

World War 2 - Part 2

30 Brave Minutes

Richard Gay, editor: Welcome to 30 Brave Minutes, a podcast of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In 30 Brave Minutes we will give you something interesting to think about. Joining Dean Jeff Frederick for the 2nd installment of a two-part podcast from World War II are faculty from the Department of History. With him are James Hudson, Bruce Dehart and Robert Brown. Now get ready for 30 Brave Minutes.

JF: As we approached the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 2, we decided to launch our first-ever, two-part podcast, given the size, scope, and scale of the origins, conflict, and aftermath. Part of the reason for the "two-parter" was connected to the legacy of the conflict, and part, as a nod to our listeners. We are grateful to the folks from all over the world that have tuned into 30 Brave Minutes and we thought a topic that was critical to, literally, the entire world made some sense. A note about the format is in order. When we launched 30 Brave Minutes in 2016, our goal was making most of our podcasts around 30 minutes, perfect for a commute or a typical exercise session. Part 1 of the World War II podcast was longer than that, and today's probably will be, as well. We will return to the shorter format next month, but with the virus and the isolation, and distancing, longer content, or at least content that can be returned to from time to time, made some sense for us for now. Last month, we recorded part 1 with two of our three guests in the studio. Today we gather, not in person, but through technology to record our second part. As we record, the world has been turned upside down by the coronavirus. We grieve with those facing uncertainty and whose families have lost loved ones. Barely a corner on the face of the earth has escaped the reach of Covid-19. Those that have not felt the impact know that they may soon. World War 2 was similar in its sweep and span in that few parts of the globe escaped the impact or aftermath. In part one of this podcast, we assessed the world between the wars. Some of the origins and structural issues around key nations and the early military developments, both in Asia and in Europe. As the war rolled into 1943, the Asian Theater featured numerous air and sea battles, an important nod to the development of faster more reliable and more devastating fighters, bombers, submarines, massive aircraft carriers, and the like. The fighting on individual islands was horrific and some contested spaces were rusted away with tremendous casualties. In Europe, the Soviets had stopped the German advances. The British, with radar, guile, and grit, survived the Blitz and action in North Africa and Italy was intensifying. Battles and campaigns and action at places like Dunkirk, Sicily, Anzio, and hundreds of other places seared memories into the minds of soldiers, citizens, and observers. Roosevelt and Churchill, together with their generals, pondered and plotted a second front and the invasion force and location that might be needed to make it so. And what would Stalin think of this? As abroad, war brought changes to the home front, though with no direct action in the continental states, American citizens were part of a

different kind of war than the French, Germans, Soviets, or Chinese experienced. In America, millions found work at good wages, unions grew, women entered the workforce in large numbers, and some executives left corporations to work for the government as "dollar-a-year-men." Most of the defense spending went to big corporations. 82% to the nation's top 100 corporations, based on size. General Motors alone received about 8% of the total contracts in America. By the end of the war, the Americans had built 300,000 planes, give or take, 80,000 tanks, and about 86,000 warships. And even agriculture picked up, as the need for huge quantities of food encouraged increased production and guaranteed a good market price. Overall, per capita income doubled and even the poor seemed to benefit from the need for labor. There can be no doubt that from the American perspective the war effort ended the depression. Taxes were raised dramatically. Those making over a half a million dollars a year were paying 88% percent in taxes. Corporate taxes averaged 40%, and those making over \$645 a year were assessed a 5% victory tax. War bonds, advertised by Hollywood stars, were purchased by individuals and corporations. And raised a total of a \$135 billion. The military was spending around 2 billion a month when the US entered the war. By the time the war was over, they had spent 300 billion, more than the combined totals of the previous 150 years of national history. In America, people at home grew Victory Gardens to support the war effort. Thermostats were turned down to 65 degrees or lower in the winter and rubber, scrap materials, and other things were recycled. Coffee, meat, silk, cotton, nylon, and fabric were conserved, and the two-piece bathing suit was marketed as "patriotic chic." Less material on the swimsuit was somehow better for the war effort. You can imagine who the ad wizards were that pushed that idea. Our topic today is World War 2, and here to help understand this event in the second of our two-part episode, on what many would call the defining event of the 20th century, are professors Robert Brown, Bruce Dehart, and James Hudson. Welcome everybody.

Dehart: Thank you, Dr. Frederick.

Brown: Thank you.

Hudson: Thank you, Dean Frederick.

Frederick: So, technology clearly had proven to be dramatically different in the first half of World War 2 than in World War 1, even though the gap between the wars is only some 21 years between the end of one and start of the other. Discuss briefly for us, this military technology. Bruce, get us started. How was it developed and in what ways was it most successfully deployed?

Dehart: Well let me start by saying that when we think about the development of military technology during the Second World War, we can go in a variety of directions. So I will start at the beginning. It seems to me that the most significant technological development of the war, a development that has long term implications, the atomic bombs. And the bombs that were tested

and employed by the United States in 1945 were the byproducts of more than 3 years of research and development in the United States. A story, however, of the development of atomic bombs by the United States actually began, one could argue, in August 1939, when Albert Einstein, who had immigrated from Germany in 1933, and who had taken a faculty position at Princeton University, was convinced by emigre scientists to sign a letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, informing Roosevelt that because of recent developments in physics in Europe, he, Einstein, believed it would be possible to develop a new type of bomb that might be able to destroy a port. We don't know for certain whether Roosevelt actually read the letter signed by Einstein, but we do know that a number of his advisors read it, probably told Roosevelt about it. Roosevelt shortly thereafter, had a number of people investigate the possibilities mentioned in Einstein's letter. And in the summer of 1942, June 1942 specifically, Roosevelt sanctioned the establishment of a highly secret project given the code name "The Manhattan Project." Over the course of the next 3 years, roughly 150,000 people, working at different locations across the United States, will develop these new, unprecedented weapons. I would also point out that the United States spent an estimated 2 billion dollars on the development of the atomic bombs. The first one was tested in the deserts of New Mexico in July of 45 and I think, as most people know, 2 bombs were actually used against Japan on August 6, and August 9, respectively, of 1945. The first bomb hitting Hiroshima, the second bomb hitting Nagasaki, and both produced a massive amount of death, and a massive amount of physical destruction. According to the statement made by Emperor Hirohito in a recorded radio address to the Japanese people that was broadcast on August 15, announcing Japan's unconditional surrender, and the employment of these bombs was the decisive factor in his, Hirohito's, intervention, and the decision-making process that produced the unconditional surrender.

Frederick: So, James, pick up on that story. What is the reaction in Japan to this and were other pieces of technology, air, land, or sea, particularly important in the Pacific Theatre?

Hudson: I think the one thing that Dr. Dehart has hit on, what really I think is the significant thing about this war is the use of aircraft, and the use of bombing. And just indiscriminate bombing, both in Europe and in Asia, of civilian populations and cities. Even in the months prior to the dropping of the Atomic bombs, in the summer of 45, in one bombing raid on the city of Tokyo, alone, 80,000 to 100,000 people were killed in that single event. And especially after 1943, under the direction of Curtis Lemay and one of his main advisors, a young officer named Robert McNamara. From then on they planned the bombing of many cities in Japan. You also have, in Japan, the development you mentioned in your opening comments about these big corporations. In the United States-General Motors, in Germany-Volkswagen. In Japan, it is Mitsubishi, and Mitsubishi is the company that builds the A6M0, which becomes, especially in the early days of the war for Japan, the superior fighter. It was also a long-range

craft, and could fly great distances. For the first years of the war, a lot of the allies had trouble fighting the Zero, but in China, especially, you have the emergence of a volunteer American Air Group, the Flying Tigers, led by a Texan, Claire Lee Chennault. And the fact that the Allies could conduct an air war in support of Nationalist China meant that American ground troops would not have to be committed to the China Theater. And I think the use of atomic bombs, as Bruce has so eloquently pointed out, I think is something we can also talk about when we finish up at the end and talk about, could the outcomes have been different?

Frederick: So Robert, bring us back to Europe. Talk a little bit about the technology that is used in the European Theatre successfully. And for any of you all, were there some flops? Were there some technology ideas in terms of weaponry that absolutely did not work?

Brown: Okay. I would certainly echo the comments about aircraft. It was much more sophisticated than World War 1. We had the dive bomber, the key component of Germany's Blitzkrieg. We had the long-range bomber, which was used in bombing of civilian targets, like the cities, London, or later in the war, Hamburg, and Dresden. The B17 had a range of some 2,000 miles and it could carry a heavy bomb load, in addition to things like incendiaries. It had a sophisticated bomb-site. This was all something new and of course, it was an aircraft that delivered the atom bomb. So we are still delivering these explosive devices by air in the Second World War. Other areas of technology the Germans are developing the missile, which is going to have great implications to the future for the delivery of atomic and then nuclear weapons. We also had developed in terms of technology during the war, things like electronic devices, not only sophisticated code machines, but code breaking efforts, and we had early forms of computers. We had early forms of radar, we had early forms of sonar, to find submarines. I don't know if it fits the category of technology or not, but think about medicine. The treatment of the wounded, drugs, penicillin, atropine for malaria, morphine, blood transfusions. It made the survival rate of both military and civilian casualties much greater in World War 2 than in any previous war. The technology really does transform the nature of war in a way that we are still living with.

Frederick: Any thoughts among the group on technology ideas, in terms of weaponry that did not really work as intended?

Brown: The German B-1s and B-2s were not particularly effective, but they were there, and of course, the Germans developed the first jet fighter, the ME262, which again, was not particularly effective, but the potential was there. So we do have things, and then we could mention chemical weapons. All the sides had chemical weapons, but we didn't generally use them on the battlefield, but what were employed during the Holocaust to murder the victims was poison gases, and various types of poison chemicals. The chemical weapons were there.

Dehart: Robert mentioned the sophisticated bombsight employed by the B-17 flying fortresses. As the Norden bombsight, it was the most advanced bomb site in the world and when the United States Eighth Army Air Force showed up in Great Britain in 1942 with their B-17s, they were supremely confident that strategic bombing against Europe, against Germany, and German occupied Europe, would be extremely successful, in large part because they had such confidence in the heavily-armed B-17, but also because the American Airmen possessed the Norden bombsight. You may have heard the story, but American Airmen, starting in 1942 bragged that using the Norden bombsight they could drop a single bomb in a pickle barrel from 30,000 feet. While it was certainly was an advanced bombsight, one could argue that it certainly did not produce the results that the United States Army Air force anticipated it would. I'm not suggesting it was a flop, but what the Americans learned and what the British had already learned is that there were so many variables to strategic bombing that you could have the best bombsight available and it might not make any difference at all. Robert mentioned the Germans developing the first jet fighter, the ME262. The Germans did, in fact, get it up in the air, but there were two issues with the ME262. Hitler did not want to use it as a fighter. He insisted that the Luftwaffe employ it as a bomber, but it was a fighter. The other thing is that by the time the Germans had enough ME262s, enough jet fighters to get into the air, Anglo-American Strategic bombing had done such damage to the German fuel industry that there was not sufficient fuel to get a sufficient number of them in the air. A couple of additional points, when you are talking about air craft. I think we should not only emphasize these long-range bombers, like the American B-17 and subsequently, like the American B-29, that carried the strategic bombing load in the Pacific, but we should also keep in mind that the key to the Allies achieving air superiority in early 1944 was the American decision to introduce long-range fighters, specifically the P-51 Mustang, which was arguably the best long-range fighter produced by anybody in the war. The story there is that the Americans had developed the P-51, but had put an underpowered engine in it and consequently the American Army Air Corps abandoned the P-51. The British took it, installed a more powerful Rolls Royce engine and then the Americans will adopt it in early 44. It, again, is really a key to the success of the strategic bombing campaign. Finally, if you look at the Battle of the Atlantic, this ongoing struggle between the German submarine fleet, and the British, the American, and the Canadian navies, a piece of technology that no one knows anything about that was key to the Allies gaining the upper hand in 1943, was a little device called a high frequency direction finder (usually known by its abbreviation HF/DF), the Americans called it the huff duff, and what it would do was to lock on to signals being sent from U-boats in the North Atlantic to the command post on the French Atlantic coast. When this device would lock onto those signals, it would allow convoys to know in advance where German U-boats were, in fact, congregating. And this allowed the commanders of the convoy to shift the routes and it also allowed for American and British hunter-killer groups to chase those U-boats down and destroy them. So, this little device, about

which no one knows anything at all, plays a critical role in the Allied victory in the battle of the Atlantic.

Frederick: Fascinating stuff! Let's transition from soldiers, sailors, and airmen working with new technology to ordinary citizens back across Asia and Europe. James, get us started. What do ordinary Chinese and Japanese folks learn about what's happening in the war? What are their sources? And how accurate are they in understanding what's happening on the ground?

Hudson: From the beginning there's a variety of journalists from newspapers, both in China and abroad, reporting on the war and a lot of the reporting that is being done about what is happening in China, especially after the United States becomes involved, is being done through Time-Life Publications, which was headed by Henry R. Luce. Now, Henry Luce is an interesting story, because he was the son of missionaries in China and Time-Life Publications throughout the war painted and depicted Chiang Kai-shek and his wife in a very favorable light, very much supportive of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, Madam Chiang, made the cover of Time-Life eleven times (something like that) between 1927 and 1955 and well after the war was over. Luce was a republican. He was also vehemently critical of Roosevelt. And then you have journalists reporting on what Communists are doing as well in base areas in Northwest China, among them Agnes Smedley, and Edgar Parks Snow. Smedley embedded herself with many of the Communist armies and Snow even spent a considerable time embedded with Mao in North China and learned a lot about him. Also, what I think is interesting about the war, and this more speaks about how the people of the United States are learning about the war, is that the United States government commissioned a series of films called "Why We Fight." There was one film devoted to teaching people about the Axis powers. One for Germany, Italy, and there was one for Japan. I know in the case of the movie for Japan this film was made by Frank Capra. These widely viewed films were enormously influential, in addition to the Time-Life Books about educating people about the war, popularizing the cause of the war, but also in the case of Japan, and I can speak more about this in a second, characterizing the enemy in a sort of way of the "other," of racializing the Japanese.

Frederick: Robert, what about from the German perspective? What do ordinary Germans know and how much accuracy do they have in their minds when they think about how the war is progressing?

Brown: Okay, this is a good question, because in Germany, of course, formal news was controlled by the Goebbels Propaganda Ministry. That would include newspapers, magazines, video, and film. The newspapers reported what the government wanted you to know. There were glossy magazines, like Signal, that was produced for occupied countries. Ordinary Germans would see newsreels. There's one, particularly important, was the Dutch of

Voilkenshau, which was the weekly news, done between 1940 and 1945. These were newsreels shown before feature films. Of course they showed Germany winning. Other areas were, of course, soldier's letters, which were highly censored. Soldiers came back for home visits and probably were able to tell family members a little less restrictedly what was going on. We had millions of civilians working in occupied countries and even within Germany, a number of things, and we will get to the Holocaust later, but for example roundups of Jews. They were done in public, at least in many cities. The Jews were assembled in public places before being put on trains and deported. This was hard to miss and of course all of the locations are marked these days, with plaques and so forth. Further, Germany was a police state, conversations were reported, and defeatism was defined as a crime, listening to foreign radio broadcasts, like the BBC, was illegal, and so even if you learned something, discussing it, even within families or with your neighbors, was highly difficult. I suspect knowledge was very fragmentary, but it was there.

Frederick: And Bruce, in the Soviet Union, there is a lot of first hand evidence of what is happening since there is so much action occurring there. What is the perspective of the average Soviet citizen? What do they know about the war?

Dehart: The Soviet Union, like Hitler's Germany, was a totalitarian dictatorship. After Stalin became the leader of the Communist Party, and of the country in the late 1920s, he eliminated the intellectual freedoms that had existed in the 1920s, he imposed harsh censorship, and government became the source of all information even before the Soviet Union became dragged into the war, and once the Soviet Union goes to war in 1941 the peoples of the Soviet Union knew what the government allowed them to know. The government shared information via radio, via the official government and party newspapers. Undoubtedly, some information spread in a clandestine way, but to my knowledge, those civilians who were engaged in war industries beyond the Ural Mountains and outside of the battle fronts basically knew what the government told them.

Frederick: Let's change our perspective from what citizens actually know to what their feeling, what they are actually experiencing. Let's stay in the same general areas. James, get us started. What are Japanese, and particularly Chinese citizens feeling? What is the amount of civilian suffering? We'll get back to the military perspective and of course, we'll talk about the Holocaust in a minute, but as to the typical citizen in China and Japan, what are they feeling and experiencing as the wars drag on?

Hudson: Well, I mean from the Japanese side, I think it should be fair to say that even in the 1930s there were people in the civilian population, people in the government, that opposed Japanese expansionism, but unfortunately, the expansionists won out. From the time that the

Japanese decide to invade and occupy China in 1937, it creates a massive humanitarian crises because people began fleeing in masse from the eastern coastal areas and other occupied places that the Japanese is concentrated in, into the interior. A lot of humanitarian organizations really step up to the plate. Among them, the YMCA, the Red Cross, and then after 1943, the creation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, all of these kind of organizations were very much responsible for delivering a lot of material aid, medical, and so on, to many of the refugees who were displaced as a result of the war. This kind of touches on what I was saying before about the use of bombing in the war. Cities in China, like Chongqing, and many others, were heavily bombed by the Japanese. Some of my own research has been about YMCA volunteers in Hunan Province, who, after a bombing run by the Japanese would take place, they would go into bomb sites and dig people out of rubble. They would organize evacuations, like I said. They distributed supplies and even held patriotic rallies.

Frederick: Bruce, what about in the Soviet Union? What are Soviet citizens feeling? What are they experiencing as the war drags on?

Dehart: It depends where you were in the Soviet Union. If, in fact, you were in those portions of the Western Soviet Union, conquered and occupied by the Germans, you faced extremely difficult conditions. You were exploited, you were starved, and you were subject to being shot, after having been accused of partisan or gorilla activities. You were also libel to be conscripted by the Germans, and relocated to Germany to work in German war industry. One of the things that happens as the war unfolds, there develops a very serious labor crises in Germany as the Germans suffer more and more German casualties, especially on the Eastern front. Consequently, workers in industry and farmers, who would have been exempted, had the war gone differently, had the casualties not mounted, are now conscripted into the military, sent primarily to the Eastern Front to die. Consequently, there is this great need for workers and so the Germans resort to conscripting forced labor in those countries they occupy, but especially in the Soviet Union. By 1944, there is an estimated 7-8 million foreign workers laboring in Germany. So, if you are in that part of the Soviet Union, conquered and occupied by the Germans, your life is essentially going to be determined by German needs and German policies. In other parts of the Soviet Union, people live very, very difficult lives, but the thing about the Soviet War effort is that the citizens of the Soviet Union are willing to pay the price to achieve victory, and so they sacrifice. They work long, hard hours. They go without the ability to obtain sufficient food in some cases. They obviously don't have access to what we would consider consumer goods. So the experience of the Soviet Citizen, again, does, in fact, depend on what part of the Soviet Union you were in from 1941 on. One thing I would add to this, that there are those in the occupied part of the Soviet Union who, in fact, welcomed the Germans as liberators, who initially supported the Germans, and then there were those who actually

collaborated with the Germans and helped them perpetrate all sorts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Frederick: To Bruce's point, yeah, the Soviet Union, Germany, China, and Japan, obviously large countries, and what would be experienced in one place might be different elsewhere. Robert, pick up our story and obviously, given the size of Germany, what Bruce has just pointed out is true, but maybe contrast what the ordinary German is experiencing and feeling in, say 39, 40, 41 versus certainly by mid to late 44 and into early 45.

Brown: I think that the point is well taken, that it depends where you are. If you are in a major city, the bombing was, particularly after about 1943, a fact of daily life. If you were in a rural area, it was not. And if you are in a medium-sized city, it could be one way or the other. Let me give you an example. Last November, I spent the month teaching in Ludwigsburg. Ludwigsburg is right next to Stuttgart. Stuttgart was almost completely destroyed, at least the center of the city. Ludwigsburg, which is about 15 minutes by train away, was not bombed at all, or minimally bombed. So you could see the difference. Citizens of Ludwigsburg had a very different experience of the war. In the cities, particularly the major ones, Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin, where the bombing was heavy, what we can say about it is the Nazis were pretty good about getting the infrastructure up and running, even though they were bombed night and day by the Americans and the British. The power came back on, if they could make it. They got urban transportation working if they could. Water was back on, schools were open, and I can give the example of my mother-in-law. She completed her teaching degree at the University of Berlin in the middle of the war and was teaching toward the end of the war, and the schools were open right until probably late 1944 or so. Then, right after the war was over, they were open again. Bombed out residents, and she gives the example that she was at school at the University of Berlin and was bombed. When she tried to go home, she couldn't even find the street where she lived, but the Nazis found people houses. They doubled up, tripled up, and so forth. They tried to maintain a modicum of real life. The whole issue "did the bombing destroy human moral?" has been a hotly debated question and it appears it probably did not.

Frederick: Fascinating insights there. Well, let's get back into the battlefield and away from the civilians. Each of you discuss a battle or a campaign or an economic development that you might rightly call a turning point. You can pick whichever theater of war you want. What starts to make the outcome pretty much no longer in doubt?

Hudson: I think from the outset, what you have to understand about China during the war, is that prior, during, and after the war, China is fighting amongst itself, and there is a conflict taking place between the Communists led by Mao and the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek. The Communists, in 1936 by kidnapping Chiang Kai-shek in Xian, ultimately forced him into an uneasy alliance. But even after Japan is occupying China, and even after the United States is

committing aid to China, Chiang Kai-shek maintains his wartime strategy, or his idea that Communists were a disease of the heart, the Japanese were a disease of the skin, and the internal threat had to be dealt with. This kind of goes back to the question you asked about media coverage of the war, because there is this press that is sympathetic toward what the Communists are doing and there is press that is sympathetic to the Nationalist cause, but all Western journalists, I think, to a point, especially in the years leading up to Japan's defeat, everyone knew that the Nationalists were fighting a lost cause because Chang Kai-shek was just not popular. He was not winning hearts and minds. He would forcefully conscript peasant men into service. He relied on organized crime to finance his state and created his own, sort of uniformed police, The Blue Shirt (Society), to instill terror. And he had these wartime strategies, going back to your original question, one of which was buying space for time. That meant that from the time the Japanese invaded in 37, the Nationalists would just retreat further and further inland to the West, and force a war of attrition. This was effective in many respects, but it also, I think, undermined moral, in terms of the public's general support of Chiang Kai-shek. But one thing that Chiang Kai-shek had going for him was the influence of his wife. I wanted to mention her, just briefly, and talk about her significance, because she was a really key actor in promoting the Nationalist cause. She was fluent in English. She was Western-educated, studied at Wellesley College, and in many ways she was sort of his interpreter. Chiang Kai-shek was sort of an aloof sort of figure. And in 1943, to raise support from the US Government, Madam Chiang visited the United States and actually spoke before the US Congress. A woman of color speaking before our elected body is unusually significant at the time. I would have to say Chiang Kai-shek's wartime policies, buying space for time, and other things he did, involved "scorched earth," and breaking the dikes of the Ural River, but I can speak more of those in a moment. I would yield to Robert and Bruce.

Brown: I think in Europe we have to keep in mind that the Eastern Front, particularly the Russian Front, two-thirds of the German forces are committed there. There was a debate over whether the defeat of Stalingrad is the military turning point, but I think, for many, it may have been a psychological turning point, because the news does get back about the surrender of (Friedrich) Paulus, and the German sixth Army. The propaganda machine had to go into full gear to explain what happened at Stalingrad. The second point I would make is the Americans had the wide-spread belief that D-Day, June 6, 1944, is the turning point, but quite honestly, I think that by that point the war was lost for the Germans. It may have been lost earlier, as Bruce mentioned in our previous podcast. But the fact that the advances coming from the East was well underway by the time the Allies landed on the Normandy beaches, and further, the Allies were in Rome in June of 1944. So Germany, in 1944, is being squeezed, from the East, from the West, and from the South.

Frederick: Bruce, your thoughts?

Dehart: Well, this is a question that is almost impossible to answer, but my position is, and has been, as long as I've studied the war, that the outcome of the war was decided, and when I say the War, I mean the War, in its entirety, was decided on the Eastern Front. If you take a look at the fighting on the Eastern Front, there are three potential turning points there. One would be the failure of Barbarossa in 1941, because when the Germans fail to achieve the quick and decisive victory they anticipated they would achieve, they found themselves involved in a long, drawn out conflict against an enemy whose resources would ultimately overwhelm them. The second potential turning point is the one that Robert pointed to, the Battle of Stalingrad, and I think the consensus among historians of the war on the Eastern Front, and many historians of the war in Europe, is that Stalingrad did, in fact, constitute the military turning point. But I do agree with Robert, that while the Germans do lose an entire army at the Battle of Stalingrad, and there are two Romanian armies that are decimated, I tend to believe that, that particular defeat, from the German perspective was much more psychological than military, and so I would actually argue that the turning point of the war on the Eastern Front, the point at which the military initiative shifted irreversibly, came in July 1943, when the Germans launched their third and final summer offensive on the Eastern Front. This particular offensive was launched along the southern sector of the Eastern Front. It was not nearly as extensive as Barbarossa, in terms of manpower and material committed, nor was it as extensive in terms of manpower and material committed as the Summer Offensive of 1942 that climaxed in Stalingrad. It was a much, much smaller offensive and it was designed to pinch off a salient, or a bulge in the front line that had developed around the Soviet town of Kursk. The result was the Battle of Kursk, sometimes described as the "Greatest Tank Battle in History." The Soviets defeat soundly this German offensive, and from that particular point on the Red Army holds the military initiative. So, whereas prior to Kursk, the Germans had been the hunters and the Soviets had been the hunted, from mid-July of 1943, the Soviets are the hunters and the Germans are the hunted. Now, obviously, it took months and months of blood and treasure for the Soviets to finish off the Germans and end up in Berlin, but in my estimation, it is July 43, at the Battle of Kursk, that the Eastern Front turns, and that, frankly, the war as a whole turns.

Frederick: And diplomatic historians whose primary focus is American History might argue that even if D-Day didn't prove to be a decisive military turning point, even if the Soviets were already well on their way to pounding the Germans back from the East to the West, that the American foothold on the coast of France has started the process of changing the post-war order, because as Americans race into Germany from the west to the east, it allows them to claim a mantle of helping to decide the post-war World War II order, which, of course, eventually at some point in time will lead to the Cold War, as well.

Dehart: Let me just say that the success of the Americans, the British, and the Canadians, don't forget the Canadians, the success in making it across the Channel, establishing beachheads, firming up those beachheads and breaking out, wrecked Hitler's plan for the future. I don't think people really appreciate that despite the terrible setbacks that Germany and its allies had experienced since 1942, going into 1944, Adolf Hitler remained absolutely confident that victory would ultimately belong to him. And his confidence was based on his sincere belief that when the Americans and the British crossed the Channel the Germans would defeat that invasion which would necessitate the British and the Americans having to prepare to mount a second operation that would take a tremendous amount of time. This would, according to Hitler's thinking, give Germany a breathing space, during which they would be able to regain the initiative on the Eastern Front, during which they would be able to mount a new bombing offensive against the British Isles, during which the German Navy would be able to get into operation in the North Atlantic new U-boats that they were developing, and giving Germany the opportunity to employ the miracle weapons that they had been developing, including the V-1, the V-2, the V-3, the V-4, and the aforementioned ME262. So, when the British, the Americans, and the Canadians succeed in getting across the Channel, Hitler's plans for the future are completely wrecked.

Robin Cummings: This is Chancellor Robin Cummings and I want to thank you for listening to 30 Brave Minutes. Our faculty and students provide expertise, energy, and passion driving our region forward. Our commitment to Southeastern North Carolina has never been stronger through our teaching, our research, and our community outreach. I want to encourage you to consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. With your help we will continue our impact for generations to come. You can donate online at uncp.edu/give. Thanks again for listening. Now back to more 30 Brave Minutes.

Frederick: You are listening to 30 Brave Minutes, a broadcast service of the College of Arts and Sciences at UNC Pembroke. I'm Jeff Frederick and we are talking about the Second World War. Our panel includes Bruce Dehart, James Hudson, and Robert Brown. In part one of our podcast I asked you to note something about the first half of the war that most folks did not know. In the same vein, perhaps discuss a battle or a military development that you think is under-appreciated, or, for those of us that are non-scholars of the war, might not know much about. Bruce, get us started.

Dehart: Well, in response to this question, and I apologize, but I actually think about several different developments that are under-appreciated. The first one I would mention is Japanese invasion of India in 1944. Japanese had conquered Burma in 1942, and in early 1944 the Japanese 15th Army launched an invasion of Eastern India for the express purpose of capturing

those airbases that the Americans had been using to fly supplies over the hub to Chiang Kai-shek. This particular invasion produced two battles about which most Americans don't know, bitter engagements. One at the small town of Imphal, the other at the small town of Kohima. The British 14th Army defeated the invasion and proceeded to inflict on the Japanese the single worst defeat that the Japanese suffered in all of World War 2. The British 14th Army completely annihilated the Japanese 15th Army, eliminating the threat to India and opening the door for the liberation of Burma. The second battle or campaign that comes to mind are the Japanese Offensive Operations in China in 1944. The Japanese will conduct very successful operations in China that will allow them, not only to do tremendous damage to Chiang Kai-Shek's military forces, which will have implications for the post-war period, and the renewed civil war against the Communists, but these particular operations will result in the Japanese capturing a series of American airbases that had been erected in China for the express purpose of conducting a strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese home islands. The third battle or campaign that I would mention as under-appreciated began June 22, 1944, on the Eastern Front. When the Red Army launched a massive offensive in Belorussia that caught the Germans by surprise, and that allowed the Red Army to advance from Belorussia all the way to the Eastern bank of the Vistula River, just across from Warsaw, in a matter of five weeks. What is so significant about this is that during this advance, the Soviets destroyed, and I mean destroyed, 25-30 German divisions. They simply disappeared from the German order of battle. And in destroying these divisions, the Soviets actually destroyed an entire German Army group. If you think about the day, June 22, 1944, the Red Army launched that to commemorate the third anniversary of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion. But, this operation had been coordinated with the Americans and the British when Stalin met with Churchill and Roosevelt at the Tehran Conference in November-early December, 1943. He promised Roosevelt and Churchill that once the British and Americans established that second front in Western Europe by crossing the Channel, the Red Army would launch a massive offensive on the Eastern Front to prevent the Germans from shifting forces from the east to the west to defeat British and American forces in the West.

Frederick: Robert, your thoughts on an under-appreciated or little known battle or military development?

Brown: Well, these are not quite military developments, but there are two things I would like to mention. One is the resistance movement within Germany to the Nazis, which were relatively small, but fairly widespread, and they culminate for most of us in the July 1944 bomb plot to kill Himmler, but I don't think many people realize in the aftermath of the bomb plot, the various plotters, including Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, who gets a lot of press in the United States because of recent movies, but the reaction to the bomb plot was basically to arrest and decimate the resistance, and there are some scholars that argue that in the aftermath the

resistance was essentially eliminated and it may have actually prolonged the war. That is one point and Bruce can elaborate on that if he would like. The second thing I would mention is, and this may come up in our discussion of the postwar period, is the basis for the Cold War are laid in wartime conferences, which is something we haven't really talked about. So, when the war ends in May, 1945 in Europe and then in August and September 1945 in Asia, the whole foundation of the Cold War which begins probably before the military part of the war ended, is already there.

Frederick: James, tell us something we don't know. What is underappreciated or little known, but critical in the Pacific?

Hudson: I think there were several things. There are a series of decisions that Chiang Kai-shek made early on in the war, and two of them occurred in 1938. One was he broke the dikes of the Yellow River in North China, which killed something like 900,000 people and contributed to this humanitarian crises that I was referencing earlier. He did it to stop the advance of Japan's forces into the interior, but he did it without warning and so people were completely unprepared in regards to how to deal with it. I mentioned also his strategy of scorched earth. One particular example is he burned the capital city of Hunan, Changsha, to the ground in 1938 to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Japanese. The other thing that I think that people have to understand about this war, and when both Robert and Bruce talk about the Holocaust, and its significance in a moment, I think this might contribute to that part of the conversation, but especially in the Pacific Theater, how intentionally racialized this war was. To use the phrase of John Dowers' famous book, "It was a war without mercy," in terms of how Japanese treated American POWs. They had lost all honor because they had surrendered or been defeated. Also on how the Allies viewed the Japanese. It was viewed in propaganda posters, and films, like the Why We Fight series that I mentioned earlier, but also what you have is that shortly after the United States enters the war against Japan, the US Government and President Roosevelt decide to intern thousands of Japanese Americans, mainly who live in the western coastal areas. American citizens were rounded up from their homes, put in trucks and loaded on trains and taken to camps in rural Arkansas, where they had to live out the duration of the war. In Asia, especially, just the racial character of the war and how it provoked such strong emotions and intense hatred and discrimination on both sides.

Frederick: As we think about atrocities, we are reminded that we have discussed the Holocaust in a previous podcast and I would invite our listeners to check that out and get a tremendous amount of insight in detail from Bruce Dehart about the Holocaust. From Mein Kampf to the Nuremberg Laws, to Kristallnacht, to the final solution, the inhumanity just continued to escalate. From anti-Semitism, perhaps on a personal or individual level, through a series of

ongoing policies and beliefs, all the way into institutionalized National actions with horrific end costs. Bruce and Robert, was this humanity's darkest moment?

Brown: I think that I could make a comment on that. We have certainly discussed the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany, and in the occupied territories, because as Bruce reminded us in the previous podcast, the vast number of Jews who died in the Holocaust came from Eastern Europe, from Poland, Ukraine, and places like that. In context we need to remember that was also on people who were chronically ill, who were mentally retarded, who had antisocial elements, gypsies, homosexuals, and whole range of other people, including Jehovah's Witnesses, and they were all persecuted. They were, in many cases, deported, in many cases murdered, in various concentration camps. I think we need to remember that what we are seeing there may not be humanities darkest moments, unfortunately there are whole lot of those, but it is a reminder of what can happen, particularly when governments sanction and encourage the persecution of groups within their societies that are minorities, and who are otherwise marginalized peoples. I'll leave it to Bruce from there.

Dehart: Well, I think Robert does us all a service when he reminds us that the Nazi regime targeted a multitude of peoples for a variety of reasons. I also, much like Robert, hesitate to go so far as to say that the Holocaust was humanities darkest moment. However, I would remind people that in 1944 when the details of Auschwitz finally reached London, and finally reached Prime Minister Churchill, he made a statement, and here I am paraphrasing "that this is probably the worst crime in the history of the world." What I would say, however, is that, in my estimation there had never been anything like the German attempt to eradicate the Jewish people and I don't believe that there has been anything like it since. We should keep in mind that from 1941, when the Hitler regime implemented what Hitler and his associates euphemistically called the final solution of the Jewish question, the goal they pursued was the complete and total physical annihilation of the Jewish population, not just of Europe, but of the globe. They are committed to killing, in one manner or another, every single Jew. While other groups were certainly targeted by the Nazi regime, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, a-socials, non-Jewish Poles, Soviet POWs, Sentient-Roma, otherwise known as Gypsies, we could go through a whole list. There is no evidence to suggest that this regime set out to kill every member of those target groups, so there was no final solution of the gypsy question, or no final solution of the homosexual question, so again I don't think there had ever been anything like this in global history and I don't think that there has been anything like it since. Whether it was humanities darkest moment, I would hesitate to make that particular judgment but again I think it is unprecedented.

Frederick: Well, let's discuss the end of the war. We have run up against this with our discussion of turning points or under-represented or little-discussed developments, military or

otherwise, that affected the outcome. We know with certitude that the Japanese and the Germans lost the war. We know that they lost the actual war that was fought and concluded in 1945. And of course the world is much better for this outcome. Much of the story of the 75 years of history since the war has been the relative empowerment of ordinary citizens in many areas of the world, not complete but relative. Is it possible though, is it conceivable, that there are some basic, not outlandish, but basic alterations of the strategy or the action or the scope that could have led to a different result in the Second World War? How far-fetched is this? James, get us started.

Hudson: Well, I think, going back to something we had already touched on when we first started talking is, that the decision to drop the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was debated at the time and will continue to be debated. In December 46, Carl Compton, a physicist and future president of MIT wrote a piece in the Atlantic where he articulated and justified the reason for the dropping of the bombs, that it ultimately saved American lives because the Allies, and, I think, the people of Japan and the Japanese Government were preparing for an eminent invasion of the Japanese mainland. I think the Allies were preparing to do that in early November and among the American generals to be tasked with spearheading it was Joseph Stillwell, one of the top American advisors in China until he was dismissed by Roosevelt, but there had been so much damage done to urban space, housing stock, infrastructure, and obviously, civilian and military casualties, prior to the bombing, prior to the dropping of the atomic bombs. I think that is what will continue to be debated is that had the United States done enough damage through the use of incendiary bombs, if they had continued those campaigns, which were highly, highly destructive, would the result have been the same? And the problem that you have would be the legacy of the atomic bombs is the long term damage in terms of radiation and damage to the natural environment that obviously occurred as a result of that.

Frederick: Bruce, your thoughts? Was a different outcome conceivable? Was it possible?

Dehart: Well, looking back at the war from the perspective of 75 years, I answer absolutely no. But I don't think that's really the way to look at the war. I think to truly understand the war you have to look at the war from the perspective of the time. And so, when I teach my course on the Second World War, one of the things that I am constantly telling my students is we know how this war turns out and we have a good idea already why it turns out the way it turns out, but this is not the way to look at the war. If one looks at the war from, say, the perspective of late 41 and early 42, and you are looking at it from the perspective of the Soviets or the British or the Americans, or the Canadians, you are not so sure how this war is going to turn out. In fact, you are not terribly optimistic, and this is true even of the leadership of the Soviet Union, after Barbarossa has been defeated and after they have launched the counter-offensive that forced the

Germans to withdraw in some places by as much as a hundred miles. So, if I look at the war in retrospect, I don't think that there is any way that the Axis could have won the war, unless there had been some sort of technological miracle that would have been possible for the time. But, I think the way to look at the war is to look at the war from the perspective of the time when it unfolded.

Hudson: I think that is a great point, I just want to interject here, I think that is a great point that Bruce makes there, is that when we look at something like the war we have to remember the people who experienced it and lived it, be it in the Soviet Union, in Europe, or China, or Japan, or wherever. There was no clear outcome. That's how we try to teach students to think when we get them to approach and engage with history. That is a great point and I think we should all remember that.

Frederick: Robert, thoughts from you? Was a different outcome possible, or conceivable?

Brown: If we look at it from the point of the people, and that is an excellent point. People celebrated VE day in 1945, or the VJ day in 1945. They thought the war ended, but in fact, it didn't. It morphed, as I mentioned earlier, immediately, into the cold war, which I don't think, particularly in America, people had anticipated. They thought the war is over, we defeated the Nazis, we defeated the Totalitarianism, we defeated the Japanese, the boys are going to come home and we are going to have a Post War World. Well, it didn't happen that way. They didn't anticipate it. Plus, in 1945, what is the status of the world, in Europe, in Japan, in Asia? The place is in almost total devastation. There is one historian that I keep quoting to my class, says you know whole countries are on welfare. Complete political, economic, social breakdown. Post War reconstruction is going to take decades, depending on where you are. So, the war doesn't end. We immediately go into this Post War period. The division of Europe, between so called Communists, and so-called Western powers, Churchill's Iron Curtain, and a situation that persists until, I guess, its symbolic end in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall. One final point that I would like to bring up is the culture of remembrance. Whether it is in Germany, United States, Great Britain, or in Japan, or in Asia, how do we remember the war? Just to take the German example, which is the one that I know the best, is the Germans don't really begin to take a point of responsibility until the 1960s. But then, and we don't have time to go through all of the stages, but there really has been a culture of remembrance there, of remembering the Holocaust, remembering the persecution of other groups like the gypsies, the Roma, the homosexuals, the mentally and physically handicapped, and today if you go to Germany, there are memorials. We could talk about the different kinds. There are museums, the curriculum in the schools is constantly talking about how the current generation should look back on the period of the Second World War and the Nazi Regime.

Frederick: Well, Robert, you have transitioned us beautifully into some final comments by thinking about the outcome and the aftermath. James and Bruce, why don't you add something, like final comments into a brief summary of a topic that we've already talked about for a couple of hours and haven't barely scratched the surface of its overall meaning in terms of origins, outcomes, causes, and effects, but tie a ribbon on this for us Bruce and James. What should we take away from the overall meaning of this horrific conflict?

Hudson: I thought I would lead off first because I wanted to speak to some of the questions that Robert raised about the remembering of the war in Asia. It continues to be a source of remembrance and controversy to this day. Obviously, the Nanking Massacre, which I talked about in Part 1 continues to be remembered, and continues to stroke sensitive veins in China, especially when there are textbooks that have been published in Japan in very recent years that omit all references or de-emphasize the extent of atrocities committed by the Japanese. I'm not completely certain that you have the degree of remembrance, in terms of the role that Japan played in the war, today, that you have in places like Germany. In terms of tying a ribbon on all of this, the fact that China continued to fight until 1949. After the surrender of Japan, the Nationalists and the Communists went to war again, and the Communists emerged victorious from this, but what happens is Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government flees to Taiwan and establishes the Republic of China there, and the effects of that are still being felt to this day. The other thing I wanted to finish up in saying is that, you know, the end of the war, I think the Allies, by the creation of organizations like NATO, wanted to create a unified body or series of alliances between states to prevent fascism, to prevent Nationalist regimes from raising their head again. So, in today's time when you have the resurgence of populism, a resurgence of isolationism, it is scary to think about and I think that we would do well to continue to look back on these wars and continue to learn from them in that regard.

Frederick: Bruce, finish us off.

Dehart: What I would like people to understand is that in the early 1940s the world hung in the balance. One of the most significant points that we can make about Winston Churchill, once he became Prime Minister in May 1940, is that he was determined that Great Britain would continue in the war. Even after Great Britain's European continental ally France capitulated. And that is because he really understood, unlike many people, who Hitler was and what Nazism was all about. So, when you get farther in the war, in late 41, early 1942, and I am looking at the war, not from the perspective of 75 years later, but from the perspective of those living at the time. World and civilization literally hung in the balance. The other point that I would make here is that there are many historians who make the argument that the First World War was really an unnecessary war. For the Allies, for those who fought against the Third Reich, and Japan, and Italy, and Romania, and Slovakia, and all those others, who hitched their wagons to

the Nazi horse, for the Allies, this was a war that not only had to be fought but for the sake of the world and for the sake of civilization, it had to be won. Had this war turned out differently, and looking back from 75 years, I don't think it could have had a different outcome, but had this war turned out differently, I can only imagine how differently the world in which we live today would look.

Frederick: For all of our listeners, I want to offer thanks to this tremendous panel, who in two separate sessions has demonstrated a master class of historians at their work. The command of the material, the depth of the insight and analysis, the level of interpretation, and understanding of how different pieces fit together, we are all enriched by your conversation and by your insight on this most important of wars, which we are continuing to feel even today. Thank you to our tremendous panel. Thank you to Richard for putting all this together. Join us again next time for another edition of 30 Brave Minutes.

Richard Gay, Editor: Today's podcast was edited by Richard Gay and transcribed by Janet Gentes. Theme music created by Riley Morton. This content is copyrighted by the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and the College of Arts and Sciences. It is to be used for educational and non-commercial purposes only and is not to be changed, altered, or used in any commercial endeavor without the express written permission of authorized representatives of UNCP. The views and opinions expressed by the individuals during the course of these discussions are their own and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, and positions of UNCP or any of its subsidiary programs, schools, departments, or divisions. While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that information discussed is current and accurate at the time of release, neither UNCP nor any individual presenting material makes any warranty that the information presented in the original recording has remained accurate due to advances in research, technology, or industry standards. Thanks for listening and go Braves.

Frederick: Good job everybody.