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# The Round Table

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

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**Welcome to the May meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight's speaker is Dr. Gerhard Weinberg, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of North Carolina and author of *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders*; *A World at Arms: a Global History of World War II*; *World in the Balance: Behind the Scenes of World War II*; and *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933-1939: The Road to World War II*; as well as the editor of several more, including *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*. In recognition of the 70th Anniversary of V-E Day, Dr. Weinberg will review the territorial and other aims of the eight World War II leaders.

Two hundred years into the future, historians will look back on the first half of the twentieth century and contemplate the rhetorical dichotomy; does history make the man or does man make the history. Although this conundrum can never be truly solved, when looking at the pivotal leaders of the Second World War one pauses over the brutal power they possessed and what they planned for humanity's future.

These dynamic rulers included, Germany's Adolf Hitler, Italy's Benito Mussolini, Japan's Tojo Hideki, China's Chaing Kai-Shek, the Soviet Union's Josef Stalin, Great Britain's Winston Churchill, France's Charles de Gaulle, and the United States Franklin Roosevelt. Even though

they led very different countries, there are similarities between the leaders. All were deeply affected by World War I, whether they fought in it, like Hitler, Mussolini, de Gaulle, and Churchill or were in government, like Roosevelt; and most were dissatisfied with outcome:

- Hitler refused to believe that Germany had been defeated, but was 'stabbed in the back' by the civilian leadership that was left after the Kaiser's abdication.
- Mussolini believed that Italy had been "gypped out" of its promised territories at Versailles by the Allies.
- Tojo's Japan believed the same had happened to them, not gaining enough of the spoils from the Great War.
- Churchill and de Gaulle, while on the winning side were not satisfied with the outcome of the Treaty provisions that would prevent a resurgent Germany.
- Franklin Roosevelt did not like the United States retreat from European affairs at the end of the war, but would have to wait for a change of attitude by the American people.
- Chaing and Stalin, after their ascent to power wanted to maintain their isolation to consolidate their power, but the Japanese and the Germans had other ideas.

Except for the aristocratic Churchill and the American patrician Roosevelt, the rest were from poor or middle class backgrounds. After their military service Hitler and Mussolini became leaders of fringe political parties and Mussolini was able to take power in Italy years before Hitler. Stalin consolidated his power in the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin in the

**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](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

1920s. Tojo, Chaing, and de Gaulle worked their way up through the ranks of their respective militaries. Chaing also married the sister of Sun Yat-Sen the Nationalist leader of China's Revolution and took power after Sun's death. Tojo became Prime Minister in 1941. De Gaulle became the leader of the Free French only after France's defeat by Hitler in 1940. Even though they were from different backgrounds than the others Churchill and Roosevelt knew how to reach the "common man." Churchill spent the 1920s and 30s in and out of government but came to the fore when Great Britain needed a strong leader to defend against Hitler's Third Reich. Stricken with polio during the 1920's, Roosevelt spent the rest of his life unable to walk without heavy braces on his legs, no amount of money would ever change that reality. That circumstance provided Roosevelt with an empathy for the plight of the everyday Americans.

Each man led his country through the most destructive war in history not believing they would lose but of course some did. Even the winners did not fulfill their entire vision. Churchill did live to see the end of the British Empire. De Gaulle did see the end of the French colonialism. Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo all lived long enough to see their countries defeated. Chaing lived to see not his vision of China but Mao Zedong's vision triumphant. Roosevelt died before the Axis defeat but he did not doubt that the United States would be victorious.

**Further Readings:**

Mark Stoler. *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (UNC Press, 2000).  
 George E. Crowder. *Pointblank: A strategic and National Security Decision Making Analysis of the World War II Combined Bomber Offensive* (Air War College, 1991).  
 Alan F. Wilt. *War from the Top: German and British Military Decision Making during World War II* (Indiana UP, 1990).

**Announcements:**

- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - May 19, 2015 – *Women in the Civil War* - [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - info@tccwrt.com
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - May 18, 2015 – Slave Revolts - 715-386-1268 – [rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)
- Rochester WWII History Round Table – 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/>
- Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717
- CAF - Commemorative Air Force - [www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org) 651-455-6942
- Minnesota Air Guard Museum - [www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-2523
- Friends of Ft. Snelling, [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)
- Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.
- World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>
- Airshow - Eden Prairie - 11/12 July 2015 [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org) 952-746-6100
- Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 27 May, Showalter's *Blood and Armour* - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

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**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

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**Round Table Schedule 2015-2016**

- 2015**
- 17 Sept. (3d Thurs.)** Blitzkrieg in the Pacific
  - 8 Oct. 11th Airborne
  - 22 Oct. Seals of WWII
  - 12 Nov. War Crimes Trials
  - 10 Dec. Carrier Operations in Pacific
- 2016**
- 14 Jan. German-Russians Operations
  - 11 Feb. Liberation of Concentration Camps
  - 10 Mar. Mobilization for War
  - 24 Mar. Birth of New Age of War
  - 14 Apr. Operation Dragoon/Anvil
  - 12 May Start of Cold War

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