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# The Round Tablette

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

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**Welcome to the second October session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight's speaker's Dr. Christopher Simer, a former student of Harold Deutsch and Lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, who is speaking on the political and social conditions in the 1930s which saw the Nazi rise to power and the Nazi consolidation of power before the war.

Following its defeat in World War I, Germany passed through years of economic inflation and political upheaval. Like all of the major combatants of the Great War, Germany suffered the profound shock of millions of war dead and hundreds of thousands of wounded. In addition to this Germany was forced to change from a monarchical political system to a fragile new republic saddled with the triple burdens of having lost the war, being blamed for the war, and faced with financially ruinous reparations payments.

After passing through a period of coup after counter coup a certain amount of economic stability was obtained with the 1924 Dawes Plan, but politically the country was deeply divided with a vocal and militant Communist party, the compromised Socialist party, and numerous anti-democratic parties on the right. In this tumultuous *milieu*, the Nazi party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or *NSDAP*) was just one minor party among many others. However, the relentless drive and organizational skills of Adolf Hitler and Josef Goebbels kept the party alive and active after its failure to achieve power in a failed *putsch* on 8-9 November 1923. When the U.S. stock market crash hit in 1929, ending the relative economic stability of the late 1920s, the Nazis began dramatically increasing their popularity among the German people. They increased their seats in the National Reichstag (parliament) from 12 seats in 1928, to 107 seats in 1930, and reached their peak strength in July 1932 with 230 seats and 37% of the vote. A series of short-lived coalition governments and behind the scenes political machinations led to Adolf Hitler becoming Chancellor on January 30, 1933, despite not having a majority in the Reichstag and this ascension to power was ex-

pected to be another short-lived coalition with his anti-communist partners. Not for the last time his opponents profoundly under-estimated Hitler. Taking advantage of the opportunity afforded him by the Reichstag fire on 27-28 February 1933, Hitler began a process of suppressing all political opponents and elevating the Nazi Party to supreme power within the state. Through emergency decrees of the President, Paul von Hindenburg, the constitutional rights of free speech, free press, right of assembly and other legal protections were suspended. In a few months, all other political parties were gone and the NSDAP was in command of the Reichstag. After the "Night of Long Knives" on 30 June 1934 when Hitler began the murderous purge of opponents within and outside the Nazi party, he demonstrated his contempt for the rule of law and, after the death of President Hindenburg on 2 August 1934, was in complete control of the state.

The period of Nazi rule before the war was a progressive series of steps towards absolute power. The true face of Nazism was to a large degree concealed in the beginning when the party pursued many popular initiatives intended to win support for his rule. For example, a massive public works program such as building the *Autobahn* would address the needs of the large number of unemployed Germans, which had peaked at over 30% of the work force in 1932. By 1937, unemployment was around one million, down from a high of over five million five years before.

In addition, the Nazis slowly and steadily transformed German society. "Gleichschaltung" or 'Coordination' was the process of Nazification applied to virtually all German institutions. All levels of education, the media, and all forms of cultural expression had to pass through the prism of Nazi ideology. All youth groups, save the Nazi Hitler Youth and the Society of German Maidens, were outlawed, and in time membership in the Nazi groups became mandatory. In a decade, German culture was distorted into something unrecognizable. A series of anti-Jewish laws began the isolation of Jewish-Germans from the rest of German society, culminating in the "Nuremberg Laws" of 1935, which outlawed sexual relations between Germans and Jews, and created categories of citizenship based on the percentage of "German blood" an individual had. Nation-wide violence against

**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)

Jews on *Kristallnacht* on 9 November 1938 would be a prelude to the greater horrors of the Holocaust during the war.

During the Summer Olympics, held in Berlin in 1936, the Nazi regime showcased its many accomplishments before the Depression-weakened world while carefully concealing its brutality. Rapid rearmament, the abrogation of the Versailles Treaty's military restrictions, and the expansion of the armed forces won the support of many of the German general, who came to accept, if not enthusiastically support, Hitler's rule. Exploitation of the French and British fear of another war, coupled with adroit diplomacy and sheer bluff gained Hitler a series of diplomatic victories, from the remilitarization of the Rhineland to the *Anschluss* with Austria and the annexation of the *Sudetenland*, given to Germany by France and England at the Munich Conference of 1938. These bloodless victories and territorial expansions won Hitler great popular support in Germany and undercut efforts by a military conspiracy inside the officer corps to overthrow his government.

The Western Allies only realized the failure of their policies of appeasement after his rapid annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939 that imposed the Nazi "New Order" on an unwilling, foreign people. When Hitler made his next territorial demands against Poland in August of 1939, France and Britain stood firm, and Hitler initiated World War II in Europe, with catastrophic results.

**Further Readings:**

Henry Gole and Edward M. Coffman, *Exposing the Third Reich: Colonel Truman Smith in Hitler's Germany* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2013).

Andrew Nagorski, *Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

Irmgard A. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain: Overcoming the Legacy of a Nazi Childhood* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005).

Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang I. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang I. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945* (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1984).

Erik Larson, *In the Garden of Beast* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2011)

Harold C. Deutsch, *The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1968).

**Announcements:**

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 15 Nov. 2016 – *The Forgotten George G. Meade* - [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)  
St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 28 Nov.

2016 – *Sherman's Carolinas March* - 715-386-1268 - [rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)  
Cannon Valley CWRT - 17 Nov. *CS Navy and the British* – [dnl1.peterson@gmail.com](mailto:dnl1.peterson@gmail.com)  
Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium - 8 April 2017  
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>  
World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>  
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717  
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - [www.cafm-n.org](http://www.cafm-n.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>.  
Airshow - Eden Prairie - July 2017  
[www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org) 952-746-6100  
Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 30 Nov., Hotta, *Japan 1941* - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

**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)**

**Round Table Schedule 2016-2017**

- 10 Nov Deutsch Lecture - Sentencing at Nuremberg
- 8 Dec Countdown to Pearl Harbor (75th Anniv)
- 2017**
- 12 Jan Battle of Königsberg
- 9 Feb Nazi Hunters
- 9 Mar Arsenal for War
- 23 Mar Gen. Lesley McNair
- 13 Apr Last Mission of the 93rd Bomb Group
- 11 May Corps Commanders of the Battle of the Bulge



Massed crowds at the Nazi party rally in Nuremberg. Nuremberg, Germany, 1935. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*



Jewish prisoners paraded by the SS and local police through the streets of Baden-Baden, November 10, 1938. *Yad Vashem Photo Archives 138FO8*