
The Round Tablette

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

Thursday, 10 November 2016
30:05 Volume 30 Number 5
Published by WW II History Round Table
Edited by Dr. Connie Harris
www.mn-ww2roundtable.org

Welcome to the November meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight, Greg Peterson, Founder of the Robert Jackson Institute, will discuss the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and the sentencing of surviving German senior leadership sixty years ago.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with this annual event, we offer a word of explanation. It was Dr. Deutsch's custom to speak on a topic of his choosing at the November meeting, — his knowledge on virtually any World War II topic was second to none. The lectures were always well attended due to his scholarly renown, and many of his former students from the University of Minnesota came to this lecture. With his death, we decided to remember him through both this Round Table named in his honor, but also with a yearly lecture.

Rarely do belligerents consider how the war might end. Mostly they are entirely involved in the fighting, and mostly they anticipate — as in World War I, that the loser(s) will somehow pay the winner(s) the full cost of their war expenses plus. When the termination was based in negotiations, the resulting agreement might last for some decades, as after “Napoleonic Wars” when the Congress of Vienna introduced the concept of a “European balance of power,” which did not preclude the wars of German unification under Prussia, or prevent the Franco-Prussian War. That war left the French most dissatisfied, wanting the return of Alsace and Lorraine along with a smidjeon of vengeance. The Paris Peace Conference that ended World War, a war that was to “end war,” to “make the world safe for democracy,” imposed peace terms upon the Central Powers, almost completely disarmed Germany, demanded massive “reparations payments,” and blamed Germany for starting the war. The defeated Germans were now dissatisfied and sought revenge and a return to greatness.

The end of World War II was, the Allies decided, to be different. Although the Americans, British, and French agreed that there would be no demands for reparations, the Soviets insisted and got substantial reparations payments from the Germans, mostly in kind. There would be no

general peace conference, instead the Germans surrendered unconditionally (as did the Japanese a few months later). Among the joint decisions made by the leaders of the major Allied nations (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, with a cameo appearance by Chiang Kai Shek at the Cairo Conference) was the decision to put their defeated enemies on trial for their conduct during war time — for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Stalin advocated the execution of 50 to 100,000 German officers, while Churchill suggested summarily executing (without trial) all of the Nazi leadership. Roosevelt was opposed to such bloodletting, no doubt in part for precedent it might set. Invoking our tradition of litigation, we insisted upon formal trials of the criminal German and Japanese leaders — both civilian and military. This necessitated melding together four very different legal systems to create a consensual agreement on the “laws” they broke and the penalties to be imposed. Evidence of the Nazi crimes would be presented, analyzed, and documented, so future generations would know the truth and there would be no opening for the defeated to later deny their crimes, or create a “stabbed-in-the-back” myth.

The German city of Nuremberg was chosen as the location of the trial of the German leadership for two reasons. First, the Palace of Justice was both large enough to accommodate the trial court and remarkably undamaged. Second, because it was considered the ceremonial birthplace of the Nazi Party, there was a certain justice in bringing the Nazis to the noose there.

The London Charter of the International Military Tribunal, signed by the Four Powers on 8 August 1945, established the laws and procedures for the Nuremberg Trials. The Charter defined the three categories of crimes: (Harris' *Tyranny on Trial* p. 23)

Crimes against peace — the planning, preparation, initiating, or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements, or assurances, or the participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment thereof.

War crimes — violations of the laws or customs of war, including the murder, ill-treatment, or deportation to slave labor of civilian populations of occupied territories, the murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, the killing of hostages, the plunder of public or private

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

property, and the wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages not justified by military necessity.

Crimes against humanity –the murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, or other inhumane treatment of any civilian populations before or during the war, or persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal.

A fourth category –”**a common plan or conspiracy** to commit those crimes” – war crimes and crimes against humanity and against peace – was also developed at American insistence. (“Indictment” against the defendants, para. 1.)

The “Nuremberg trials” process lasted from 1945 to 1949 and took place in several different countries and locations within German, and a separate International Military Tribunal for the Far East dealt out justice to the Japanese. The best known trial, that gained the most attention over the years, was the trial of the Major War Criminals that ran from November 1945 to October 1946. This included the surviving leaders of the Nazi Party and the German military, including Hermann Göring, Alfred Jodl, and Wilhelm Keitel. Twelve of the 22 who were tried were convicted and hung for their crimes; Göring committed suicide before his hanging.

The *Nuremberg Prozesse* or International Military Tribunal was not perfect. With the passage of years, it has been derisively called “victor’s justice” or a “lynching party.” While it might be deficient in legal basis or in justice, in 1945-46, the “Nuremberg trials” ensured that there would not be mass executions of Germans and a resulting urge for vengeance like that which followed the “Peace of Paris” in 1919, and helped the re-integration of Germany back into the community of nations.

Further Readings:

Bradley F. Smith, *The Road to Nuremberg* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1981).
 Whitney R. Harris, *Tyranny on Trial* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954).
 Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1992).
 Joseph E. Perisco, *Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table -
 15 Nov. 2016 – *The Forgotten George G. Meade* -
www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
 St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 28 Nov.
 2016 – *Sherman’s Carolinas March* - 715-386-1268 -
rossandhaines@comcast.net
 Cannon Valley CWRT - 17 Nov. *CS Navy and the British* – 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 - 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, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.
 Airshow - Eden Prairie - July 2017
www.wotn.org 952-746-6100
 Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 30 Nov., Hotta, *Japan 1941* - 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

Round Table Schedule 2016-2017

- 7 Dec Minnesota Goes to War – at *History Center*
- 8 Dec Countdown to Pearl Harbor (75th Anniv)
- 2017**
- 12 Jan Battle of Koenigsburg
- 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



Palace of Justice, Nuremberg



Chief US Counsel Justice Jackson delivers the prosecution's opening statement at the IMT, Nuremberg, Germany, November 21, 1945. NARA