



A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II

By Maury Klein

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The colossal scale of World War II required a mobilization effort greater than anything attempted in all of the world's history. The United States had to fight a war across two oceans and three continents-and to do so it had to build and equip a military that was all but nonexistent before the war began. Never in the nation's history did it have to create, outfit, transport, and supply huge armies, navies, and air forces on so many distant and disparate fronts.

The Axis powers might have fielded better trained soldiers, better weapons, better tanks and aircraft. But they could not match American productivity. America buried its enemies in aircraft, ships, tanks, and guns; in this sense, American industry, and American workers, won World War II. The scale of effort was titanic, and the result historic. Not only did it determine the outcome of the war, but it transformed the American economy and society. Maury Klein's *A Call to Arms* is the definitive narrative history of this epic struggle, told by one of America's greatest historians of business and economics, and renders the transformation of America with a depth and vividness never available before.

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Editorial Review

Review

“‘We must be the great arsenal of democracy,’ declared Franklin Roosevelt in December 1940. In the five wartime years that followed, his countrymen stocked that arsenal with astounding quantities of the instruments of war – even while expanding the civilian sector of the economy as well. For all the valor of its warriors on land, sea, and air, in the last analysis it was the stupefying productivity of America's behemoth economy that constituted the nation's greatest contribution to victory. Maury Klein tells the story of the World War II “production miracle” in all its complexity, contention, and drama. Meticulously researched, incisively argued, and fetchingly written, *A Call to Arms* is the authoritative account of one of America's most prodigious achievements.” ?*David M. Kennedy, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of FREEDOM FROM FEAR: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*

“For those who believe the “grand narrative” has disappeared, I strongly recommend Maury Klein's elegant and endlessly fascinating account of America's mobilization for World War II. Combining a deft understanding of the enormous forces that won the war and changed the world's direction along with a jeweler's eye for the anecdotes that bring history alive, Klein has produced the best one-volume account to date. The shrewd analysis, superb writing, and masterful storytelling sweep the reader along. History doesn't get much better than this.” ?*David M. Oshinsky, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of POLIO: An American Story and A CONSPIRACY SO IMMENSE: The World of Joe McCarthy*

“While the United States did indeed become the arsenal of democracy in World War II, it was far from a smooth or inevitable process. In this outstanding achievement of research, synthesis, and lucid writing, Maury Klein traces the fits and starts, bureaucratic infighting, and eventual unparalleled success of America's economic mobilization that outproduced all enemies combined and enabled the allies to win the war.” ?*James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Battle Cry of Freedom and Tried By War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief*

“Everyone knows that America's economic mobilization was the great force that won World War II--but there was so much more to it than that. In *A Call to Arms*, one of our greatest historians vividly captures the titanic struggle to turn a Depression-wracked country into a superpower. We see engineers accomplishing the seemingly impossible, managers cracking open production bottlenecks, the troubles and triumphs of weapon design and deployment, and squabbling politicians, businessmen, and labor leaders, all driven forward by the complicated man in the White House, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Where others have seen only numbers, Maury Klein finds a story--a hell of a story.” ?*T. J. Stiles, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*

“The story of how America became the ‘great arsenal of democracy’ is the subject of *A CALL TO ARMS*, and I can't imagine it being told more thoroughly, authoritatively or definitively. Maury Klein crowns his long career with this massive examination of one of the most important aspects of 20th-century American history and one of the least documented or understood. In every respect, “*A Call to Arms*” is a remarkable and singularly important piece of work.” ?*Washington Post, one of Jonathan Yardley's favorite books of 2013*

“[A] magisterial account. Exhaustively researched and engagingly written, this marvelous book tells an epic story. It paints on a broad canvas, yet simultaneously limns detailed and fascinating miniatures of compelling

people and places. It deserves a spot on the bookshelf alongside David Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Freedom From Fear" as the definitive rendering of the World War II home front." ?*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"Maury Klein, the noted economic historian, has written a sweeping account of how America got ready for war. A CALL TO ARMS is history writ both large and small--from FDR at cocktail hour to ordinary workers on the assembly line, from portraits of cabinet chiefs to detailed discussions of industrial fabrication and the endless turf battles of New Deal agencies." ?*Wall Street Journal*

"Except for a couple of nearly unreadable official histories, there is no comprehensive retelling of the 'production Miracle' that made the United States the 'Arsenal of Democracy.' Maury Klein's A CALL TO ARMS fills that gap. Moreover, it does so in a spectacular fashion. Klein's work does the same for the story of American production that Adam Tooze (*Wages of Destruction*, 2006) did for those trying to grasp the scope of Germany's World War II economic effort...for those seeking a comprehensive understanding of World War II, A CALL TO ARMS is a must read. Moreover, considering the subject matter, this is a great read." ?*Military History Quarterly*

"[Klein's] coverage of the organization of American institutional, economic, military, and governmental might for WWII is both sobering and inspiring....reminiscent of Arthur Schlesinger's earlier, sweeping volumes on the early New Deal--uncommonly perceptive, enjoyably readable, and authoritative." ?*Publishers Weekly (starred review)*

"Thoroughly researched, objective and authoritative in tone, this is likely to be the definitive work on this topic for years to come." ?*Kirkus Reviews*

"Very well written and exhaustively researched, this masterpiece demonstrates that accomplished scholarly work can also be accessible. Highly recommended to both academics and lay readers." ?*Library Journal (starred review)*

"Klein is a writer, historian and, most enjoyably, a storyteller...The excellent, broader story [he] tells in *A Call to Arms* is about a country that fought with itself before it could fight its enemies abroad." ?*Dallas Morning News*

About the Author

Maury Klein is renowned as one of the finest historians of American business and economy. He is the author of many books, including *The Power Makers: Steam, Electricity, and the Men Who Invented Modern America*; and *Rainbow's End: The Crash of 1929*. He is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Rhode Island. He lives in Saunderstown, Rhode Island.

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