

---

# The Round Tablette

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

---

Thursday, 8 November 2018

32:04 Volume 32 Number 04

Published by WW II History Round Table

Written by Drs. Connie Harris and Christopher Simer

[www.mn-ww2roundtable.org](http://www.mn-ww2roundtable.org)

---

**Welcome to the November session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight is the annual Dr. Harold C. Deutsch Lecture. Our speaker is Danny Orbach, author of *The Plots Against Hitler*. He will discuss the discord amongst the Nazi leadership and their failed attempts to kill Hitler.

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. These lectures were always well attended due to his renowned scholarly reputation. His knowledge on virtually any World War II topic was second to none. Many of his former students from the University of Minnesota came to this lecture. With his death, it was decided to remember him through, not only this Round Table, but also by a lecture series named after him.

Despite its self-image as a united "People's Community," the Nazis and their Third Reich were opposed by many Germans from all walks of life. Because of the culture of fear and surveillance created by the SS and Gestapo it was very risky to publicly show resistance. The threat of imprisonment in a concentration camp or even death stifled open opposition. In spite of this some Germans still showed opposition in small ways and large. Some would not allow their children to wear the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* or *Hitlerjugend* uniforms; others would listen to foreign radio broadcasts and spread forbidden information to other Germans. More dangerously, some helped or hid Jews or opponents of the regime. Others went so far as to conspire to kill Hitler himself.

The most serious resistance and conspiracy against Hitler gradually evolved within the *Wehrmacht*. Many officers, coming from either pre-20<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic Prussian tradition or having more contemporary democratic values, were loyal to Germany and not specifically the Nazi regime. The antipathy towards Hitler took a long time to coalesce, partially hindered by the issue of honoring the personal oath of loyalty to Hitler required of each officer. During the years of Hitler's many successes, the officers who opposed Hitler felt isolated and helpless. One of

the biggest challenges for the conspirators was to win over a large enough number of officers to make a *putsch* successful. Their opportunities for doing this varied greatly over the period of Hitler's dictatorship.

Dr. Harold Deutsch identified four rounds of the military conspiracy against Hitler. The first was around the year 1938, and was due to the anger of the Officer Corps over Hitler's removals of the Minister of War Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg and Commander-in-Chief of the Army General Werner von Fritsch on spurious grounds. Combined with anxiety over the Czech crisis, several army leaders felt the Führer was leading Germany into war. Army Chief of Staff General Ludwig Beck feared another war, and made contact with foreign leaders in Great Britain and France to encourage them to stand firmly against Hitler's threat (with the possibility of a *putsch* to remove Hitler). However, appeasement led to the Munich Agreement, which undermined Beck's position altogether.

The Army's second round of conspiracy came at the beginning of the war, September 1939 to May of 1940, centered among officers of the *Abwehr*. This was German Military Intelligence service under the direction of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Colonel Hans Oster organized an extensive network of anti-Nazis in the Army and in the intelligence services. The *Abwehr* attempted to contact Britain just after the invasion of Poland. They wanted a British agreement to a negotiated peace if the Nazi government was overthrown. Oster knew he could recruit more Army officers in a plot against Hitler if they were sure a peaceful outcome would be the result. Unfortunately, the British ignored these overtures.

The third round of the conspiracy developed within the Army Group Center command in Russia during 1942 and particularly after the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943. Army Group Center had a large number of anti-Nazi officers, starting with its two commanders, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock and, later, Field Marshal Günther von Kluge. Organized by the senior operations officer Lt. Col. Henning von Tresckow, several attempts were made to place a bomb near the Führer on his many trips to the Front. The failure of these efforts brought the realization that the conspirators' best chance would be found by striking Hitler closer to

---

**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)**

home. Tresckow turned to fellow conspirators in the Home Army Staff.

The final and nearly successful chapter of the conspiracy was led by Col. Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg between March and July 1944. When he became the Chief of Staff to Colonel-General Friedrich Fromm of the Home Army, Stauffenberg went to several Führer conferences prepared to detonate an explosive to kill Hitler. The conspirators needed to coordinate assassination and military action. On 20 July 1944, Stauffenberg placed an explosive-laden briefcase under the table during a conference at Hitler's Wolf's Lair headquarters in Prussia. The army forces in Berlin began implementation of *OPERATION WALKÜRE* (an Army take-over of Berlin). Unfortunately, Hitler was only slightly injured and *OPERATION WALKÜRE* was a failure. Stauffenberg was shot by a firing squad later that same day and his co-conspirators paid dearly over the next several months.

One of the weaknesses of the officer's conspiracy against Hitler was their failure to agree on their goals: did they want a democracy or a monarchy; would they retain the territory gained thus far in a successful war? Another weakness was the absence of any support by the Allies. The Allied war aim of "Unconditional Surrender" both denied support to any putsch and meant many German officers sympathetic to the conspiracy felt obliged to continue fighting as a matter of honor, and thus stayed neutral but did not report the conspirators to the Gestapo. Having no alternative to offer other than taking down the Nazi regime and begging for mercy from Josef Stalin, Winston Churchill, or Franklin Roosevelt, the conspiracy was never able to generate the necessary support. Many Germans, who did not support Hitler nonetheless fought to the death. Today in Germany the conspirators are honored as true German heroes.

#### FURTHER READINGS:

Danny Orbach, *The Plots Against Hitler* (London: Head of Zeus, 2018).

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

Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance 1933-1945*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996).

Hans Mommsen, *Alternatives to Hitler: German Resistance under the Third Reich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Freya von Moltke, *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance Against Hitler: the Search for Allies Abroad, 1938-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

See our programs on YouTube at <http://youtube.com/wv2hrt>

#### Announcements:

**Vietnam War Roundtable** - 19 Nov. 2018 - *Veterans Voices Awards* - [mnvietnam.org](http://mnvietnam.org) - [rldietrich@mnmilitary-museum.org](mailto:rldietrich@mnmilitary-museum.org)

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table -

20 Nov. 2018 – *The Last Siege: Mobile Campaign* - [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)

St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 26 Nov. 2018 – *Lincoln & Thanksgiving* - 715-386-1268 -

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

Civil War Symposium - 6 Apr. 2019 - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)  
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

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)

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

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, Air show - 20 June 2020. <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie - 13-14 July 2019 - [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org) 952-746-6100

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble - 28 Nov. 2018 - Allison, *Destined for War: Can America ...*

*Escape Thucydides's Trap?* - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

Winston Churchill Book Club: Info: [lin.hopkins@hotmail.com](mailto:lin.hopkins@hotmail.com)

Alliance Francaise, [www.afmsp.org](http://www.afmsp.org), 612-332-0436

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

**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 2018-2019

##### 2018

13 Dec. Pearl Harbor

##### 2019

10 Jan. Inside Hitler's Headquarters

14 Feb. Economics of War

14 Mar. Aerial Reconnaissance of the Reich

28 Mar. WASPs

11 Apr. General with Six Stars: J. H. C. Lee

9 May D-Day



<-Claus Graf von Stauffenberg



Dr. Harold C. Deutsch->



Stauffenberg, left, with Hitler (centre) and Wilhelm Keitel, right, at Rastenburg on 15 July 1944