Happy New Year and Welcome to the January meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Once again this year we return to the Russian Front and a chilly topic, the Battle of Stalingrad. Tonight’s speaker is Jonathan House who, with David Glantz, coauthored *Stalingrad*. He will be joined by veterans from the Eastern Front.

The Second World War in Europe was won and lost on the Eastern Front. The sheer scale and intensity of the fight to the death between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union was unprecedented in the history of warfare. The most decisive battle of the Eastern Front, and thus of World War II in Europe, was the Battle of Stalingrad, which lasted from the initial German offensive in the summer of 1942 to early February, 1943.

Both Germany and the Soviet Union were exhausted by the stalemate that was the final result of the massive Barbarossa offensive which had failed, barely, to take Moscow by December 1941. Thus, both sides envisioned decisive offensive operations, once the weather allowed them, in spring and summer of 1942. Hitler, unable to attack everything all at once as he had in 1941, recognized that inadequate petroleum resources placed profound limitations on every aspect of Germany’s military operations (from reducing U-boat missions to forcing pauses during Panzer offensives). Thus, in 1942, Hitler chose not move against Moscow again (as Stalin believed he would), his forces would instead head south, into the Don River Basin, aiming to seize the Caucasus region through Grozny in Chechnya and the oil fields on the Caspian Sea.

Under Operation Blue, for the 1000 km drive into the Caucasus, Hitler divided Army Group South into two elements- Army Group South(A) under Field Marshal von Kleist would drive into the Caucasus, while Army Group South (B) consisting of the 4th Panzer Army under Hermann Hoth and the 6th Army under Friedrich Paulus would secure the flank of the Caucasus forces by crossing the Don and advancing to the Volga.

After much fighting (and some redirections by Hitler), these forces advanced towards Stalin-
Army to withdraw was a failure because Hitler refused to allow Paulus to fight his way west to be relieved. Thus, the Sixth Army was trapped 250 km from the nearest German forces. Then the Red Army began to tighten the noose it had around the 6th Army.

By January 25th the last German airfields were overrun by Soviet troops, and the Germans maintained a last ditch defense in utterly hopeless conditions. Over 90,000 Axis forces surrendered on February 2, 1943. After Stalingrad, the Germans never won another major battle. The pivot point of World War Two had been reached, and the Soviets, at enormous cost, had finally shattered the German blitzkrieg.

FURTHER READINGS:

Announcements:
Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 16 Jan. 2018 – Civil War Surgeon Maxwell & Iowa Soldiers’ Aid - www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 22 Jan. 2018 – Two Families in the Civil War - 715-386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net
Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium - 7 Apr. 2018 - info@tccwrt.com
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - eazyjerry45@hotmail - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafmn.org 651-455-6942

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 2018
8 Feb. Berlin Airlift
8 Mar. American Airpower in World War II
22 Mar. OSS Woman v. Imperial Japan

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