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# The Round Tablette

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**Welcome to the February meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight's speaker is Andrew Nagorski, author of *Hitlerland* and *The Nazi Hunters*. He will discuss the search for Nazi criminals that evaded capture at the end of the war and those who would search the world to bring them to justice.

In May 1945, the guns fell silent ending the second European war in a generation. Among the wrecked cities, infrastructure, and monuments were the human victims of the Third Reich. Spread out across Europe, these victims were not just the "collateral damage" of the conflict; too often they were the focus of the Nazi racial ideology: Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, Slavs, and particularly the six million Jews. The Allied powers faced the daunting tasks of rebuilding Europe and caring for the people, but also of finding some justice for the millions killed. They lacked a word to describe the Nazi's racial destruction, though a Polish Refugee lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, tried in 1933 to warn the world of the Hitler's intent to exterminate an entire race and had coined the term that would come to used: "genocide."

The best-known effort to provide justice was embodied in the International Military Tribunal (IMT) held at Nuremberg, Germany, from November 1945 to October 1946. The defendants included the Third Reich's remaining major leaders, notably General Alfred Jodl, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, SS-General Ernst Kaltenbrunner, and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. Judges from Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union presided over their trials. Even though evidence of the Nazi's racial extermination was presented, the focus of the IMT was not the Holocaust – a word not used then, but "crimes against peace." This was defined in the Nuremberg charter as "the planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of wars of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing." In addition, at the time the IMT was being put to-

gether, the Allies were only beginning to realize the enormity of the Nazi crimes. The Allied forces had found the individual camps and survivors but there had not been, for lack of a better word, an accounting taken of all the camps and the numbers of victims.

Men lower in the hierarchy, men like SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann and Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss, carried out the orders given by the Görings and Kaltenbrunners to implement the Final Solution. These underlings had to be found and brought to some kind of justice in trials conducted under the IMT framework. These later trials gained less attention and many perpetrators escaped in the confusion of the post-war world. By the end of the 1940s, Allied and especially American interests had shifted with the rise of a new nemesis, the Soviet Union. The new West German state came to be seen as a bulwark against the Soviets, and to gain German cooperation they chose to let the Nazi era fade.

The "Nazi Hunters" were a small group of men and women who persevered in seeking out the Nazi vermin and bringing them to justice. Often they had lost family members in the Holocaust. Some were American lawyers like Benjamin Ferencz and William Denson, who presided over the lesser known "Dachau" trials of camp personnel. Whether working unofficially or in their official capacities, they were resolved to not let the world forget the Nazi crimes and sought to bring their prey to trial, the better to force the world to remember.

Among the more famous Hunters were the husband and wife team, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, who tracked down Klaus Barbie, "the Butcher of Lyon." Fritz Bauer, a German Jew, became a German judge and provided useful information that led to the capture of SS-Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann. The most famous Nazi Hunter was, of course, Simon Wiesenthal, who devoted his life to the cause.

Even though there were successes, like Eichmann and Barbie, there were other more controversial trials like retired Cleveland auto worker, Ukrainian, John Demjanuk, who was accused of being "Ivan the terrible," a guard at Auschwitz-Birkenau, even though his war record had him at Sobibor. The court determined that he was not "Ivan," but he was convicted of being a death camp guard.

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**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)**

Some, like “the one that got away,” Auschwitz doctor Josef Mengele, were never found. Nazi Hunters searched the world for him and learned that he had regular contact with his family, but eluded justice – he drowned in Brazil in 1979. In other cases, the perpetrators were found, their crimes revealed, but their positions precluded trail. The most infamous of these cases is that of former United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, whose record as a German army officer in the Balkans was brought up during his run for the Austrian Presidency in 1986. Waldheim did not stand trial for any crimes he might have committed during the war, and did become the Austrian President, but there was enough evidence against him to have him placed on the U.S. Watch List, which meant he could never travel to the United States again. The Waldheim incident also had the positive effect of forcing the Austrians, who continually posed as “Hitler’s first victims,” to confront their own Nazi past.

The Nazi criminals and their hunters are passing into history along with the military veterans of the Second World War. “Genocide” and “Holocaust” have become part of the world’s lexicon, and Lemkin’s efforts resulted in the United Nation’s General Assembly’s adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. The Holocaust should never be forgotten, and should serve as a warning to those who attempt to duplicate those crimes that they are never above the law.

**FURTHER READINGS:**

Andrew Nagorski, *The Nazi Hunters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016).  
 Simon Wiesenthal, *Justice Not Vengeance* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989).  
 Guy Walters, *Hunting Evil: The Nazi War Criminals Who Escaped and the Quest to Bring Them to Justice* (New York: Broadway, 2009).  
 Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler’s Men*. (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt, 2014).  
 Neal Bascomb, *Hunting Eichman*, (New York:Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt, 2009)  
 Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip*, (New York:Little Brown, 2014)  
 Michael J. Bazylar & Frank M. Tuerkeimer *Forgotten Trials of the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

**Announcements:**

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table -  
 21 Feb. 2017 – *Lincoln’s Scandalous Sec War* -  
[www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - info@tccwrt.com  
 St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 27 Feb.  
 2017 – *Swords of the Union* - 715-386-1268 -

[rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)

Cannon Valley CWRT - 16 Feb. 2017 –*Battle of Franklin* – [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/>

Minnesota Air Guard Museum - [www.mnang-museum.org](http://www.mnang-museum.org) 612-713-2523

World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Airshow - Eden Prairie - 15-16 July 2017 [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org) 952-746-6100

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 22 Feb. 2017, Nagorski, *Histlerland* - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

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

Friends of Ft. Snelling, [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

**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 2017**

- 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 Bulge



Simon Wiesenthal



Wannsee Conference Attendees. Hoffmann, Müller, Eichmann, Heydrich. ghwk.de