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# The Round Tablette

*Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)*

25th Anniversary

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Thursday, 10 November 2011

**Welcome to the November meeting of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight is the annual Harold C. Deutsch lecture, featuring R.J.Q. Adams of Texas A&M University.

Tonight, we do not have a veteran panel. In the early years, it was Dr. Deutsch's custom to speak on a topic of his choosing at the November meeting. These lectures were always well attended due to his reputation. His knowledge on virtually any World War II topic was second to none. Many of his former students from the University of Minnesota came to this lecture. With his death, it was decided to remember him not only by naming this Round Table in his honor, but also with a lecture series.

The word appeasement conjures up such negative connotations that it is easy to forget it has been a part of the diplomatic lexicon for centuries. Throughout its history Great Britain has tried to maintain a peaceful balance of power on continental Europe, so it could pursue its empire overseas. This has sometimes meant appeasing a dissatisfied nation to maintain the peace.

Britain lost a generation of young men during the First World War and this left an incalculable psychological scar on their national psyche. Preventing another human catastrophe was paramount in the minds of the inter-war British policymakers. The British government also came to think concessions to Germany were necessary because of the perceived unfairness of the Versailles Treaty that ended the Great War. This fear of another war, a traditional policy of accommodation, and the postwar peacemaking led Britain to negotiate from a position of willing weakness.

The Paris Peace Conference that ended the Great War produced only more animosity between all the signatories. The Germans were especially unhappy with the territorial

changes, reparation agreements, and the reductions in armaments that were imposed upon them by the Allies in the Versailles Treaty. The new countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia were carved out of the German and the Austro-Hungarian empires, and the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine were returned to France.

Saddled with the entire cost of the war, Germany had to pay reparations to France, Belgium, and Britain. Since the Allied countries linked German reparations to their repayment of wartime loans from the United States, Germany had no way out of paying reparations. A precarious triangle thus developed where Germany would pay the French and British reparations, which would then pay the United States, and the United States would then loan the money to Germany. The system worked until 1929 when the US stock market crashed and sent the world into Depression. In the Treaty, the German army was reduced to a hundred thousand men, along with no air force, tanks, or submarines, and could not station troops in the Rhineland (the German area contiguous to France) ("demilitarization of the Rhineland"). Inter-war German governments tried to work within the Versailles system, until 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power. The Führer vowed to destroy the treaty one way or another.

Great Britain's mid-1937 election of Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister made appeasement the centerpiece of the Empire's foreign policy. Historians have soundly vilified Chamberlain for this, but he was part of that generation that endured the losses of the Great War. His cousin and close friend, Norman Chamberlain, was killed. He was determined to prevent future losses. In addition, he felt that Germany did have viable disagreements with the Versailles settlement and the Germans could somehow be accommodated and peace would then be maintained. Chamberlain resigned himself to German dominance in central Europe and even welcomed it as a restraint on the Soviet Union, which was seen as the real world specter of evil.

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During the inter-war years, before Neville Chamberlain came to power, the British had allowed Germany to slowly erode the Versailles Treaty and this became even more apparent after 1933. Hitler's Third Reich began rearmament in 1935, and then in 1936, troops marched into the Rhineland, and reparation payments were stopped; with each of these policies the British and French government did nothing. Chamberlain's policies were put to the test in March 1938, with the *Anschluss* of Austria, when German troops crossed the border and the small Germanic country was annexed.

Hitler then set his sights on the *Sudeten* area of Czechoslovakia where three million ethnic German's lived. Czechoslovakia had been created out of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire and contained not only ethnic Germans, but Czechs and Slovaks. The country had a defense treaty with Britain and France stating that if they were attacked the others would come to their aid. This alliance was seen as a way to keep Germany at bay, but the Prague government never expected to be stabbed in the back by its Allies.

In September, Chamberlain, Hitler, Italy's leader Mussolini, and the French leader Édouard Daladier, met in Munich to decide the Czechoslovakia's fate. Hitler threatened war if his demands were not met and the British and French would then be forced to defend their ally. At the conference it was decided that Germany would annex the *Sudeten* region of Czechoslovakia, which took away most of that country's industry, and lines of defense. The agreement was decided without the participation of the Czechoslovakian leaders, who were told that if they did not accept, they were on their own against the Third Reich.

Chamberlain returned to Great Britain promising "peace in our time," to the relief of the British nation. Even with this proclamation Britain re-doubled its rearmament program. By March 1939, Czechoslovakia would cease to exist, divided among Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Chamberlain's promise of peace collapsed in September 1939, and he was replaced as Prime Minister by Winston Churchill in May of 1940. Since the Second World War the word "appeasement" continues to be vilified by the world's leaders.

### Further Reading:

R. J. Q. Adams, *British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement, 1935- 1939* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993)

R. J. Q. Adams, *British Appeasement and the Origins of World War II* (Lexington MA, D. C. Heath, 1994).

David Faber, *Munich 1938: Appeasement and World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008)

Peter Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)

R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 1993)

Jeffrey Record, *Appeasement Reconsidered: investigating the Mythology of the 1930s* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005).

Jeffrey Record, *The Spector of Munich* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007)

Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006)

### Announcements:

**Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** -

Nov. 15, 2011 Mary Todd Lincoln

[www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - 612-724-3849

**St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** -

Nov. 28, 2011, Midwestern Slavery, Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268

**Rochester WWII History Round Table** – Nov.

14, 2011 Mayo Medics at War 507-280-9970;

[www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org](http://www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org)

**Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

**Air Show - Eden Prairie** -

<http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100  
July, 14-15, 2012

**Honor Flight** - Jerry Kyser -

[crazyjerry45@hotmail](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717

**CAF - Commemorative Air Force** -

[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org) or Bill at 952-201-8400

**Minnesota Air Guard Museum** -

[www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-252

### Round Table Schedule 2011-2012

Dec 8 The *GI Offensive in Europe*

#### 2012

Jan 12 The Battle of Leningrad

Feb 9 Code breaking and Computers

Mar 8 OPERATION PLUM 27<sup>th</sup> BG

Mar 22 Japan's Mistake: Starting the War

Apr 12 Jedburgs-Jumping Behind Enemy Lines

May 10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

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**campaigns** – or know a veteran, contact Don

Patton [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

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