The German Army was generally unprepared for protracted warfare - logistics were a nightmare on the Eastern Front and lack of coordinated strategic planning (due to Hitler’s mercenary goal setting) would prove a fatal handicap. Failure to capitalize on the deeply rooted hatred of the murderous Communist regime felt by many of the Soviet peoples would only serve to weaken Germany. The Nazis were among the cruelest conquerors in history. This compelled most people under their control to resent (at the very least) or actively work against German occupation. This also provided Stalin with the valuable propaganda role as defender and liberator (in contrast to his pre-war role as overseer of the Great Terror).

The self-inflected errors that Nazi war fighting and occupation policies suffered from reached an apotheosis with Hitler’s hubristic declaration of war against the United States in December 1941. Despite Franklin Roosevelt’s clear pro-British stance, and flagrant violation of the Neutrality Acts, Germany exercised significant restraint in its U-Boat operations against shipping to the UK. By 1941, the U-Boats were more aggressive and fostered a swelling anti-Nazi sentiment in the United States. Nevertheless, Roosevelt would have had a hard time persuading the American public, outraged at Japan’s perfidy at Pearl Harbor, that fighting Germany should be America’s first priority. Hitler’s declaration of war rendered the question moot. Furthermore, British – American strategic cooperation, while rocky, worked far more effectively than the German High Command at structuring a coherent strategic posture and while the two democracies’ relationship with the Communist dictatorship could scarcely be described as cordial it nonetheless began to take shape in the last days of 1941.

On the one hand, it simplifies analysis to blame Hitler personally for the German errors of 1941. On the other hand, the gaps in German strategic capacity, such as poor strategic intelligence, inept economic policies, lack of a strategic bombing ability, underdeveloped logistic support, and overemphasis on purely offensive tactical operations can be attributed to the failures of the General Staff. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to blame Hitler for the Nazi mentality which permeated all aspects of German behavior. Had the Germans exploited
the anti-Soviet feeling of the conquered peoples, they would have found a huge manpower reserve begging to fight. To do so, however, would have meant ceasing to be Nazis. The nightmare of the Holocaust and the deliberate enslavement of the Slavs not only were horribly immoral and criminal policies - they created a wave of hatred that prevented Germany from stabilizing her empire.

Hitler created such an atmosphere of fear that only a very few non-Germans had any interest in being part of the Greater Reich and they mostly set aside for the duration their social, cultural, and political antagonisms to end tyranny of the Third Reich. Even Churchill (the British imperialist) Roosevelt (the American millionaire) and Stalin (the Communist mass-murderer) could and did find ways to work together to smash the National Socialist regime to oblivion.

To many Germans and others in Europe, the Third Reich in 1941, having unleashed unprecedented violence and destruction, was all powerful and undefeated. The contemporary view was bleak. From our vantage point, however, we can see that the decision to invade Russia, the sheer brutality of Nazi occupation of the East, and the declaration of war against the United States (all decisions made in 1941 and the products of Nazi certainty in their own supremacy), ultimately proved fatal to the Third Reich. It also fostered the unity of the Allied powers, if only towards one objective: To drive a stake in the heart of National Socialism and destroy it forever.

**FURTHER READINGS:**


**Announcements:**

Vietnam War Roundtable - TBD - rldietrich@mnmilitary-museum.org

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 17 Nov. 2020 - Gen. Grant at the Battle of Belmont - www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com

St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - TBD - 715-386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble - TBD - sdauberock52@gmail.com

Civil War Symposium -TBD - info@tccwrt.com


Minnesota Air Guard Museum - 612-713-2523 - www.mnangmuseum.org

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall Bloomington, Wednesdays at 1130 - https://www.8thmnn.org.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - www.fortsselling.org


Winston Churchill Book Club - lin.hopkins@hotmail.com

Alliance Francaise - 612-332-0436 - www.afmnp.org

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 - stpfrtwjerry45@hotmail.com

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 - www.cafmn.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

Round Table Schedule 2020-2021

10 Nov Deutsch Lecture on Walter Bedell Smith

8 Dec Origins of the Great Pacific War 2021

19 Jan Aerial Intelligence in Europe’s Air War

9 Feb Struggle for Middle East Oil and War

9 Mar Nazi Art

23 Mar Nazi Scientists in the US Space Program

13 Apr The Tragedy of Poland: Nazis; Soviets

11 May The “Mighty Eighth” and Victory in Europe

The Round Table is a 501c.3 non-profit. We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2RT!