

## Dr. Frank's Notes on the Hillsdale College Lectures on World War 2

### WW2 Lecture #1

#### The Stakes of WW2

Intro: Dr Hanson is one of the world's best scholars BUT he's also a farmer!

- WW2 started around 1939 with Hitler's invasion of Poland.
- Britain failed in their guarantee to protect Poland.
- Russia was an ally of every major country in WW2.
- France fell in June of 1944. Very fast.
- May 1944 Churchill voted Prime Minister removing Chamberlain who miscalculated in his dealings with Hitler.
- The war spread to everywhere. Never happened before.

Lecture:

- Big question, What fueled WW2 i.e. what was the reasons for the war? Two big reasons 1. Death and 2. Life.
- Death: The Soviets lost about 10 million people in the war.
- 60 died as a whole. Half were soldiers and half were civilians.
- There was a concentrated effort to murder masses of people. Intentional!
- Germans scientific in the way they murdered Jews and any others they disliked.
- Biggest organized attempt to murder in mass.
  
- Life: Dr Hanson starts with the classics when he tries to describe Tyranny.
- Tyranny is when the rules are in the interests of the ruler.
- 20th century, a new word emerged for tyranny. Called Totalitarianism.
- Communists and Nazis were very good at this.
- Started when children went to school. People totally brainwashed.
- German's believed they could eliminate all trouble i.e. create a perfect world.
- They thought, to get this great good, you need to get rid of a lot of stuff that get in the way. So cruelty was justified for the benefit of the highest good.
- Churchill thought communism was more dangerous than nazism because communism as get common.
- Nazis and communists i.e. socialists where making belief claims. We can learn about their worldview from this. They believed one is a product of their environment. People are product of their race, class (economic). They believe it is a product of time i.e. a process.
- They believed that if one could control that process, you could do anything you wanted with the world.
- These socialists are injected into a society like a plaque which eventually destroys the host i.e. that society.
- Emergence of tyranny.
- How do tyrannies perpetuate themselves? Plato described tyranny as walking through a grain field and cutting off all taller grains and any beautiful ones. So can't have friendship, philosophy, faith because these things look above the tyrant.
- Tyrannies typically don't last very long.

- Tyrants suppress everything private and everything high or noble.
- With growing technology this become even more possible and more intense.
- So the big question is, whose belief claims are right? Which is superior worldview?
- Churchill was great because he was a friend of freedom.
- Freedom with restraint. Every person could live as they liked no matter what class they were from.
- He believed government needed to be accountable to the people.
- Do the people belong to the government or does the government belong to the people?!
- Bolchavicks were ruthless in achieving their utopian goals.
- If one is willing to do that to ones own people, what would they do to other people groups??
- So the difference is freedom, where people are to govern themselves and if governed, it's only at their consent versus, we're all collective being shaped by history and some are now appointed to have the power to shape history.
- Very sadly, WW2 did not provide a final answer/solution to these competing ideas of humankind and government. Tyrannical ideas continued.
- Socialism reduces people to insects.
- human being, made in the image of God, are easy to lead but hard to drive i.e. force.

## **WW2 - Lecture #2**

### **Air**

Intro: There was a huge transformation from WW1 to WW2 in air power.

- Airpower needed a reason a goal. It was to secure air superiority in order that assets and objectives on the ground could be met.
- The world thought WW1 would be the war to end all wars so they were very unprepared to defend themselves when Germany militarized and attacked surrounding countries.
- Europeans tried to appease Hitler.
- American used isolation.
- Soviets engaged in collusion with Germany i.e. provide materials so that Germany wouldn't attack them and so they could undermine capitalistic democracies in Europe.
- Allies felt they couldn't stop Blitzkrieg.
- During war, one must be able to destroy the enemies means of production. Would need to be able to project power! Did Germany manage to do that? No e.g. never built a bomber with 4 engines.
- Why, because Germany were so efficient in defeating neighboring countries giving the impression to the Allies that they would invincible! Not true.
- The other problem was they used dive bombers to get closer to target and more accurate instead of going higher and do accurate bombing.
- Then the Axis powers i.e. Germany realized their mistake, then they tried to gain advantage by technological advancement.
- Allies i.e. America, adapted very quickly because they were democracies.

- How was Germany and Japan going to stop or slow down the industrial power of the US and Britain? They couldn't keep up!
- Axis power believed in superior technology!
- Axis powers also couldn't destroy US and British production because they couldn't reach them while Allies bombed German production.
- Hitler decided to build missiles and jets!
- American technology and strategic thinking changed the direction of the war and then ultimate victory.
- In early 1945, Gen Lemay changed tactics to bomb Japan. Low altitude bombing with Napalm. Very effective and in a short time destroyed the industrial production of Japan.
- Nuclear bomb was used to avoid invading Japan and having many soldiers die.
- Not only that, but avoided fire bombing entire Japan and many more Japanese dying.
- Was investing so much of US money into the war effort worth it?
- Air and Sea power and weapons made it possible to attack the enemy i.e. Axis power like Germany instead of having to use troops on the ground like in WW1.

### **WW2 Lecture # 3**

#### **Water i.e. Naval War**

- War needs to be won on the ground BUT the naval and air aspects could greatly affect the situation on the ground.
- Need to establish naval superiority. If so, then land forces can operate better and more effectively.
- Germany and Italy decided not to build aircraft carriers. Fatal mistake just like they failed to build 4 engine bombers. In both cases they could have projected their military power much more dramatically.
- Old strategy from WW1 was to build huge battleships that could destroy whole fleets from a far distance thereby achieving naval superiority. Failed strategy.
- The Axis powers emphasized this strategy so invested a lot of time and money in this.
- Axis powers were being inflexible and not diversified. All resources went into a failed strategy. Small radius to extend power and damage the enemy.
- Aircraft carriers increase their range much farther! Much more lethal.
- Failure was that people loved the battleships so the leaders failed to imagine something better.
- Hitler declared war on the US to attack US merchant ships that were supplying the British war effort against Germany.
- UBoats were able to destroy 50 percent.
- Americans sought to destroy Japanese carriers while also destroying means of production in Japan. At the same time increasing production of US naval assets i.e. Carriers.
- US gains naval supremacy thereby able to transport troops to islands on the way to Japan.
- After US achieved naval superiority over Germany and Italy, all their naval assets could then be shifted to the Pacific war.

- Americans were able to innovate rapidly during the war especially against the Japanese while Japan and Germany stuck to old ideas and didn't improve their planes etc.
- So Americans increased their carrier fleet while at the same time, improved their airplanes and pilot training, rapidly outpacing the enemy especially Japan.
- By end of 1944 the Japanese navy and air force were considered combat ineffective.
- US was now able to supply all their Pacific bases as they jumped from island to island.
- US economy was the key to their victory!!
- World underestimated the power of American industry.

## **WW2 Lecture #4**

### **Earth i.e. Land War**

Intro: In past lectures we established that if one could achieve air and sea superiority, then one could enhance ground operations.

- A war will ultimately be decided when you occupy where the enemy's people really exist e.g. towns, cities etc. So the ground.

Lecture:

- Each country approached this differently. Geography was a big factor e.g. America had a small ground force comparatively speaking, because they had a large ocean to cross. So invested a lot in Navy and Air force.
- Soviets were a one-dimensional army i.e. army. Knew they were just fighting on land.
- They had a huge army.
- Germany was similar to Soviets.
- The way each army equipped their ground troops was also very similar.
- No radio contact or air support.
- Bolt action rifles changed to auto assault weapons.
- Invented high rate light machine guns.
- Started to use grenade launchers. One man can destroy a whole tank!
- Radios, especially US army, were now used for artillery support.
- Changed from horses to trucks!
- At start of WW2, we had a very small army.
- Americans had the highest rate of PTSD.
- Americans were very green when they went against Germans and Japanese who were very experienced combat troops.
- Americans focused on keeping casualties very low. Not like others.
- Soviets were not concerned with casualties. They would even use their own troops to go through a mine field to clear it!!!
- Germans and Russians were traditional enemies. Socialism and communism were force multipliers to that attitude. War on eastern front was brutal!
- 3 mil German soldiers died during WW2. 75% of them on Eastern/Russian front!
- Why was German Army so pre-eminent?
- Being in the Army i.e. foot soldier was highly honored and respected.

- Germans had a different officer operations. So they had a lot of freedom to carry out battle plan. Worked with troops to work out tactics right on the battle field. This made them very deadly.
- Americans realized too late that Italy was not the way to get into Europe and attack Germany. It ended up being a non strategic battle front.
- 20 million Asians died in WW2.
- Airborne troops were a new feature of war. Not really successful for Germans. But was better for the Allies.

## **WW2 Lecture #5**

### **Fire**

Intro: In relation to grand forces, big artillery and tanks were very important. Eliminated trench warfare.

- German tanks were thought of as Battleships. Once got in they would destroy the entire enemy.
- At beginning of war not sure what a tank should look like and what would be its mission. By near end of war this was all figured out due to experience in the war.
- Learned that Tanks along were not a game changer.
- The big like Battleship and tanks now became outdated.
- In war, economic might was very important as well as how funds were invested in.
- Making something big and perfect not practical.
- Russians focused on building artillery. Very good plan and killed many Germans. Added Katucha rockets too. Very cheap and effective.
- Russians also built a huge stockpile of tanks too. Cheap and efficient equipment.
- Time on Target, developed by Americans. They timed artillery pieces from different areas by calculating distance and barrel configurations, so that they could fire at a target so that shells would land simultaneously!
- Americans developed a sensor to put on artillery shells that would go off due to pressure and above the target killing enemy hiding in fox holes.
- Americans fielded largest amount of soldiers but had the fewest casualties.

## **WW2 Lecture #7**

### **Ends i.e. who won?**

Intro: We need to summarize WW2 i.e. was it worth it? Who won the peace and who lost it? What was the ultimate fate of those nations that fought it?

Lecture: The biggest questions was did WW2 end in a way that the people imagined particularly did the winning sides gain their objectives?

- Let's first look at the failures. the league of nations and Versailles treaty failed.
- In the end the soviets didn't join the free nations to engineer a beautiful post war world.
- The UN failed to make a perfect peace.
- If the purpose of WW2 was to end totalitarianism then the war failed!

- The east was given to the soviets so we substituted a right wing totalitarianism with a left wing totalitarianism.
- Stalin killed more blood on his hands than Hitler. But west gave him that power!
- If objective was to stop Nazis and Facism and Japanese militarism then war also failed because so many had to die before these powers were defeated.
- If objective was to fix the mistake of appeasement, then WW2 was a success.
- Why did the Allies win? Once that an alliance was formed in 1941, it was very likely that the Allies would win the war.
- Roosevelt administration was socialist e.g. the New Deal.
- But during war Roosevelt turned to the capitalists to produce what was needed for the war.
- The American economy boomed!!
- US and UK allowed private enterprise to flourish and provide the resources for war.
- Nationalist socialists didn't do the same until Albert Speer. This was croni capitalism.
- The Axis powers couldn't unite like the Allies because they highly distrusted each other.
- Axis powers had bad ideologies inherent to totalitarian regimes so they wouldn't cooperate and share technology. Opposite of what Allies did.
- Allies had two democracies that acted transparently, thereby giving them upper hand over totalitarian Axis countries.
- Two reasons why Allies won the war and won it relatively quickly. 1. Not ideologically constrained. 2. Had a moral cause i.e. liberation, not to eliminate people groups like the Axis powers did.
- German socialists/totalitarians, wasn't huge resources on eliminating Jews e.g. used railways and soldiers. they got side tracked.
- When German leadership knew the way was lost they still believed that all was NOT lost because they would be known for eliminating the Jews.
- Japanese wanted to eliminate the Chinese because they believed that Chinese were inferior. Killed 50 mil chinese.
- Why did the Asians look to their colonial masters as Allies instead of fellow Asians like the Japanese? Because Japanese ideology considered savage and brutal while Western ideology not so.
- What happened post war?
- Germany lost 5.5 million people. Industry destroyed, country divided i.e. east/west Germany.
- Purpose of NATO was to keep Germany down, Russia out and US in.
- Germany is flexing power even today. Force their way on other NATO countries.
- Today Germany is 4th largest economy in the world.
- Japan experienced similar things post war.
- Allied victors empowered defeated Axis powers to become economy powerhouses. Today Japan has the 5th largest economy in the world.
- The British government nationalized their economy after war so soon after British products were far less quality than those they defeated i.e. Germans and Japanese.
- Soviets after war returned to fully communist. Worse than Hitler.

- Because of Soviet's relationship with US and UK during war, they got a new lease on life and survived post war. But as a result they spread revolution resulting in the deaths of many. So facism grew and thrived!
- War is like a laboratory, tells us what is true and real.