

>> Peter Robinson: Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge, I'm Peter Robinson. Today revisionism; those who would revise our understanding of World War II and those who would defend it. Victor Davis Hanson, military historian, professor of classics, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, I quote you, World War II was worth it. You intend to stand by that?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: I think so.

>> Peter Robinson: You will. Christopher Hitchens, author and journalist, quote, is there anyone shared principle or assumption on which our political consensus rests? One would probably get the widest measure of agreement for the proposition that the Second World War was a good war. You'll stand by that?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Well I've certain; I will say that it's my view as well as the consensus view.

>> Peter Robinson: All right. World War II was a good war.

>> Christopher Hitchens: And believe me it, it gashes me somewhat to put it like, like that.

>> Peter Robinson: All right. Our first revisionist here today, Pat Buchanan in his new book, Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War, the background and then Buchanan's central argument. It takes a moment to set up the background, but bear with me here. September 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain visits Munich to negotiate the agreement to the German annexation of the Sudetenland, which is the boarder region of Czechoslovakia, which is heavily populated by German speakers. In return, Chamberlain believes he's gotten Hitler to agree to give up any further territorial claims in Europe. In the follow weeks Hitler renigs. He not only annexes [phonetic] the Sudetenland, but moves in and occupies Prague, then places Poland under increasing pressure to give up Danzig, a free city hived out of East Prussia by the Treaty of Versailles. But Poland is in control of Danzig's external affairs. Danzig has a German population of about 95%, completely surrounded by Polish territory. March 31, 1939, Chamberlain reverses his policy of appeasement rising in the House of Commons to announce British support for Poland in the event of, quote, any action, which clearly threatens Polish independence. Close quote. August 24th we're three, three items from the end, August 24, 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; they agree not to invade each other. September 1, 1939, Hitler invades Poland. And September 3, 1939, Chamberlain announces that a state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany. Buchanan's central argument, quote, what made a European war inevitable was not Hitler's occupation of Prague, but Britain's guarantee to Poland. Had there been no war guarantee, Poland might have done a deal over Danzig and been spared 6 million dead Pol's. Had there been no war guarantee there would have been no British declaration of war on September 3rd. And there might have been no German invasion of France in May 1940 or ever. There was nothing inevitable about Hitler's war in the west. Victor?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Well, it's not an isolated act. You remember that what made Chamberlain.

>> Peter Robinson: The invasion of Poland.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: No. What made Chamberlain come to his senses, it was a long line that had gone from a violations; and Buchanan makes the argument the Versailles Treaty as he quotes this creepy Lady Aster that it, Hitler was born at Versailles. But the point is.

>> Peter Robinson: Creepy Lady Aster is an American Victor that's.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Especially creepy, we should as Americans point that out.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes, her, her home in England was the social headquarters of the, the Munich set.

>> Peter Robinson: The appeasers.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes.

>> Peter Robinson: [unclear]

>> Christopher Hitchens: Right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: But anyway, it came after the violation of the demilitarized riman, [phonetic] the Anchluss, [phonetic] the fragmentation of Czechoslovakia, the murder of a form, the former German Chancellor, the murder of the Austrian. I mean this, it, it already there were the crystal nightmic [phonetic] and not with the Jews. So all of this was sequential, and serial, and incremental. And finally, the allies, especially England, realized it was, they had no choice. It, essentially they were bankrupt in ideology and courage all that, unless they finally drew the line. It was unfortunate that they were not in a position to draw the line militarily, at least Britain wasn't. Maybe France could have invaded on the west when they went into Poland. But the point that Buchanan makes in the, the book is always out of context. He says that Hit, Churchill considered this a disastrous move. And he quotes liberal thinking people who thought it was a disaster. Not because they finally drew the line, but because for five years they did not draw the line and then they had no choices when they were at the point of war.

>> Peter Robinson: Christopher, when Chamberlain gives Poland a war guarantee, Britain has at its disposal five divisions; the Germans have a hundred. In the six months between the granting of the war guarantee and, excuse me, yes nearly six months between granting the war guarantee and Hitler's invasion of Poland, Britain extends no credit to Poland. It places no advisors on the ground. It offers no concrete aid to Poland what so ever. They shouldn't have done it, because it was a bluff. And you ought not to make bluffs when you're dealing with Adolph Hitler.

>> Christopher Hitchens: There, there's not much to quarrel with that. I mean it is a rather quixotic gesture. But it's, it's rendered quick, sorted by the fact that it's, it's the last stand you can make unless you're going to follow Buchanan's invitation to tautology, which is to agree that there won't be war as long as we gave Hitler everything he wants all the time. I mean, to, to an extent that must be true. But to the extent that Buchanan derives this from appeasable Germans grievances, such as the Sudetendeutsch-

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Party, for example. He's, I think consciously, trying to deceive us. The example I gave in my polemic against him in News Week was this. In 1936, Germany and Italy combined to invade Spain with some rightwing Spanish fascist mutineers to overthrow Democratic [unclear] Republican government. Spain isn't a profiteer country from Versailles. Spain doesn't.

>> Peter Robinson: No, no German population in Spain.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Spain doesn't have a German speaking [unclear]. Spain can't encircle Germany; it's on the other side of the Pyrenees. It's a pure act of calculated fascist imperialism. And my, my strong suspicion is that Buchanan, who's tradition is that of the cafidit [phonetic] fascist lead. Father Coughlin in the United States, his well-known sympathy for General Franco, and so forth, is conceding something from us that would be very unpleasant if further explored.

>> Peter Robinson: I want to return to the Polish War Guarantee. Because Buchanan argues that absent that guarantee things might have been much better for everyone involved, including the Pol's. It seems to me that you, you don't need to grant Pat Buchanan's entire ethic and view of the war to think that that may be, that may actually be so. That is to say if the Britain had not granted the Polish War Guaranteed, kept its mouth shut, and rearmed as quickly as it could, then 18 months later or 2 years later there may, may have been in a better position to face Hitler down. No? Is there not an argument there?

>> Christopher Hitchens: No, but look, no [unclear] really wants to play this speculation that

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: There, there is a terrible way of doing this that keeps one awake. It comes from Sebastian Hafner's brilliant biography of Hitler. Was something that Hitler's generals noticed when it was too late. Hitler was, was physically and mentally decomposing. We know, we know, we know this now, right? They suddenly began to understand that the insane orders he was giving them

>> Peter Robinson: Were strictly speaking insane.

>> Christopher Hitchens: About the war, the war in the east. Yeah. Cause, cause he knew he didn't have much time. And he had to either see Germany totally ruined, which he wouldn't have minded, or totally triumphant, which is, which is what he would like, very soon, very quickly. Once he realized that Germany was being run by a psychopath; the concession, by the way, that Buchanan doesn't make. He, he seems to regard Hitler as a very canny and brilliant statesman, which I'm, I, I want to dispute with him. But once you've grown to the, he's a decomposing, probably syphilitic term as it may, of course it'd be very intelligent just to wait it out.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Run out the clock on him as long as you can. Deny him the chance to start a, a global war, because under the cover of war he can also start the Holocaust. If you really want to play this game you can, but you can't play it as a, as a sympathizer of Charles Lindbergh, Father Coughlin, and General Franco and the Sudetendeutsch.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Okay, but one point is that he, he assumes that all of these atrocities are unleashed only because of war, and only because the British box Hitler in. And suddenly out of the head of Zeus comes the final solution. As if altering the 30's, whether it was the deportation of the mentally ill, or racial exclusionary laws, or the ostracism of Jews, that you didn't have the nucleolus of what was going to become whether you had a war or not. It was only predicated on one variable, German power. As soon as German had the, Germany had the power then this awful vision was going to be realized, war or not war.

>> Peter Robinson: Let me come to that, the Holocaust, the next segment here. Pat Buchanan quote, for what happened to the Jews of Europe, Hitler and his collaborators bear full moral responsibility. But was the Holocaust inevitable? Close quote. Now I'm needless to say I'm bastardizing an, the argument is made at length here. But very briefly, Buchanan notes that the Swansea [phonetic] Conference, which the, works out the administrative details of the final solution, doesn't take place until January 1942. That Hitler himself, that, and he quotes several times from the diaries of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, including February 1942, quote, world jewelry will suffer a great catastrophe. The fewer realizes the full implications of the great opportunity offered by this war. Close quote. From this chronology Buchanan writes, the destruction of the Jews was not a cause of the war, but an awful consequence of the war. With no war in the west all the Jews of Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece might have survived, as did the Jews of Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland. Close quote.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And where did all this idea come from? I mean, he's in a war and suddenly he finds he's in a war, an extrastential [phonetic] war, and suddenly it comes it him that he has to start killing Jews. Or is he saying that it's, he says he bears full responsibility throughout, throughout the book. But, and that but is, well he wouldn't have really been able, capable of, it's like a heroin addict that really wouldn't take heroine

unless somebody gave it to him. As if they can't find a way to find it any other way. I mean there were already, there were already mechanisms all during, when they start killing people at Bobliar [phonetic] they start going in with special groups on the first day of the Russian invasion. All of those things can't be organized, contemplated, envisioned just because of a war scenario. I mean all of these thing, and the character, ritual assignations, systemic ethnic cleansing. I mean, what he had done was on a smaller, it was absolutely consistent with a Holocaust.

>> Peter Robinson: So you don't believe that the actual, the war unhinges them from the last vestige of morality. You don't buy that at all.

>> Christopher Hitchens: A tie [phonetic] agree with, with what Victor says there. I would intensify it a bit by underline it by saying there's a program for genocide laid out in a book called Mincomft, [phonetic] that comes out on the 20th. The entire electoral program of the National Socialists Party of Germany is to say that the, the woes, not just of their country, but of the world are to be blamed on world jury. The, the motion for invading the Soviet Union, for breaking Hitler's Stalin Pack, in the first place is to, is to exterminate what they call Judeo Bolshevism. They think Communism, they are the great enemy, is a Jewish plot.

>> Peter Robinson: And we know that it may be.

>> Christopher Hitchens: So it's written into that the, the [unclear] of Nazism is anti-Semitism; the organizing principle.

>> Peter Robinson: And isn't it the case, I'm trying, remembering [unclear].

>> Christopher Hitchens: [unclear] makes it to something that's opportunist and contingent. It's a completely [unclear].

>> Victor Davis Hanson: What was, what was the [unclear] plan? They were all going to be peacefully deported to where, Madagascar? And this was all gonna be done under the auspices of a peaceful German empire.

>> Peter Robinson: Well now Buchanan does make the argument that passage of the Nuremberg Laws, which were, harshly discriminatory toward Jews, that takes place in 1935. Between that moment and Kristallnacht 1938, between the passage of the Nuremberg Laws and the Kristallnacht violent, violence against the Jews, perhaps half of German Jews have left. And then after Kristallnacht and before the war the statistics indicate another half leave. So something like, and he makes the distinction that there's a difference between, in effect, driving Jews out of your country and penning them up and sending them to the gas chambers. That's a, that's a, that, that's a, that's a critical decision, right?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And where did a lot of the Jews go? They went to places like Warsaw that [unclear]. Planning to invade.

>> Peter Robinson: Oh is that so?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Absolutely.

>> Peter Robinson: Well, because the largest numbers went west.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Not necessarily. Kristallnacht was caused by the assassination of a German diplomat by a Jew who was denied access to Warsaw and was stateless. And remember this is a guy who had to bathe seven times, because he discovered his chief of staff had what? Married a Jew. And so, I mean

>> Christopher Hitchens: During the war. During the, during the night and fog period under the cover of which in article six, there's very often they will, they will use scarce resources like railway trains.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: It would be important to attach oneself to get on with killing Jews when, when the, these people were needed at the front. They, they were willing to jeopardize their war eggs than they were to finish with the, with the Jewish people. This is not something that comes as a

>> Peter Robinson: This [unclear] a spasm of anger. This is a high priority fully thought out.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Remember the, you gotta remember the ideology of the Buchanan argument, it accepts certain things that Hitler is a monster and he's capable of all of these horrible things, but if you, and he wants to get out of his cage all the time. But you one day were not a careful zoo keeper, so you left the cage slightly open and he got out. And therefore you're responsible for all the crimes he committed, as if it's, you know.

>> Christopher Hitchens: You see it's, it's as if to say that Hitler was a rational actor.

>> Peter Robinson: Well that's, that's, that's exactly, that I think is a, is one, one, that's a historical calculation one has to make. That if, if they had not made the, if the British had not made the guarantee to Poland. One of the critical arguments is, if the British had not offered the war guarantee to Poland, would there have been a Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact? And the notion there is, no! Because Hitler would

>> Christopher Hitchens: It's Munich that leads to the Hitler, Stalin [unclear]. As Trotsky [phonetic] points out at the time the only person who noticed it. He said, now that Mr. Chamberlain has done this, and sold the Czech's to try and preserve the British Empire with Hitler, the next thing that Hitler will do is make an agreement with Stalin. But you see it's just as insane for the Germans knowing.

>> Peter Robinson: They had that extra [unclear].

>> Christopher Hitchens: It's just as, it's just as insane for the Germans knowing that if they invade Poland, they hold war with the British Empire. It's just as irrational and quick sorted of them to do that as it is for Chamberlain to say, if you charge Poland we really will fight you. Now Buchanan says, ah ha! Hitler was so upset with, by Britain's failure to take his deal, we have Europe, you have India.

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: That he invades Russia to impress them. This is the action of an insane

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Remember what he said when he went into Pol, he, already well before 1941 he stated again and again to his generals, maybe we can handle Britain and maybe we can handle Russia, but we cannot handle the United States. This is a country that put 250,000 people every 2 months in World War I.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And finally he had up to 3 and a half million people by 1919 on the European continent. And Hitler had known that, so he understood that eventually if he was going to go down that path it was inevitable that. It wasn't just that British was, Britain impotent when he went into Poland, but it was a whole mechanism that going into Poland was the last straw for all liberal thinking people and democracies. And so this idea that we, that, that Churchill and Roosevelt cooked up this war was crazy.

>> Peter Robinson: Hold on. Buchanan; Hitler and the Jews one last time. Buchanan, grant everything you said, that still leaves the question, was it correct for the allies to push for unconditional surrender? Did the war aims go to far? Buchanan quote, at Casablanca in 1943, Churchill and FDR declared their warning was, quote unconditional surrender. At Kaybeck [phonetic] in 1944, Churchill and FDR approve the Morgenthal [phonetic] Plan calling for the destruction of all German industry. Goebbels used the Morgentahl plan to convince Germans that surrender meant no survival. And here's the critical sentence, annihilation of their hostages, the Jews, was the price the Nazis extracted for their own annihilation. Close quote. Give the Germans terms earlier and you might have saved some large number of Jews. Plausible? Madness?

>> Christopher Hitchens: It's the argument also that's made for hoping, working for the success of the Starfinburg [phonetic] plan for the, for the German general staff to take out Hitler and negotiate a separate peace with the west. Some people say that would have been better too.

>> Peter Robinson: We do hope, we do wish that Danish Starfinburg had actually succeeded, right?

>> Christopher Hitchens: I guess we do.

>> Peter Robinson: All right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: But there's one, but, but, I'd have to add the same cavil.
[phonetic]

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Right. Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Which is this, which I, I, I get from a number of my German comrades and Austrian comrades. They, they wanted to be sure that Nazism was absolutely extirpated. There was no possibility of the, there will be another Dolslosh [phonetic] Theory that Germany had been stabbed in the back or betrayed from within. And that [unclear] had hung on, so the Germans wouldn't be doing this kind of revisionism any more. That it would be an uttered feat, something un, unarguable, something finish [unclear]. Horrible.

>> Peter Robinson: All right, Churchill. Next segment Churchill. Again a word of background. With the war spreading in May 1940, political support for Chamberlain government, the Chamberlain government collapses, Churchill becomes Prime Minister. In that month of May 1940 its clear Germany is be, making diplomatic overtures. Halifax in the cabinet is probing Churchill over a critical period of several days. Will you accept a deal? They let us keep the Empire; we stay out of the general war. There's now some, there's some evidence in peoples, that Churchill seems to have considered it for about 48 hours. There's no deep consideration, but he doesn't rule it out immediately. But the final decision is, no! He rejects the overtures and insists on going, on pursuing the war, prosecuting the war. Now here

>> Christopher Hitchens: Remember the media as it was proposed was Mussolini.
[phonetic] He'd, they'd have had to

>> Peter Robinson: Is that where [unclear].

>> Christopher Hitchens: They'd a had to

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Yes, Garchano. [phonetic]

>> Christopher Hitchens: They'd have had to accept a mediation with Mussolini.

>> Peter Robinson: All right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: The, quite a lot he has to swallow.

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Right. Now I have to say when I'm, with reading this strikes me as a reach, but not implausible, not all together implausible. Buchanan argues that Hitler is convinced Churchill wants to prosecute the war, because Churchill has the lingering hope that he'll be able to turn the Soviet Union. That Britain and Russia will be able to align themselves and force Germany into a two front war. So Hitler decides things

went pretty well in France. France falls in 6 weeks. He decides on a lightning strike in Russia to knock Russia out. But all the time he's doing it with an eye on Churchill and trying to impress Britain. And there are quotations here, he quotes again there are general, generals writing in their diaries that the main enemy is Britain; we're moving into Russia because of Britain. Quoting Buchanan. By his refusal even to consider a negotiated peace, Churchill caused Hitler to commit his fatal blunder invading Russia. This would bring the downfall of Hitler, but add 4 more years to the war and bring death to 10's of millions. Was it worth it? Churchill should have settled.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: No. Remember this is the same guy who, same author who argues that had Britain just stayed out of things and had continued the policy of appeasement then Hitler and Stalin would have inevitably clashed and they would have had this war.

>> Peter Robinson: The Nazi's and the communists-

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Absolutely.

>> Peter Robinson: [unclear]

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And we would have. And the, and the democracies would have sat out and watched these two atrocious systems wipe each other out. And it would be probably a little bit better, because he thinks Russia would have probably lost, and European Christianity, and a white race, and all this would have won. And then, but, and this, then the after, that's the subtext of most of the book. And then after saying that he says that Britain caused this war in the east, eventually, by giving this, this guarantee to Poland. And what keeps it completely out of the argument is, of course, while all this is going on there's unrestricted submarine warfare that is destroying American ships, which he knows and he's getting this pressure from his navel commanders. Remember he declared war on the United States, we didn't declare war on him.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Because he wanted to destroy Britain economically, and the only way you could do that was to destroy the convoys from the United States. So the idea that he wasn't doing things that were precip, precipitous, dangerous, and would inevitably lead to war is crazy.

>> Peter Robinson: Churchill. You by the way, let the record show that you've been quite critical

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes.

>> Peter Robinson: Of, of the Churchill myth, the Churchill legend.

>> Christopher Hitchens: I have. And of the overuse to the point of diminishing returns of the Munich analogy [unclear].

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Right. Right. Exactly.

>> Christopher Hitchens: The, the, by the way I think this might be the point to which to say that the other hidden agenda [unclear] has a problem to whitewash. You got a Catholic fascism and collusion with it is, is to oppose the war in Iraq.

>> Peter Robinson: Right. I actually will come to that, but go ahead.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Okay. All right. Well [unclear] that monitor in case you.

>> Peter Robinson: That's fair. That's fair. He's explicit about that. He's explicit about that.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Churchill, remember, was, had been very pro Mussolini in the early days of fateliam [phonetic] fascism. He had written in his book, The Great Contemporaries, a very flattering portrayal of Adolf Hitler saying he hoped that if Britain was ever to suffer similar extremities that Germany had that they would find a savior of the same type. Not a guy who was very hard to persuade when it came to hard line anti-communist right-wing forces. But for that reason, very impressive when he would suddenly realize this, this is not that. This isn't what I thought it was. This is something pornographic and, and insane, and really menacing. And there isn't any possibility of co-existence with it. We can't, he said, we can't breath the same air as these people. They have to go. He would have loved to manipulate a, a war between Germany and Bolshevism. I mean it would have been Churchill's idea initially to invade the Soviet Union.

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Exactly. That's exactly [unclear].

>> Christopher Hitchens: [unclear] 1919. Not just an idea this carried to execution with the American forces as well as British ones.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And his defense also, we forget that this, while Buchanan is quite accurate in pointing out the poultry resources of Britain in September of 1939, what he doesn't realize is that Hitler, it is true that Churchill is asking two things. He wants to rearm, and he wants to by 1939 stop the appeasement. But after the fall of France when Churchill takes the reigns of government he didn't have a lot of options. This is a man who was making an argument, finally. And Christopher is right about his sordid statements in the middle 30's. But finally he was making a stand with very few resources. And he was making on a, on a, it speaks well of him that he was trying to rally the best in the British people to stop a nightmarish ideology, of which he didn't have a lot of resources at his, at his disposal.

>> Peter Robinson: Can I? Grant everything you've said about Churchill and the importance to all of world history of that moral insight. Did he prosecute the war wisely? Was he good on strategy and tactics? I mean there are plenty of American military historians who would say, we could have moved into Normandy a year earlier if Churchill hadn't insisted on that ridiculous approach from; it'll, that, that it was Churchill, he got all kinds of things wrong. He got the moral insight right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Michael House [phonetic] just written a very interesting critique of the Italian campaign, for example. Every account you read of the Norwegian campaign is absolutely calamitous. Well the accounts aren't calamitous; the campaign was calamitous.

>> Peter Robinson: Yes. Yes. Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: That, that's true. It's just that the accusation made regularly by Goebbels on Nazi radio that Churchill enjoyed war and was, and was half, half drunk all the time. Literally drunk, because he, he really loved doing it with a big glass of brandy and a cigar. Had a [unclear] with the business, absolutely true.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: This is true. This is true.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yeah. All true; and just as well. Just as well.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: But I, there's no way I think most military historians would agree on this. There is no way the United States was capable of invading western Europe, Normandy, or wherever [unclear].

>> Peter Robinson: Normandy took place as soon as it could have done?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Absolutely. Yeah. Okay. The deoperated [phonetic] show that the United States was not in a position, whether it's landing craft or tactics. And even after we, we forget 3,500 killed landing on Normandy may have been an impressive achievement, but the cost, but then we lost 80,000 people in the next 6 six weeks in the Hedgerills. [phonetic] It was not a, it was a near run thing even in 1944 in June.

>> Peter Robinson: Buchanan's second charge against Hitler, excuse me, against Churchill, that he focused so monomaniacally on Hitler that he underestimates, or he loses sight of the threat from Stalin. I quote Buchanan. The destruction of Germany to which Churchill had dedicated himself, this is following on the point that Churchill refused to deal, refused to offer them terms. He presses for unconditional surrender. The destruction of Germany to which Churchill had dedicated himself left a power vacuum that Stalin inevitably filled. Britain fought Nazi tyranny only to pave the, pave the path to power for a greater tyranny. Close quote.

>> Christopher Hitchens: It's the first thing I ever wrote about Churchill. With, actually with the help of someone, which doesn't write, Gamasigbre Taylor. [phonetic] Many years ago when the, when those papers were opened in 1974, the premier papers.

>> Peter Robinson: The state papers?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yeah. Churchill's Premier Papers as they're called. The deal he made with Stalin in Moscow 1944, literally on the back of an envelope giving Stalin 90% of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania in exchange for Britain retaining predominant interest in Greece and Turkey. And when you consider that it was Poland that Britain had gone to war for in the first place, it's a, it's a pretty sordid and shabby deal. And there's, I think, no arguing with that. Buchanan though, I think, is short-termist [phonetic] about this. He says that Stalin, and Stalin isn't Communism, was the greatest profiteer of the Second World War. That's only true for a couple of decades really. I mean, we, we can now see that, the, the war that started really in 1914 that goes on

>> Peter Robinson: The century of war.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Various, various truces. There aren't truces, and doesn't really end till the Berlin Wall comes down in 1989. By, by that stage totalitarian ideology has known as being defeated in modern society. It's been discredited thoroughly. And without it, without a through going stand to root out Nazism in the first place I don't think that could have happened.

>> Peter Robinson: We depart from Pat Buchanan for a moment here. Neil Ferguson [phonetic] has a book and a PBS television series of the same name, The War of The World. Ferguson stresses, here's the list here, American soldiers, this is based on the first installment of the series. American soldiers sometimes executed prisoners, as surely as did the Germans, and especially the Japanese. The destruction by the allies of Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, resembles a lot. The terror bombing that the Germans inflict on London and other cities. Churchill and FDR hail Joseph Stalin as an irreplaceable ally. Joseph Stalin is, of course, a mass murderer. Now listen to two quotations. Neil Ferguson quote, the allies adopted the most brutal tactics of those they were fighting. Close quote. Rush Limbaugh, I direct this one to you particular Christopher. Quote, now we've got this revisionist historian trying to say we're no better than the people we beat, because we were using the same totalitarian tactics. This is a latest example of the attempt to convince as many Americans as possible that the United States is no better than any of the worst despots and mass murderers that have ever lived, thank you PBS. Close quote. So who are you with on that one Christopher? Rush Limbaugh or,

>> Christopher Hitchens: Spirited

>> Peter Robinson: Or Neil Ferguson.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Well Mr. Limbaugh was very flattering about my good self in the New York Times last Sunday. So I

>> Peter Robinson: Yes, he was actually.

>> Christopher Hitchens: I suppose I owe him one. Actually he some how, I, try as he make he could never find my G spot. I don't understand why people [unclear].

>> Peter Robinson: Oh, you don't?

>> Christopher Hitchens: No.

>> Peter Robinson: Oh, well, have a drink

>> Christopher Hitchens: I can't, I can't get it. But, but anyway, if I haven't had the advantage of reading Mr. Ferguson's book. I'm an admirer of his work in general. The, the difference I suppose would be this, Germany and Japan in defeat were very expensively and carefully nourished back to life, and health, and democracy, and prosperity. I don't think that would have been the case for a, a German occupied Russia, or a German occupied United Kingdom. And I think I rest my case on that distinction.

>> Peter Robinson: And, and we know what happened [unclear].

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes. Right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: The difference is that in all war there's a process of brutality, and, and it becomes worse and worse. Every party tool, or no matter whether a liberal democratic government or an autocracy will find themselves caught in that spiral, that, that dissent into barbarity. But the difference between the allies in Germany and Japan was two fold. Number 1, it atrocity was incidental. It was not essential to the war making. In, in the sense that you didn't have special groups of British soldiers who went out and found Jews and slaughtered them. Or you didn't have anything like the rape of Menking. [phonetic] Or you didn't have 10 to 15,000 Asians per week being killed in the last years of World War II by Americans and British in China, and Korea, and Formosa. That's one thing. The other is magnitude.

>> Christopher Hitchens: No, and no term to make their own civilians commit mass suicide in the face of [unclear].

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And there's

>> Christopher Hitchens: There wouldn't have been.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: But the, the other argument is more of a subtle one and it involves magnitude, which I think Neil Ferguson didn't point out clear enough, clearly enough, excuse me. And that is that while there was this difference in the way that, and

first of all Hiroshima was really in reaction to the savagery of the island hopping campaign.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And people, remember after Okinawa was declared secure and they looked back and saw 50,000 casualties, the popular American outcry at the end of the war just 90 days later was not, we dropped the bomb. But surely you must have, if you, you exploded it in mid July you must have known it was there and you could have avoided Okinawa. So the point that I'm making is its magnitude.

>> Peter Robinson: You speaking to the son of a man who was on a ship just off Okinawa and watching kamikaze planes.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: My, my grandfather, my namesake was killed there. So the point that I'm making is that the fact that in retaliation to stop atrocity that the allies engage in types of activities that kill a lot of people, doesn't make it the moral equivalent of people who would have done far worse, only they didn't have the access to the technology or the material resources.

>> Christopher Hitchens: There is some very unpleasant stuff there if you read the, the conversations of Cha Wil, [phonetic] and Lindamen, [phonetic] and the advisors to the Cheswan [phonetic] area bombing they say, we recommend that you bomb the working class areas of Hamberg, because the houses are closer together, the people are packed more tightly. You'll get more deaths per bomb. And remember these are the, these are the areas of Germany that have never [unclear] to Hitler. Hitler I think, I'm, I'm right in saying, barely even visited Hamberg even when he was Chancellor, cause he knew he wasn't, he was hated there as a Socialist working class city. It's horrible to think when we ask a, a rather smug question, what happened to all the good Germans during the terrible period of Nazi's. And well a lot of them were being killed by the RF.

>> Peter Robinson: Nagasaki, by the way, was the center of Catholicism in Japan.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes.

>> Peter Robinson: Took out the one, the one place where there were actually a large concentration of Christians in Japan. However, we are, we have ratified this. There is a fundamental moral distinction to be observed, and to miss it is obtuse. That is to say, all three of us agree that Mr. Rush Limbaugh is correct.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Yes, I think [unclear]

>> Christopher Hitchens: This time, this time I'd have to say so, yes.

>> Peter Robinson: Got it. Got it.

>> Christopher Hitchens: It's, it's just rather, it's phrased in a rather spirited way too.

>> Peter Robinson: The proof that [unclear] can count on him for.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Ask yourself that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Imagine a Japanese victory and a German victory in 1945 and ask what Europe and Asia would look like today, [unclear] what they do look like today. And why is the, why is there a probable difference.

>> Peter Robinson: Let me tell you Neil Ferguson's second point that Ferguson makes. The principle beneficiary of the Second World War, quote, was Stalin's Soviet Union. The wartime alliance with Stalin for all its inevitability and strategic rationality, he grants that, was never the less an authentically Faustian pact. Get ready for this sentence; the victory of 1945 was a tainted victory, if indeed it was a victory at all. Close quote. What do you do with that?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Well we've discussed that already that in the short term you can make the argument that in a geopolitical sense Russia was empowered. In the long term, you can see World War II as part of an intricate [phonetic] process that lead to, not only the destruction of Japanese militarism, fascism, Nazism, but also the discrediting of the Soviet Union, and the world that we see today that's free of both Communism and Nazism. So I think, I think that's an, important to point out.

>> Peter Robinson: The victory is not tainted.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: No.

>> Peter Robinson: It is a victory that's not tainted.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: But I don't, I don't understand

>> Christopher Hitchens: Cause I, I would just, I don't disagree with it, shouldn't necessarily, but the argument that you can put against Buchanan or Ferguson.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Is that there's always the option, and it did exist, was real, if standing out of Fascism a lot earlier than we did. A lot, a lot of the catastrophic consequences are the result of postponing the resistance until 1940. Instead of drawing a line with, with or with out the League of Nations and appealing for American help in no, no later I would say than 1936 in Spain. Or, or maybe better opposing on the [unclear] genocide and aggression in what was then called advaciniary [phonetic] therica [phonetic]. Now all these chances are missed, but, but because of the beast.

>> Peter Robinson: What is the year

>> Christopher Hitchens: Cause the beast of Fascism is

>> Peter Robinson: [unclear] moving speech to the League of Nations, what year was that?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Gosh, I really ought to know, I think it's 1934.

>> Peter Robinson: 34, so that's during the Spanish Civil War. So it's the early 30's.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes.

>> Peter Robinson: First half of the 30's.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yeah.

>> Peter Robinson: Is your argument.

>> Christopher Hitchens: And because the, the beast is insatiable, it doesn't recognize any of these things as concessions, it just thinks of them as signs of weakness.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Two other things that are, remember, I don't see quite the argument that Soviet Union comes off so well. This is a country that lost 20 million dead in World War II and is, is very weakened severely. And a lot of the problems it shows in the 50's, and 60's, and 70's, and the Cold War was a direct result of the damage that was inflicted in World War II. So it's not, and I'm, I know that was by Germany, but nevertheless the idea that it, it just was markiavellian [phonetic] and figured out this war how to be on the right side, and how to use the allies. And it comes out in 1945 when this wonderful, there were, you know, millions of Russians who didn't believe in Communism. They were wonderful people that went out and fought the Vermark [phonetic] and saved Mother Russia. Not the Soviet Union, that's not what they were fighting for. The second thing is this notion of post fractal utopianism, in which we sit here in the, in the most wealthy affluent age of civilization and we go back to our ancestor, who really in a direct lineal process gave us everything that we have. And we say, you know what? They weren't perfect, and therefore they weren't good.

>> Peter Robinson: Pat Buchanan, his book, The Unnecessary War, and The War in Iraq, this is from Pat, of, of, Buchanan's introduction in which he's discussing the reasons for writing the book. Quote there, there's a longish quotation, but I'll just put it on the table and let you have it. There has arisen among America's elite a Churchill cult. After 911 the Churchill Cult helped to persuade an untutored president that the liberation of Iraq from Saddam would be like the liberation of Europe from Hitler. Democracy would put down roots in the Middle East as it had in Europe after the fall of Hitler. And George W. Bush would enter history as the Churchill of his generation. This Churchill Cult gave us our present calamity. If not exposed it will produce more wars and more disasters. Close quote. Christopher?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yeah, well there used to be a slogan in the 1930's, a slogan of the left and the popular front, actually said, fascism means war. And a good slogan, I

think, because it, it meant both that fascism intends war, desires it, but also it, it necessarily involves it. It means it. It is equivalent to it. You can't have one without the other. In other words, you can't have peace with it. I think the same can be said of the Saddam Hussein regime in a route, which modeled itself partly on Stalin and partly on Hitler. [unclear] ideology helped itself to, to both of these. And was ceaselessly engaged in aggression against its neighbors as well as genocide against it's on inhabitants. So, the, the reason, there was no, there was no compromise possible. There was no containment. All the, all the horrors of this last war result again from having put off the confrontation with Saddam to fight Iraq. Allowed him to be in power, so enough time to invade 3 neighbors, and to attack 3 neighbors rather, and to stay in power for the best part of a quarter of a century.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: I would add that, that

>> Christopher Hitchens: So it's actually quite a good analogy. And we owe it to Buchanan for, for [unclear] it.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: The two reference, or maybe the two catalyst

>> Peter Robinson: Essential moral insight is the same. This is someone with whom we cannot abide. Saddam Hussein and [unclear].

>> Victor Davis Hanson: When you read the end of Buchanan's book and you start to see that there's a contemporary catalyst encouragement for this type of revisionist thinking of World War II, what made him write this book. It seems pretty apparent when you read it that it was the events post, not just 2001, but say 1996 and all. And because prominently is the Serbian situation, where we, in Buchanan's world view, went in a bombed a Christian white nation in the heart of Europe, for whom? Muslims [unclear] apparently. But when you look at his two examples of what we need, what we did wrong, and how we had to learn from World War II, they're very shaky. Because where, where are we now?

>> Peter Robinson: You mean Serbia being one,

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Absolutely.

>> Peter Robinson: And Iraq being the other piece?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: We stopped the genocide in the middle of the Balkans that killed over 200,000 people, or wounded them, or exiled them. And a monster named Milosevic is gone. And there's the seeds, at least, of consensual governments in that area where there were nothing but maybe a rogue fascist commy, [phonetic] whatever you want to call Milosevic and his click. And then we had Saddam

>> Christopher Hitchens: National Socialists

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Yes.

>> Christopher Hitchens: actually would be a good description.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: And then we have Saddam Hussein and with just this week the Maliki Government is discussing with us whether we should leave their country, and we will. So there's a constitutional government in the heart of the ancient Kaliefe, [phonetic] which was absolutely preposterous to even think that. And then we're supposed to believe that, that what we see today in Iraq with the Patria [phonetic] surge and the constitutional government, what we see in the Balkans is a complete folly, because we didn't learn that we should a let Hitler alone in World War II. And the alternative of having Milosevic and Saddam Hussein would be much better for the world and for us. It's preposterous.

>> Peter Robinson: We close out the program. Clare Loose [phonetic] used to say that history would give even the greatest men only a single sentence a piece. Lincoln freed the slaves. Let me give you a couple of names and ask you for one sentence in return. Christopher, Adolph Hitler.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Well, the, the greatest enemy of the German people.

>> Peter Robinson: Victor?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: He's our, the worst nightmare within the human species.

>> Peter Robinson: Joseph Stalin?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Firm, but fair. Just kidding. Just kidding. Joseph Stalin, the gravedigger of Communism.

>> Peter Robinson: Really?

>> Christopher Hitchens: Yes, the gravedigger of communism.

>> Peter Robinson: Victor?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Ah.

>> Peter Robinson: That's a separate show; we'll have to sit you down one more time.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: The co-greatest evil of the human experience in nature.

>> Peter Robinson: All right. Franklin Delanor Roosevelt?

>> Christopher Hitchens: First class temperament.

>> Peter Robinson: All right.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: For all his weaknesses and human, human pathologies, which he displayed. And numerous thing he was on score at the right person at the right time in World War II.

>> Peter Robinson: In the Second World War.

>> Victor Davis Hanson: Absolutely.

>> Peter Robinson: And Winston Churchill.

>> Christopher Hitchens: The lover of war, and wine, and brandy, and of genialindom. [phonetic] Gena [phonetic] victory and on Berlin defeat.

>> Peter Robinson: Victor?

>> Victor Davis Hanson: He usually did the good thing last after he thought, and wrote, and said all of the other bad things first.

>> Peter Robinson: He did the right thing last, I like that. Neither of you is gonna call him the greatest man of the 20th century?

>> Christopher Hitchens: That's very clever of Victor, because that's what Churchill says about the Americans, they always do the right thing after they've tried everything else.

>> Peter Robinson: ah ha. All right. All right. Victor Davis Hanson, Christopher Hitchens, thank you very much.

>> Christopher Hitchens: Thank you.

>> Peter Robinson: I'm Peter Robinson at the Hoover Institution for Uncommon Knowledge. Thanks for joining us.