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# The Round Tablette

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

25th Anniversary

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Thursday, 13 October 2011

**Welcome to the 13 October meeting of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Roundtable.** This is the first of our October sessions, and tonight's speaker is Lynn Nicholas, who is the author of *Cruel World* and *The Rape of Europa*. She will be joined by children and other non-combatants who survived the horrors of war in Europe.

Nicholas Stargardt stated it plainly, "In all wars, children are victims." Across the continent of Europe, war waged for six years and amid the armies, tanks, and airplanes were children who witnessed the destruction of their world. Women and children were often lost in the post-war human accounting of war, often being euphemistically categorized as "collateral damage." Numbers of the human cost of World War II range between 40 and 55 million dead, the actual tally will never be known, but it is safe to say the numbers of civilians killed was just as vast as the armies who marched across the lands.

There were so many different experiences a problem arises of how to divide the different experiences into groups. Children, who had a family member involved in the war, were forever changed

if that person became a casualty or killed. There were the children who were taken and survived the concentration camps and liberation, who needed to be fed and cleaned, to either go back to their native lands, but more than likely move to a new land. Then there were the children raised under the rule of the Third Reich, who were indoctrinated to the superiority of the German race. All children were part of the Hitler Youth. They were benignly taught that their futures lay in the success of the Fuehrer. For parents who did not agree with the Fuehrer's plans they kept their opinions to themselves lest their children overhear and pass it along to their friends, who might tell the authorities. People lived in fear of being arrested by the Gestapo for some infraction and sent to a concentration camp. In the Nazi youth groups, the *Jungvolk* and *Jungmädel*, (the equivalent of American Cub Scouts and Brownies) the young children would learn German folk songs, go hiking, and make crafts for soldiers.

When the war began to go badly for the Germans, the children from the east were forced to leave their homes. They had to make the tough choices on what to leave and what to bring with them. Parents tried to ease the burden as they did with most everything by saying that they would come back. Most adults realized though that their lives were changing forever.

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Most children faced these ordeals with resiliency, thinking of the moves as some grand adventure, even as their world descended into a chaotic abyss. A bunch of rags could be made into a doll, or a stick could be used to draw in the dirt or a gun to keep the bad guys away. There were still games to play, like tag or hide and seek, with other children.

When the war ended, millions of children were left orphaned. Children were left starving in the concentration camps with nowhere else to go. American soldiers talked of seeing children playing among the corpses after the camps were liberated. Children left homeless or who fled, were left to make their way back or roamed the streets or countryside, alone or in gangs, in search of food and a place to belong. Those with parents and some semblance of a home still faced the hardship of basic survival, food, shelter, and maintaining their health.

Wars are fought by armies but the effects resonate throughout a society. In modern wars there is no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. Buildings and artifacts of a society can be replaced but the human toll of war reduces a civilization forever.

### **Further Reading:**

Lynn Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006)

Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses to War: Children's Lives Under the Nazi's* (New York: Knopf Books, 2005)

Peter Bodo Gawendra. *The Children's War* (Dallas, TX: Brown Books Publishing Group, 2010)

Wolfgang Samuel, *The War of Our Childhood: Memories of World War II* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2002)  
 Emmy E. Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents: Children Witness World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001)

### **Announcements:**

**Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** -

Oct, 18, 2011 Atlanta Part 2 [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - 612-724-3849

**St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** -

Nov. 28, 2011, Midwestern Slavery, Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268

**Rochester WWII History Round Table** - 507-280-9970; [www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org](http://www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org)

**Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

**Air Show - Eden Prairie** - <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100 July, 14-15, 2012

**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) or Bill at 952-201-8400

**Minnesota Air Guard Museum** -

[www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-252

### **Round Table Schedule 2011-2012**

Oct 13 Children Caught in the Brutality of War

Oct 27 The Resistance Against the Nazis

Nov 10 Bitter Appeasement — Munich

Dec 8 *The GI Offensive in Europe*

### **2012**

Jan 12 The Battle of Leningrad

Feb 9 Code breaking and Computers

Mar 8 OPERATION PLUM 27<sup>th</sup> BG

Mar 22 Japan's Mistake: Starting the War

Apr 12 Jedburgs-Jumping Behind Enemy Lines

May 10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

**If you are a veteran of one of these**

**campaigns** – or know a veteran, contact Don

Patton [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

*This is our 25<sup>th</sup> Year!*

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