Happy New Year and welcome to the January session of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. The weather outside fits well with our topic on the Eastern Front. Tonight's speaker is Professor Jonathan House, of the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He is the author of Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century (2001) and A Military History of the Cold War, 1944-1962 (2012), with co-author David Glantz, he has written a number of books, most notably When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler (1995).

Until the end of the Cold War in 1990, NATO fully expected to engage the Warsaw Pact forces. Much of this terrain was fought over by the Wehrmacht from 1941. The US Army’s leadership thought that we might learn from the mistakes the Germans made, starting in OPERATION BARBAROSSA. They brought together a number of captured German generals and had them explain why the Red Army defeated the “superior” Wehrmacht. This evening’s discussion is not so much about particular historical events as it is a discussion of how and why (purpose) history is written and its importance as a discipline.

Armed with their perceptions, experiences, and biases, but without documents, the captured Germans, who survived the war, wrote their version of victory and defeat on the Eastern Front. The American military took their writings as the gospel. These analyses were one-sided, since there was never an analysis from the Soviet perspective, and documents were lacking. Soviet archives were not open even to most Soviet historians, let alone western historians like A.J.P. Taylor or Harold C. Deutsch.

In the post-war period, the American military and the historical community let the losers write the history of the critical campaigns they had lost. (Analogously, Southerners dominated the writings on the American Civil War Historical literature for the first hundred years.) Gathering the former German officers into research teams, with Former German Chief of Staff General Franz Halder as the unofficial editor, they prepared the Department of the Army’s German

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
of movement at the operational level. That is, with superior training, equipment, and discipline, the logistics of distance, supply, and demographics could be overcome with a "blitzkrieg" (lightning war) style victory. This might be called the “German Way of War.”

What the Germans feared most was a “Stellungskrieg” - a war of position, (a static or trench style of fighting) which would turn into an attritional war, that the German nation would surely lose. The war on the Western Front in the Great War was a “Stellungskrieg.” Robert Citino points to the December 26, 1941 issue of Militar-Wochenblatt - the official newspaper of the German Army to answer the question of when the Germans began to lose (or, lost) the war. The status update was: “Der Stellungskrieg im Osten.” (static war in the east).

It is important to note that the officers who wrote these reports, histories and memoirs were the commanders on the Eastern Front in 1941, not those from 1943 or 1944, those men were either dead or in Soviet prison camps. Their views would have been even more illuminating to historians.

Are these writings of the captured German generals worthless? Have American historians been duped for years by these excuses? The answer to each of these questions is no. These works provide insight into the German mind set as they prosecuted their war. It is obvious we can no longer interrogate them; their memoirs will have to suffice. These works can no longer be the sole source of our interpretations.

As for the first generation of post-war historians, they used the sources that were available to them. As times have changed and archives were opened up to Western scholars the historical analysis has gained complexity and the study of military history was reinvigorated by the work of people like Drs. House and Glantz.

Further Readings:

Announcements:
Twin Cities Civil War Round Table -
Jan. 21, 2014 – Grant – “Fight It Out” -
www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Jan.
27, 2014 – Grant Before Vicksburg, D. Page -
715-386-1268 – rossandhaines@comcast.net
Rochester WWII History Round Table –507-
280-9970; 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 - July 19-20, 2014;
http://www.airexponn.org/ - 952-746-6100
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser -
crazyjerry45@hotmail - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force -
www.cafmn.org 651-455-6942
Minnesota Air Guard Museum -
www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org
Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644,

Round Table Schedule 2014
13 Feb. Encounters with WW2 Leaders
13 Mar. Operation COBRA and Falaise
27 Mar. World War II in China
10 Apr. Rabaul and the SW Pacific
8 May Landing on Omaha Beach
10-27 May Tour of Normandy

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See our programs on YouTube at http://youtube.com/ww2hrt