



HAROLD DEUTSCH – LEADING WORLD WAR II HISTORIAN, WAS A CHARTER MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

Harold Deutsch, a longtime history professor at the University of Minnesota and a leading member of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Committee on Foreign Relations, blazed a legendary trail in foreign affairs.

Students competed for seats in his European history classes at the University of Minnesota, which sometimes drew crowds of more than 500. From 1929 to 1972, he never missed a class due to weather or illness. Deutsch crisscrossed Germany during a 1935-36 sabbatical, studying changes in local government under the Nazis and cultivating German military officers and politicians who had participated in World War I. He returned to Germany in 1938 to interview many of these former leaders. In 1942-43, he served on the Board of Economic Warfare and, in the later stages of World War II, led a staff of 50 specialists assigned to monitor economic conditions in Europe. After the war, he interviewed many of Germany's World War II leaders accused of war crimes at Nuremberg for the State Department's Special Interrogation Mission. Two of his later books, *The Conspiracy Against Hitler in the Twilight War* and *Hitler and His Generals: the Hidden Crisis, January-June 1938*, became defining studies about the opposition to Hitler within the German military. In an ongoing salute to his heritage, the popular Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table, led by CFR board member Don Patton, has brought scores of experts to the Twin Cities since 1987 to speak about geo-military aspects of the war.

Deutsch was one of CFR's charter members in 1941-42. He remained on the roster for 30 years, serving on its Executive Committee during much of that time, and renewed his membership several years before he died. In 1960, Deutsch hired Theofanis Stavrou, then completing his doctorate in history at Indiana University, to join the History Department at the University of Minnesota. "Harold Deutsch got me involved in the Committee," said Stavrou, who has been a member since the 1960s. "He told me that as a young scholar, that was the best thing I could do. There is no other organization I joined that I have enjoyed as much."

Deutsch was born in Milwaukee in 1904. He earned undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, a second master's from Harvard University and his doctorate from Harvard in 1929. Before the war, he studied at the Universities of Paris, Vienna and Berlin. Initially, he specialized in French history. In a 1971 article, he called himself as an "athletic nut," explaining that when he was in town, he had attended every Gopher home football game since 1929.

Tireless interviewer

That article described his often unorthodox and always intense research methods. "In Europe this past summer, he drove a rented car over 4,000 miles in three and a half weeks, interviewing more than 30 people," the story noted. "Travelling at night to make better time, he often jumped over 300 miles between interviews, and slept at the roadside when he got tired. He began one 350-mile trip at 11 p.m. and arrived at 9 a.m. for his interview. On less hectic, longer trips, Mrs. Deutsch accompanies her husband and helps in innumerable ways, such as driving while he types or works over his notes, and helping to sort out interviews. Deutsch is a strong believer in 'oral history' and feels



that the thousand or more interviews that he has conducted over the last 35 years have given him as much as the study of books and documents."

In Deutsch's own oral history, taped in 1983 and now part of his extensive archives at the University's Andersen Library, he recalled his 1930s interviews of Germany's World War I leaders. "...Whenever I got closely acquainted with people...they would say, 'There's old ambassador so and so. He lives in the next block. He's a good friend of mine. I'll introduce you.' I found these people so eager to talk. This was especially true in Germany in the 1930s, where there had been a clean sweep of everybody -- military, civilian, diplomatic, whatever they were. All of the old leadership had been swept out, so they just decided to be reminded how important they had once been. I went over for four months and talked to almost 100 figures."

Deutsch gained a high profile in the Twin Cities in 1940-43, when his thrice weekly WCCO reports on the war followed the news commentaries of widely read columnist Cedric Adams.

Key Advisor in Europe

He left Minnesota in 1944 to serve as research and analysis chief for the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, in London and Paris. That work, and his deep knowledge of Germany's politics and military structure, prepared him for his role at Nuremberg.

Deutsch did not shy away from divisive issues. In the mid-1950s, he joined two other University figures -- political scientist Charles McLaughlin, who was also a CFR member then, and historian Barbara Stuhler, who later became a member -- to create the Minnesota Committee Against the Bricker Amendment. Sen. John Bricker, the Ohio politician who had been Republican presidential candidate Thomas Dewey's running mate in 1944, led the campaign for the amendment, which would have significantly curbed the treaty-making powers of the White House. President Eisenhower staunchly opposed the proposal. In Minnesota, Deutsch chaired the Committee, which organized strong opposition from prominent business executives and other internationally oriented leaders. A large majority of the U.S. Senate backed the amendment, but to win approval, it needed yes votes from two-thirds of senators voting. Minnesota Sen. Edward Thye was among the amendment's backers, but as the vote neared Thye decided to vote no. The amendment lost by one vote, 60 to 31. "It was the letters and telegrams that we were able to pour onto his desk" that led Thye to change his vote, Deutsch told University Professor Clarke Chambers in a 1983 oral interview.

Deutsch addressed the Committee on Foreign Relations on at least two occasions. In 1965, he filled in as a last-minute substitute for a speaker who had to cancel. His talk, termed "brilliant" by CFR Secretary Robert W. Smith, was titled "Democracy and Dictatorship: the U.S. and Germany in World War II." In 1969, Deutsch joined University economist Frank Boddy and E.W. Ziebarth, dean of the school's College of Liberal Arts, on a panelists to discuss the USSR in the wake of new crises.

Deutsch chaired the History Department from 1960 to 1966. His popular course on World War II was among the first college courses to be offered on television, in the early 1960s. In 1974, Frederick Winterbotham, a British intelligence officer during World War II, wrote a book revealing for the first time the existence of ULTRA -- the successful operation developed by the British in 1940 to break the codes that German military leaders were using to communicate with one another. The book had a profound impact on Deutsch, whose beliefs until then about Hitler and the German military had been shaped largely by his own knowledge, insights and experiences during the war. In the twilight of his life, he came to realize that much of the history of the war would need to be rewritten as more information about the extent and impact of code-breaking came to be declassified. After he retired from the University, he became a faculty member at the National War College for a year and then joined the faculty at the U.S. Army War College. He returned to the Twin Cities in 1985. Among his



other works, he co-edited, with Dennis E. Showalter, *If the Allies Had Fallen: Sixty Alternative Scenarios of World War II*.

Harold Deutsch died in 1995.

