East Germany.

Doenitz goes on, for this reason alone, for no other, I had to stay until I was removed by force. Had I not done, so then implicitly at least I should have supplied the political pretext for the division of Germany that exists today. Now he's writing this when he's been released from prison, so he is writing in the context of two Germanies, East Germany and West Germany.

Resignation then the voluntary renunciation of the position which the allies had recognised was legally mine would've been the one great mistake which I could have made after the capitulation. Well, yeah, you sort of know where he's coming from, but his position is weak. He finally, as I said a moment or so ago, is arrested by the Western allies. Onboard the ship the Patria in the harbour, Admiral Friedeburg, General Jodl, I sat on one side of the table and on the

other side sat the chiefs of the control commission with the American Major General Rooke in the centre and the British and Russian generals Ford and Zhukov off the left and right. Feeling that our fate was inevitable, my companions and I kept perfectly calm.

General Rooke declared that upon orders from Eisenhower, he had to place me it's the West that is in control of this meeting, note. General Rooke declared upon orders from Eisenhower he had to place me, the members of the German government and the officers of Supreme headquarters under arrest. And that from now on we were to regard ourselves as prisoners of war.

One further reading may be important from this, and it's this. What I learned said, Admiral Doenitz, in 1945 after the capitulation, and in 1946 about the inhuman side of the national social system made a profound impression on me.

I never knew about it, gov, my hands are clean. I'm just a naval officer. Although he admitted to war crimes that were committed by his U-boat squadrons. Somehow, I just don't buy it. Now, not for today's call, but in parenthesis after the war is over, I'm talking about West Germany now, after the war is over, the allies have no real interest in bringing other than the main figures to trial in Nuremberg. And they give power over very quickly to Adenauer and the West German government and they cease the search for Nazis. Don't mention the war, don't put it on your CV.

And of course, we all know that many former Nazis rose to positions of power in West Germany, industrialists, military, intelligence, all sorts. And the west and West Germany colluded in that. And had there been a more rigorous approach as there was in East Germany than I doubt whether Doenitz would've survived. Fascinatingly when East Germany was reunified with West Germany, the West Germans took the same view as they had done post 1945 they took post 1989 that they didn't inquire too much about who was or was not deeply involved. And many people in East Germany remember are members of the Stasi, they were not interested. And members of the Stasi were to take enormous powers in Germany, in industry, in the intelligence services, in the army.

Excuse me a moment. It just occurs to me that some of you may not have note of this book, which has only been released this week. I haven't, I must admit read it. It is about where the Stasi went after the unification of Germany. It's called, "The Grey Men Pursuing The Stasi Into The Present". By Ralph Hope, "The Grey Men." I'm looking forward to reading it, but it's the same story in Germany. That's the point I'm making. 1949, 1989, forget about it. Just, just don't. Interesting, interesting indeed in terms of having looked at things.

So, back to Doenitz. Doenitz was indicted on three counts as a major war criminal at Nuremberg. Count one, conspiracy to commit crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Count two, planning, initiating and waging war of aggression. Count three, crimes against the laws of war. He was found not guilty on count one, conspiracy to commit crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity, but guilty on two and three,

planning, initiating and waging war in aggression and crimes against the laws of war. And thus, he was sentenced to a mere 10 years in prison and spanned out in which he remained unrepentant. Totally and completely unrepentant, maintaining I never did anything wrong. I was merely a professional career naval officer doing his duty to the state. Spear advised him in Spandau to accept responsibility, and he wouldn't. And to that extent, he remained devoted if not to Nazism to Hitler.

He was released in 1956 and retired to a small village in northwest Germany to live out his days. Never, never accepting guilt. Should we have made him accept guilt? Should we have been stronger at Nuremberg? There are no easy answers to any of those questions of morality and justice. It's not about law, it's about morality and it's about justice. I leave that choice to you. There is no easy answer. For me I don't buy Doenitz. I just don't buy it.

Now, we've got a picture so far with a broad brush. Doenitz is trying to do deals with the west in order to keep the Russians at bay. Well, there is quite a lot of truth in all of that. But what is fascinating is Doenitz's view in terms of what is going on in terms of the West. And that is in particular Churchill. He writes in his memoirs, apparently Churchill at first opposed my removal. When he and his government are arrested, they become war criminals, he's tried at Nuremberg.

Apparently Churchill at first opposed my removal. He wanted to use me as a useful tool and to pass on instructions through me to the German people, so that the British themselves would not be compelled to, and this is Churchill's trade, to thrust their hands into an agitated anti. He was also the opinion that if I prove useful as a tool that would have to be reckoned against my war atrocities in command of submarines. And he says, this is Doenitz, this was exactly the cold, calculating attitude that I expected a British policy, they proposed to use me for just as long as it served their purpose to do so. Then apparently on the 15th of May, Eisenhower demanded my removal in the interest of friendship with the Russians.

Now this is the really, I mean, I'm gripped by this story because this is the beginning of the Cold War, but it's also the beginning of a fracturing of power. If Churchill retained any sense that we were equal allies with the Americans, it's blown apart by Eisenhower saying, and Eisenhower's a mouthpiece for FDR and later for Truman saying, no, no, no, no, this is not going to happen. The Russians are our friends. FDR believed that the Russians were friends, Eisenhower believed the Russians were friends. And to begin with, so did Truman. Churchill never for one moment thought of the Russians as friends. They were useful allies, but certainly not friends. Indeed, they were enemies. They were enemies.

And so you can see what Churchill was trying to do, keep Doenitz government going, and we might be able, might just be able to do something about the Russians. But I don't know how many of you know that before the war ended in early spring, 1945, Churchill asked his military chiefs to prepare a secret plan. It's going to become known as Operation Unthinkable. Churchill said, I want, and this is only to British military chiefs, Churchill said, I want you to plan a British invasion of the Soviet Union. This is early 1945. Hitler is about to be beaten, Churchill realises

that. And Churchill had always thought we had two enemies to democracy, to liberal democracy.

The first, because it was the most urgent to deal with, was Nazism, but the second was Marxist-Leninism, the first was Germany, the second was Russia. And he said, right, I want you to plan an invasion of Russia. Now, Churchill's a historian, he knows damn well about Bona Park, he knows of course about Operation Barbarossa. And he is planning something similar. The Americans, of course, were not involved, and in the early stages weren't informed. The Americans are determined in spring 1945 to finish Germany off and then move their troops eastwards to finish Japan at that point by an amphibious landing on mainland Japan.

Churchill however, thought differently, he now doesn't, well, he never trusted Stalin, but he's now got clear evidence in 1945 that Stalin isn't going to be a nice, comfortable ally. Poland is not going to be a nice free country liberated from Nazism, but to be under the kosh of the USSR and the Red Army. And the Americans are saying, no, no, no, no, the Russians are fine. Churchill's plan or the plan drawn up for Churchill envisage an Anglo-American army advancing on Moscow, along with free Poles and Canadians and Churchill informed all these allies of his plan. And strangely, the plan was very similar to the German plan of Operation Barbarossa in 1940. The Americans were horrified, absolutely horrified, and there was no chance of this plan ever taking off. There were only just under 4 million ally forces in Europe, the majority being American. The Red Army had 11 million men under arms, and the Americans needed to defeat Japan. And of course, as the Americans pointed out, if you really do invade how the blazes, are you ever going to get the Russians to accept surrender? They didn't in 1812, they didn't in 1940, and they're unlikely to in 1945.

But British plans went further. It contemplated a new German army, a new German army. This is Doenitz's view as well. You can only interpret all of this by saying that Churchill was far sighted enough to know that as the second World War ended, what we now know as the Cold War was beginning. Churchill wanted that to be a quick, swift, sharp, victorious third war, world war against Russia. You might say it's an old man losing contact with reality.

I think I thought the American saw, but I'm not sure it is you see. I mean, I think an invasion of Russia would've been impossible. Theoretically if the Germans were on board and if you could be convinced that previous Nazis officers would fight under Eisenhower, well, that's extremely difficult to think of, and Eisenhower wasn't going to tolerate it. But Churchill's view that the world faced on the liberal democratic world of America, Britain and West Germany and France, our enemy was Russia.

And if Churchill came back into this room this evening, he would say, well, that's what I was worried about in 1945. If the Americans have followed my view, we could have ended it. Well, I doubt that. I doubt any allied invasion of Russia would've worked. After all, we were in Russia in 1919, 1920, all of us, Poles, Americans, Canadians, British, French, you name it, they were all there fighting on behalf of the white Russians, and where do we get? Precisely nowhere. There's a book I haven't read from this evening, which I'm going to turn to as I come towards an

end. This is Barry Turner, but again, it's on my list, which is on the blog, it's called, "Karl Doenitz and the Last Days of the Third Reich." And he writes this.

Churchill's warnings that the big par mutual admiration society, i.e., America and the Soviet Union. Churchill's warnings, that the big par mutual admiration society was no more than a cover for Soviet aggression should have been taken more seriously. In this if in nothing else, Churchill and Doenitz were as one. And they were right, however mad you think Churchill's plan was. However, unacceptable Doenitz was, their analysis of the situation was pretty good. There remains a question as whether it really was to the advantage of the German people, that Doenitz dragged out the surrender negotiations to cover the exodus of German citizens from the East.

It has been argued notably by the historian Ian Kershaw, that the best option for Doenitz once he had been confirmed as leader after Hitler's suicide was to have ordered troops in all areas facing the allies simply to stop fighting. This would've allowed the Western powers to advance their lines immediately and rapidly to the east, shortening the lines to those Germans still trapped inside. And Turner says, maybe, but it is surely a matter of doubt that Doenitz had the power base to make such a decision, even assuming that he thought it to be the right one, which he didn't. As a naval officer schooled in military discipline, he had a dread of breakdown of authority, an order for an immediate cease fire in all fronts without first testing allied resolve would not necessarily have been obeyed by commanders in the field. Doenitz had no wish to be held responsible for social chaos and revolution. A repeat, in other words of 1918.

We're always haunted by the past. I began with 1918, and here is Turner saying, and Doenitz was haunted by 1918. I want to end or come towards an end, at least. And don't worry, I'm not going to shoot over time, but I want to add in a further suicide at this point. We began with suicide, I want to add in a suicide. And the suicide goes like this.

A Reuters correspondent watching the arrest of Doenitz and his cabinet wrote, A special guard was placed in charge of General Jodl. As a car drove up to take him away, he saluted his hat less staff who bowed in reply, Admiral Friedeburg took his last salute when a party of arrested German marines were being marched down the road, still singing, were marching against England.

Further on the marine saw Doenitz a prisoner in a car beside the road. They halted and gave a military salute which he returned punctiliously. It was all too much for Admiral Friedeburg. I don't think I can stand the circus that's about to begin he told Doenitz. The British officer who gave Friedeburg permission to go to the bathroom forgot to remove the key, Friedeburg entered, slammed the door and turned the lock. When they broke down the door it was find Friedeburg heaving up into the wash basin, turning he fell back into this bath. His body was laid out on a bunk under a portrait of Doenitz.

Suicide is the big story in Germany in 1945. On the day that Doenitz surrendered, Friedberg

committed suicide. Field Marshal Alan Brooke in London, in his office in Whitehall wrote in his diary, there is no doubt that from now onwards, Russia is all powerful in Europe. On the day of the arrest of Doenitz and the provisional government, Alan Brooke is under no illusions. This isn't a victory for Anglo-American arms. This is a victory for Russia. And so we almost seamlessly move from World War II to the Cold War and the Cold War to whatever words you like to use about the current situation internationally, many call it the second or the new great game. And Russia still threatens us in Europe and threatens American interests across the world. There was to be no western allied war on Russia, instead Germany, and indeed Berlin, its capital is to be divided into four separate zones, Russian, American, British, and French. And then very quickly the Sovietization of the Russian sector as they flew in from Moscow, German Marxists who'd been waiting for this very moment. And soon the camaraderie shown in Berlin when Western allied troops met Russians and they dance in the streets together, gradually a bipartheid state emerges, West Germany and East Germany and there to remain divided until 1989.

And now from London or from Washington, the position looks remarkably historical. Britain isolated from Europe because of Brexit out of the European Union. America desperately attempting its fallback position and traditional position of isolationism in Europe, but finding it cannot. And it cannot because of the pressure of Putin. And Putin's power grows militarily enormously. And Europe, as represented by the European Union, is dominated by a unified Germany. Nothing ever stands still in human affairs. And the past never quite, never quite goes away. And that is why we learn history. There ends the sermon for this evening. Well, this evening here where I am in England, and I'm sure there's lots of people with lots of arguments and disagreements, and that's fantastic. So, Judi, it's over to you and we'll see what people want to say or do.

- [Judi] Oh, thank you, William. If you want to have a look at the Q&A. While you just having a browse through the Q&A, some people have asked me about your blog. Just to everybody know, when I send out the reminders in the morning, like for this morning that all the information about how to get onto William's blog, et cetera, it is on the emails. If you so just take a look at the email again, scroll down. It'll be underneath the links from today. There's some information. So over to you, William.

- Oh, thanks very much indeed.

Q&A and Comments

Sylvia has put, after every military conquest in history, the victor occupied in the next area they conquer. Why in Israeli history? Oh no, sorry, that's about Israel. I'm going to stick, no, I dare not go off theme. If I go starting about Israel, that will, I'll never stop. We must stick to Germany today. Oh, yes, now that is good.

Somebody, Mitzi has put, there's a fascinating series on TV called, "Babylon Berlin" gives a

realistic view of Berlin in the late 20s. Yes, it is I dunno, Mitzi, whether you are viewing in Britain or America, but it's certainly available in Britain. It's, "Babylon Berlin." And I am assume it is in America. Yeah, no, no.

Q: Why the term the Fourth Reich?

A: Well, simply because of Hitler's death. And so historians to cover this little period of time between Hitler's suicide and the final surrender of the German forces, whilst Doenitz is Fuhrer to sort of, historians like giving funny titles, the things they call it the Fourth Reich. Technically it's still the Third Reich. And technically Admiral Doenitz is the second and last Fuhrer of the Third Reich. But if you call it the Fourth Reich, well, it does make sense because the Third Reich really is Hitler, but it's merely terminology. And I use it for effect really, because people don't expect to see the term Fourth Reich.

Yes. The SS officers seem to have been well supplied with cyanide capsules and knew their fate to come, I guess. Yes, they were. And there's an interesting story of one general who on arrest by the allies is asked to take his trousers. I'm not going to. Is asked to take his trousers down and he's furious, but they want him to take his trousers down because they don't know where the poison cyanide pill is. And it was an ordinary German soldier behind it who said, sir, I think you better just drop your trousers, and he did.

Totally understand why Germans fear the Russians, Russians have a long memory. Well, the division is the division between Teuton, it's ethnic German Teuton and Slav Russian. It goes right back to the Middle Ages. The Teutonic Knights of the Middle Ages are Christian knights who were both monks and knights. The Teutonic Knights were German and they were fighting against the Slavs. The Russians who were not Christian, had no faith in that sense. They were worshipping all sorts of things. And the interesting thing about that is when the Protestant Reformation came, the Teutonic Knights were a order of Catholic knights, and they became Protestant. They were converted to Protestantism, and they wrote to Martin Luther and said, look, this is a bit awkward because we're now Protestants, but we really should keep the Teutonic Knights going because of these dreadful Slavs. And Luther said, oh, that's fine, just create a state, create a country. And the senior knight at the time was surprise, surprise, a member of what later is to be the German royal family. And so the German Imperial Royal family is descended from the Teutonic Knights, this antagonism towards the east. And part of that is geographical. There's a lot being written today by historians like the importance of geography. And the Northern German Plain, here's no natural barriers. That's a problem. In Britain, we're fortunate to have barriers that make sense. Not least we were an island, but we've also got the Pennines across England and Scotland. They've got nothing, and so everyone wants the other, they just want to come down a bit further or up a bit further. So, geography played a large part in activation as well.

Please repeat the name and all for the first book mentioned. Oh you're pushing me because I couldn't remember. Don't ask me what I'd done half an hour ago. I can't. Oh, I know. Yes, yes, I

do know what I used. And if you give me half a minute, I might even find the book amongst this mess. Here it is. "Promise Me You'll Shoot Yourself," by Florian Huber. "Promise Me You'll Shoot Yourself," by Florian Huber. But it's on my blog, so you can get hold of that. And it's an interesting read. Well, I found it interesting, I'm sure you will. Yeah.

Somebody else is asking me about Israel. I am ducking out of answering about Israel because it takes me in a completely different direction.

Q: What about Alsace-Lorraine?

A: Well, Alsace-Lorraine was taken by the Germans, of course, in World War II and then is returned to France. But if you go to Alsace-Lorraine, perhaps you go to Strasbourg. I used to go to Strasbourg for meetings at the Council of Europe, which met in the Palais du Europe, which is the place where the EU meets when it meets in Strasbourg. And Strasbourg, if you've never been to Strasbourg, go, it's the most beautiful, beautiful city, very interesting city. But you will find that people will speak German as well as French and also local dialects. Some of your English and British listeners will have heard me tell this story before, but please forgive me because there may be Americans who haven't, and they might find it amusing. When I was principal of the City Lit adult education college in London, and I was going to a meeting in Strasbourg and I needed to book a hotel quickly, and my French frankly wasn't good enough for any complicated answers I might get. So I asked, I rang up to the language department and said, could the head of languages come down who was fluent French speaker, British, but fluent French. And they said, no, she's gone home but Lenore is here. Now, Lenore is the deputy head of department and a . And I knew she spoke French as well as German and English. So I said, oh, that's lovely, send Lenore down. So Lenore came down and she used my phone because the other phones were blocked for international calls. So there's Lenore booking my hotel. And then it dawned on me, My God, she's not speaking French, she's speaking German. And this hotel I knew, and it was French run. It was very French. So when she came off the phone, I said, Lenore, why did you speak German? And she said, well, she said, Alsace-Lorraine should be German, so they can damn well speak German too. And she was, she'd married after the War of Britain. And I thought, "Oh my God, I dread going to this hotel now, they'll think I'm German." It's a fascinating era. Sorry, I've read that.

Q: Is there definite concrete proof for Hitler suicide?

A: Yes, 100%. No doubts about what happened now.

Q: Why Fourth Reich?

A: Well, I've answered that, I think. It's Doenitz.

Yes. Appalling. The Gestapo were busy executing, retreating deserters to almost the very end. Absolutely true. It's horrendous. Yes, Sir Antony Beevor wrote a fine book. Yes. And it's here on

my floor. Here it is. I close that. "Berlin: The Downfall 1945" by Antony Beevor. A big thick book and it's on my blog. I didn't happen to refer to it tonight. It didn't, I could have done. I didn't, I took quotations from other books. Sometimes I try and a different book because if I've used it a lot, I get sort of bored and want to interest myself as well as you. Oh thanks. I'm sorry if my voice was muffled if I had the book in front of me. Thank you very much.

Somebody's talked about Anna Schindler. That's very interesting. Yes, that's also true. Someone says, Hey, remember reading that one of the reasons the Germans were afraid of Russian troops was because of how very badly the German troops had acted towards Russian civilians. That's absolutely true. The horrors done by the Germans in Russia were dreadful. Yet somebody else has said that as well.

Q: What is your opinion on the theory that the roots of World War II, World War I actually go back to the revolutions of 48 leading to the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, and another conflicts?

A: That's a very difficult question to answer. I think one of the problems we have to deal with in the past, since 1870 and today is a unified Germany. Mrs. Thatcher was very concerned about the reunification of Germany. And people laughed at her or felt that she was being over nationalistic and all sorts of accusations, but maybe like Churchill, she was right. We do have to be worried about Germany. And Germany post Merkel could be a problem. Germany unbalanced Europe and particularly Western Europe. And that is a problem. It's not a problem if it's the Weimar Republic. It's not a problem under Mrs. Merkel, but it could be a problem as it has been. Yeah.

They're saying somebody's obviously American or Canadian is saying that Russia's war memories are coloured. And coloured is too weak a word, overwhelmed by the number of deaths they suffered. That's also true, remember, of how Britain views the war as against how Americans perhaps view the war. There is a difference if you're being bombed and there's a difference between England and Russia. If you are actually got enemy forces on your soil, you bound to look at things differently. The problem for both Russia and Britain is that we can't get over the war. And the other problem for both Russia and Britain is that for internal political reasons, politicians hark back to the war, so that Putin is using the war in all sorts of ways like this great cathedral he had built for the war to remember the war dead. He plays that inverted commas, patriotic, nationalistic card. And so do politicians in Britain play that patriotic nationalistic card. And that's something also what one should worry about. Well, sorry, it's something I worry about.

Q: Is Czar Putin to be feared?

A: Yes, he is. The only good thing about it is that Russia internally is weak in terms of how its economy is not strong. It's military economy is extraordinary strong far stronger than anybody else's. And was Putin to be removed, there is absolutely no guarantee that it will be followed by

a democratic Russia with somebody like Navalny as president, it's much more likely to be a military coup d'etat, in my opinion but who knows, Russia is an enigma. Or as somebody once said, that's what Churchill said it was an enigma. Somebody said that Russia is an enema. Well, I don't think it's that, but it's certainly an enigma.

Yes, of course people spoke positively about the Russians who liberated their concentration camps, the soldiers, the Russian ordinary people were ordinary people. And the ordinary Russian soldier who saw the concentration camps that the Russians liberated was the same as the ordinary American or British or Canadian soldier that saw the concentration camps. They were absolutely appalled. But that's on a human personal level rather than on a political.

Q: How did Doenitz earn a living?

A: I don't know. Well, he produced two books for a start off. And I guess he, I think he had his naval pension.

You simply can't make people accept guilt by force. No, you can't. But there are other ways you can make people. Remember that what happened after the concentration camps were liberated, many senior officers. I'm thinking because I've been reading it recently about a British officer brought local Germans in and made them look and see, and many of them refused to look until they were made to look.

Jonathan, thank you for that.

Wernher von Braun's autobiography, the joke went was entitled, "I Aim for the Stars," but sometimes I hit London. Ah, marvellous.

Yeah, Churchill did send aid on those dreadful convoys, those northern convoys to me Demmin and so on and they were terrible. I've known people who sailed on those convoys. They were absolutely dreadful.

Yes. Well, that's another point which Monica made and Martin followed. Absolutely, what is totally unbelievable, no, it isn't, I'm afraid, is that Nazis were hired after the war, particularly by Americans because basically justice was not as important as profiting from their expertise, the bomb, space and so on. And the Americans had a unit that went out to find these.

Yes, of course, Yale politics, as Martin says, Absolutely, it's human beings. We'd all be better off if we were gerbils or something. Human beings are so unpleasant as a species. Oh, Patton was always in favour of continuing at war. Yes. And invading Russia, Americans had the atom bomb. Well, you see, you make an extremely good point. Is that Montage, you make a good point.

Q: If the Americans would somehow accepted Churchill's deal, would they have been prepared

to drop bombs on Moscow and other Russian cities? And what would have Churchill have thought about that?

A: I'm not sure. That's a really good question, which I'm easy way out for me to say there is no answer, but you make a really fine point. No, he wasn't thinking of using an atom bomb. He was thinking of using the traditional, well, that's why it's mad. It was going to be like 1812 or 1940 all over again with the same result.

Q: Would the British electorate have tolerated war with Russia?

A: Absolutely not. And that's the other important thing. No, they would not. We had had enough of war. Twice in a generation it were. No no no. And we couldn't have ever afforded it. We were bust broke.

Yes. No, that's another, Steven, you make a very good point. Let me read what Steven said. Stalin made a pact to ally with Hitler, which was broken by Operation Barbarossa, not Russia. So how the Americans thought the Soviets would not be an enemy is hard to fathom. Well, they were thinking well of everybody really. And they were focused not on Europe, they were focused on Japan. And they wanted to believe, they believed they saw what they wanted to see. Churchill never ever behaved like that.

Q: When did the Americans join the Cold War?

A: Oh dear. We do it long with a long and bold question. It's not whether they joined the Cold War, it was they couldn't escape it. They were in it from the beginning. The question is, when did it begin? That's another story for another day. I've heard the current situation called a hot piece. That's a very good phrase. Yeah. Hot piece, new game, whatever. That's another excellent phrase to discuss what we're in now.

Q: How much did the Russians know?

A: They didn't know about Joseph's plan.

Q: How powerful was France at the end of the war?

A: Zero. We forget, and it's very important to say France surrendered in 1940. It had a nasty, nasty fascist government in Vichy. And after the war, the reprisals even in France and hiding the past. Remember, Vichy and it all came out, France was in a heck of a mess. I said that in another context recently, and someone said, well, what on earth are you saying? France is always in a heck of a mess. There certainly is now at the moment with the election coming up and the arguments over how you commemorate the death of Napoleon in 1821. And Macron, who didn't want to but realise it was going to be votes in it was made a hugely pro Napoleonic speech laying wreaths in Les Invalides and all the rest of it there only a few months ago, he was saying it should all.

Oh, thank you, Carol. Oh thank you. People who said they enjoyed it. so hopefully some of you enjoyed it. As I always say, I don't care if any of you don't listen, I'm rather enjoying the sound of my own voice. Now at least that's what my wife says. Now at least that's what my wife says.

Yes, they had agreed on unconditional surrender but the point was it was unconditional surrender. What Stalin wanted was one unconditional surrender, not piecemeal, which is what was happening with the Western allies who just wanted to stop fighting. And Stalin wanted the glory of the unconditional surrender And Stalin wanted the glory of the unconditional surrender of all German forces signed with all the cameras were in the heart of Nazism in Berlin itself. I don't deny that he was right. I don't deny he was right. I've got to stop in a second.

- [Judi] Yeah, yeah.

- [William] Otherwise-

- [Judi] Do you want to take one more question?

- No, I'm going to say something if I may instead.

- [Judi] Of course.

- I've got a talk coming up for you all if you are interested on Lockdown University, which is going to look at the division of Berlin. in the next tranche of questions I saw in the next *tranch of questions I saw people were asking about that. Well, don't worry, we're going to come to that it, as they say in due course. And I think I may be, it's never my, it's not my decision alone. I may be doing a talk about Stalin in the round. I've been, had my arm twisted. I hate talking about Stalin. I find him one of the most awful, awful human beings ever. But if I've got to talk about him and people want to hear about him, I will do it. But yeah, with gritted teeth. But I am going to talk about the division of Berlin, the division of Germany in a lecture, I can't remember when, but it's in my diary, so it can't be very far away. Thank you, Judi.

- [Judi] Thank you so much. Thank you so much, William, and we will see you all again very soon. so see everybody later.

- Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

- Bye-bye. Bye-bye.