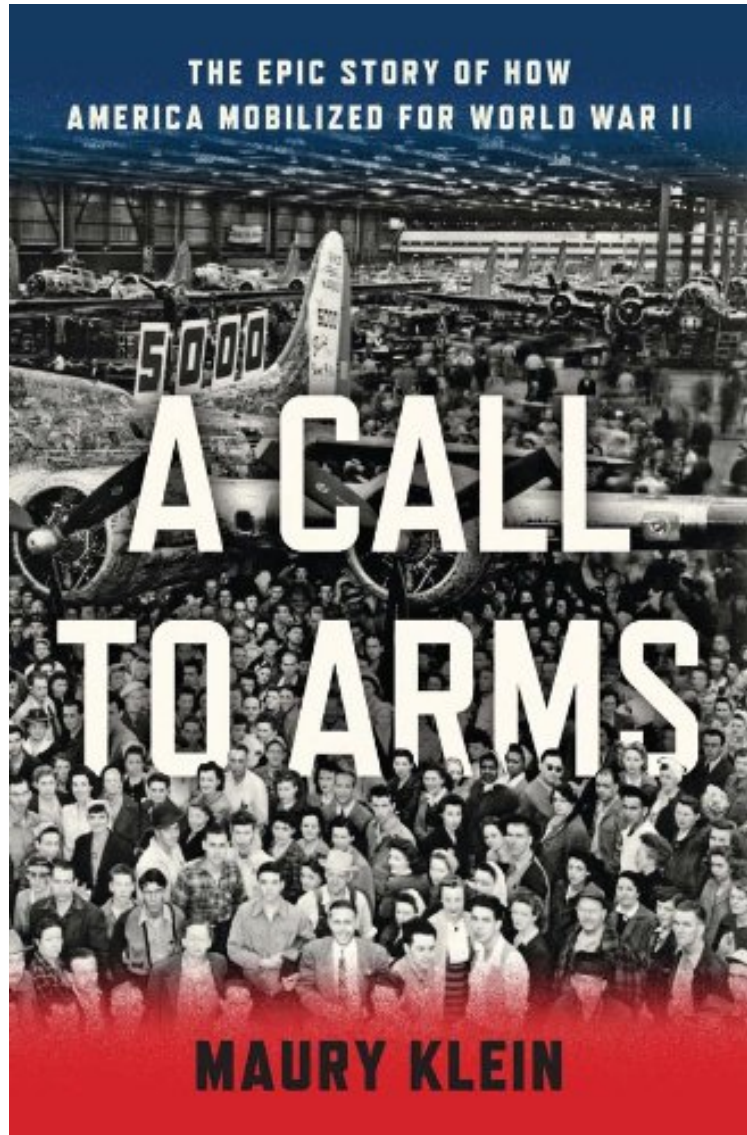


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A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II

Maury Klein

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Maury Klein : A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Monumental; iconic; epochalBy William BrennanI considered myself an advanced amateur student of World War II. What a joke; until I read this book I knew nothing about how the war was won. Sure, I knew of Rosie the riveter and her counterpart, Ralph. I even had my own victory garden but had no idea how it fit into the overall food production of the war.Did you know that developing the B-29 cost more than the Manhattan Project? Neither did I, but that's a fact that I won't soon forget now.The usual

characters are largely missing from Maury Klein's great book. They were off fighting the war while another cast provided them with the guns, ammunition, planes, radar, dehydrated potatoes, onions, tires, jigs, machine tools and a million and one other products and services that made it possible for the Eisenhowers, Pattons, Bradleys, Nimitzes, Halseys, Arnolds, MacArthurs and all the other generals and privates and seamen to Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition, so we could all stay free. I hesitate to name many heroes of the home front for fear of leaving some off the list. I knew many of the names and was happy to see them get their due and take their bow as Klein showcased them. But one name was not familiar to me, and I want to point out Donald Nelson as one who gave much and was rewarded with almost nothing when all was said and done. Most of the real heroes were supremely confident men and women; who would not let bureaucracy stand in the way of their ideas on what must be done to increase production of the goods, commodities and services essential to defeating the Axis powers. Klein also paints vignettes of how little people did their very best to support the war effort. These human interest stories bring out the best of the Greatest Generation, but he does not shrink from showing their human side in wanting their share and in exploiting black markets to satisfy their own hunger and perceived needs. Klein's description of the parallel development of the B-29 Super Fortress and the atomic bombs is riveting, and he comes down forcefully on the side of those who believe that using the bomb in combat saved tens of thousands of American lives. Above all, he gives Franklin Roosevelt credit for being the visionary leader needed to get the home front moving when isolationists fought him every step of the way to thwart these policies. Klein is unstinting in his praise for FDR for being the absolutely essential communicator to bring the concept of total war to the American people. My negatives are minuscule in comparison with the positives: the book is long and heavy and should have been issued in two volumes; the writing is well above pedestrian but does not shine as brightly as Klein's scholarship; and finally there are more than a few instances of failed copy editing. If you really want to know how America won the war, this book is essential for your education and must be held handy for ready reference; what a book.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Useful Doorstop
By Louis S. Barnes II
Mr. Klein's vignettes are occasionally interesting, but that's it. Imagine an historian doing exhaustive research, taking notes on index cards, thousands of them, then sorting the cards by year, shuffling them and calling it a book. For all of Klein's paralyzing length and trivia, not ONE chart. How many airplanes of what type in what year? Ships? Rifles? Cartridges? When did all of this weaponry enter service? Ships ordered, then launched, then in combat? As other reviewers have noted, Lynn Olsen's "Those Angry Days" does a far better and concise job of describing the politics of rearmament. War production itself has been described many times (1940-1941 "Life" magazines are more useful than this doorstep), but we'll have to wait for a good revisit.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Well researched, but at times hard to follow
By Phil Geusz
I actually feel a bit sorry for the author. Much of this work of necessity centers around a virtual alphabet soup of federal and private agencies, far too many of which were known by three-letter acronyms. This is by its nature inherently confusing, brain-numbingly so at times, and I don't know of any way the author could've presented the subject any better than he did. Yet I can't give the otherwise well-earned five stars because the result is just not all that readable over long stretches of pages due to this issue. My sympathies, Mr. Klein-- I think you chose a subject where five stars was impossible from the getgo. The author also doesn't know a lot about naval engineering or warfare. Nor has he been to visit the wonderful old USS Olympia where it still sits in Philadelphia, which he listed as scrapped. (It was another historic warship from the Spanish-American war, the USS Oregon, that was sacrificed.) That said... While less than completely excellent in terms of casual or pleasure reading, this was a very well researched work on a wide-ranging and under-covered aspect of WWII. Far too much of what's available on the Home Front is a mere paean to the achievement of seemingly impossible production goals via good old American can-do attitudes and know-how. This work lets you see behind the curtain to explore a much more plausible and human reality that encompasses the impact of numerous slackers, military miscalculators, crybaby politicians and black marketeers every bit as much as the hard-working saints we've heard so much about.

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, and better tanks and aircraft, but they could not match American productivity. The United States buried its enemies in aircraft, ships, tanks, and guns; in this sense, American industry and American workers, won World War II. The scale of the 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.

'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 —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 Saunterstown, Rhode Island.