
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the Second March session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is historian Pamela D. Toler, author of *The Dragon from Chicago: The Untold Story of an American Reporter in Nazi Germany*. We will hear about Sigrid Schultz, who served as the *Chicago Tribune's* Berlin bureau chief and primary foreign correspondent in Europe from 1925 to January 1941. Sigrid Schultz was one of the first reporters—male or female—to warn American readers of the growing threat of the Nazi regime in Germany.

In the 1920s, American newspapers began hiring their own foreign correspondents instead of relying on wire services. As threats of another war grew, staff were increased to cover the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany and other global conflicts. Established magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* expanded their coverage in competition with new publications such as *TIME*, *LIFE*, and *LOOK*. Correspondents on contract reported from foreign capitals. When radio became widely available in American households, broadcast journalists joined the print reporters overseas.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler showed a strong appreciation for propaganda as a tool for control. He appointed Joseph Goebbels, a member of the Nazi Party since 1924, as Reich Minister of Propaganda on 13 March 1933. Goebbels had built a media image of Hitler as a strong, stable leader. Now, he used media, speeches, and film to ensure unwavering public devotion to Hitler, ensuring that populace believed their survival depended on the regime's success.

Anti-Nazi newspapers were forced to close or were taken over by the Nazi Party. Daily directives were given to newspapers, instructing them what to report on, how to report it, and what to ignore. Only “Aryan” journalists registered with the Nazi party could work, allowing the state to purge political opponents. The Storm Troopers (SA) and Gestapo harassed, arrested, and sent journalists to concentration camps for any hint of dissent. The regime introduced the cheap, mass-produced *Volksempfänger* (People's Receiver) radio, which was designed for the masses to receive Nazi-approved broadcasts. Strong efforts, including book burning

(notably in May 1933) and public destruction of literature, were made to eradicate opposing, “un-German,” or Jewish viewpoints.

While they were not initially subject to the same draconian restrictions as German journalists, American reporters faced increasing levels of intimidation, surveillance, and censorship as they reported on the rise of the regime. Phone lines were tapped, mail was opened, and they were under watch. Reporters were reluctant to quote witnesses by name for fear of betraying them to the Gestapo. Attacks on reporters increased, particularly in the early years of 1933-1934 when American citizens were sometimes beaten for not saluting Nazi processions. Requests to visit concentration camps were often denied or restricted. Several journalists were expelled for unfavorable reporting as the decade progressed. Many practiced self-censorship to remain in Nazi Germany.

Regardless of how much the Nazi government tried to hide it, some American journalists did write about what was actually going on. Edgar Ansel Mowrer of the *Chicago Daily News* covered Hitler's rise to power with such brutal candor that in the summer of 1933, the Nazis made it clear they could no longer guarantee his safety in Berlin.

Dorothy Thompson's turn came the following summer. She had covered Europe off and on since 1920, served as the head of the Berlin bureau for the *New York Evening Post*, and earned a reputation for vivid reporting. She had interviewed Hitler for *Cosmopolitan Magazine* before he came to power—and had viewed him as the very prototype of the little man. She had also read *Mein Kampf* and saw Hitler's vision fast becoming a reality. When she visited Germany again in the summer of 1934, Hitler, who had never forgotten her article about him, personally ordered her out of the country within 24 hours. Thompson's expulsion made her an instant celebrity in the United States. She undertook a 30-city lecture tour warning that Hitler was an underestimated and dangerous leader.

During the *Anschluss* (the annexation of Austria) on 12 March 1938, German and foreign reporters were given advance “guidance” to follow. The German press was directed to publish on front pages a fake telegram from Austrian leaders asking for German troops to prevent disorder. During the invasion of Czechoslovakia similar tactics were used. Stories were handed to the editors with headlines including “Blood, Death, and Suffering of the Sudeten Germans.”

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

Following the start of war in 1939, a free press long gone, the media rarely acknowledged that a single plane had been shot down or a single life lost. In the summer of 1940, British bombers began attacking Berlin, the very heart of the Nazi regime. Berliners were stunned. They had been told the city's air defenses were impregnable. No one had been prepared for sounds of shrilling sirens and bombs exploding. Germans were starting to question the future of Germany.

CBS Correspondent William Shirer was in Berlin from 1937 to 1940 and accompanied Nazi forces into Austria. Over time, his access and his ability to independently report events was severely reduced. His broadcasts and scripts were monitored and officials demanded the inclusion of propaganda. By late 1940, the Gestapo considered him a threat and was building an espionage case against him, which carried the death penalty. Shirer left and managed to smuggle his diaries out of Germany, which later formed the basis for his famous *Berlin Diary*, published in 1941.

In Berlin, everything changed when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. With Germany's 11 December 1941 declaration of war on the U.S., American reporters were immediately placed under house arrest by the Nazi regime. Around 115 American journalists and civilians were then interned for nearly five months at a hotel in Bad Nauheim, near Frankfurt, before being exchanged for German diplomats in May 1942.

FURTHER READINGS:

Pamela D. Toler, *The Dragon from Chicago: The Untold Story of an American Reporter in Nazi Germany* (Beacon Press, 2024).

Ian Kershaw. *Hitler: A Biography*. (W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

Erik Larson. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*. (Crown, 2011).

Judith Mackrell. *The Correspondents: Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II*. (Doubleday, 2021).

Frank McDonough. *The Hitler Years: Triumph, 1933–1939*. St. Martin's Press (Macmillan, 2021).

William L. Shirer. *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934–1941*, (Knopf, 1941).

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 19 May 2026–
Post-war Ordeals of Veterans– Civil War Symposium –
25 April 2026 – *The Cavalry* – www.tccwrt.com – e-mail: info@tccwrt.com

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345. 320-616-6050.

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>.

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall
Bloomington, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 1100.

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - www.fortsnelling.org

Alliance Française 612-332-0436 - www.afmsp.org

Friends of the National WW II Memorial –

<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org.US>

Pittsburg Veterans Breakfast Club

- <http://www.vbcphg.org>.

Western Naval Historical Association – info@wnha.net

WWII Discussion Forum – www.wwiidf.org

History Happy Hour - Sundays, 3 pm -

www.historyhappyhour.com

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

www.cafmn.org

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -

jkyser45@gmail.com

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 2026

14 Apr. Doolittle Raid – Plane No. 8

28 Apr. Mil. Intell. Japanese Lang. School

12 May Eisenhower's Leadership

The Round Table is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2HRT.



Sigrid Schultz

Schultz as a war correspondent.



Ambassador Dodd, Schultz, Propaganda Minister Goebbels



William Shirer (left) reporting from Compiègne on Armistice of 1940.



Dorothy Thompson in 1937