
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the second October meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is Andrew Nagorski, author of the new book *Hitlerland*, about Americans living in Germany during the inter-war years. Also included in this evening's presentation will be former Minnesota Senator Rudy Boschwitz and Holocaust refugees, who will discuss the Nazi Party's rise to power and oppression during the 1930s.

One of the most difficult concepts for most people to understand is the notion of "presentism," seeing the past through the prism of the present. They fail to comprehend how the people of the inter-war era were not omniscient - they had no way to know that Adolf Hitler would lead the German people down the suicidal primrose path. Karl von Wiegand, of Hearst Publications, and assistant military attaché Truman Smith, two of the first Americans to meet Hitler regarded him as just another Bavarian politician. Even the Americans living and working in the Weimar Republic and later the Third Reich did not see the future cataclysmic destruction.

The attitude of the German people towards the Americans who came to Berlin after the first World War might have helped mislead Americans. The Germans saw Americans less as enemies, like the British or especially the French, than as the "good victors" who were almost neutral, as Andrew Nagorski asserts. In addition, both the United States and Germany were annoyed with the French. During the Paris Peace

Conference, Washington and Paris were at odds over what was to be included in the peace treaty. These differences continued as the Allies disagreed on the degree of German compliance. Prosperous Americans brought their money to the Weimar Republic, and many were sympathetic to the Germans plight immediately after the war.

During the inter-war years Germany went through a process of Americanization, in present day terms, this would be called globalization, economic interdependence and cultural exchanges. The resumption of trade and the influx of American money triggered by the completion of the 1924 Dawes Plan brought a period of prosperity. The Germans reveled in American products and went to American movies. This came to a sudden stop with the Wall Street crash of 1929, as countries began protectionist and isolationist policies.

Americanization brought many new ideas to Germany and Europe but one very old idea maintained its pernicious hold, anti-Semitism. What was new about this old idea is that Germans found out that many Americans were not all that different from them in this regard. The prosperity of the 1920's covered up the anti-Semitism, but once hard times hit and the Nazi Party rose to power nationwide boycotts of Jewish businesses and other harassment became increasingly common. In 1935, Germany passed the "Nuremberg Laws," barring marriages between Jews and non-Jews, etc. Through the latter part of the 1930's there was a move toward out-right separation of Jews and non-Jews, culminating in the November 1938 *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), where Jewish businesses and synagogues were vandalized and burned in retaliation for the assassination of a German (Nazi) Embassy official in France.

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Some Americans were alarmed by the growing brutality in Germany. George Messersmith, U.S. Consul General in Berlin from 1930 to 1934 was vehemently opposed to the Nazis and helped many Jews get the documentation they needed to get out of the country. Newspaper reporters like Chicago Daily News correspondent Edgar Mowrer reported on the growing violence of the Third Reich and eventually had to leave because of harassment and threats. American newspaper correspondents, diplomats, scholars, artists, and writers, who lived and traveled in Germany, observed the rise of Adolf Hitler first hand. At the beginning, some were impressed by the order and discipline that the Nazi Party imposed; the most perceptive were able to see the rot beneath the gilded shell. Those were the ones who sounded the alarm for the world to prepare once again for war.

Further Reading:

Andrew Nagorski, *Hitlerland* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).
 Erik Larson, *In the Garden of the Beasts* (New York: Random House, 2011).
 Theodore Hamerow, *Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2008).
 Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1996).
 Robert Beir, *Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade, 2006).
 David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: New Press, 2007).
 Erik Larson, *In the Garden of the Beasts* (New York: Random House, 2012).
 Martin Gilbert. *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - Sept. 18, 2012 Lee's Retreaded Tarheels 26th NC www.tccwrt.com - info @ tccwrt.com
St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Oct. 22, 2012 South Mountain - Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268 – rossandhaines@comcast.net
Rochester WWII History Round Table –507-280-9970; www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org
Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium April 2013, <http://www.tccwrt.com/symposium.html> or tccwrt@yahoo.com
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
Air Show - Eden Prairie - July, 13-14, 2013; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.com
Fagen Museum in Granite Falls, www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org. 320-564-6644

Round Table Schedule 2012-2013

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- 8 Nov. Interviews of Nazi Leaders
 - 13 Dec. Relief of Bastogne
 - 2013**
 - 10 Jan. Defeat in the East 1943 (Eastern Front)
 - 14 Feb. Emergence of Viet-Nam from WW2
 - 14 Mar. Military Intelligence Language School
 - 28 Mar. WW2 in the Middle East
 - 11 Apr. Hitler's Breakwater Fighting in the Baltic
 - 9 May Kampfgruppe Peiper at Malmedy

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com