
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the first March meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Maury Klein, author of *A Call to Arms*, and Professor Emeritus at the University of Rhode Island. He will discuss the complicated transformation of the depressed American peacetime economy into the military Goliath that supplied the Allied world to victory.

As Adolf Hitler rose to power and began to slowly gain control of the European continent, Americans looked on with horror over the events around the world. Many leaders were determined not to get involved in another European war. President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 had promised “a war to end all wars” and the American “doughboys” had valiantly fought for that cause. Now, twenty years later another war was brewing and Americans did not want to lose another generation on European soil. Many believed that the United States became involved in the Great War through the machinations of the “Merchants of Death” – munitions manufacturers bent on making fortunes selling their wares to the Europeans. To prevent this from happening again, between 1935 and 1939, the Congress passed Neutrality Acts barring the sale of arms to engaged belligerents. New laws did not stop the conflagration from becoming more pronounced and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) knew the United States would have to do something.

Rearmament for the Second World War occurred in two distinct time periods. The first was from the start of the war in Europe to the attack on Pearl Harbor. FDR could see that the United States would eventually get dragged into the war but knew he would have to ‘nudge’ the American people into seeing it his way. Europe was his focus. The Japanese were already at war with China; he admonished them and began to withdraw resources from their war machine. FDR finagled as many ways as he could to get around the “neutrality laws” imposed on him by an isolationist Congress. Such programs as “cash and carry”, where the British and French could have

all the munitions they wanted as long as they paid cash and transported the materiel on their own ships, and the “destroyer deal” where the British were given old destroyers in return for leases to their naval bases in the western hemisphere, and even “lend-lease” – the fiction that Americans were just lending the friendly European nations war materiel that they would return at war's end. FDR was desperate to aid the British and, after June 1941, the Soviet Union, to keep them fighting, even if it was to the detriment of building up America's own military strength.

After the United States entered the war, the second phase of rearmament began. The process was much more extensive because of the re-tooling of American factories from making consumer goods like cars, to making tanks. The munitions factories were dismantled after World War I and we had to begin nearly from scratch. The auto engineers had to meet with the military designers because they did not even know what a tank looked like. During these meetings the auto engineers had to take the tank apart piece by piece and then each piece had to have a mold made for production. Once this process was complete, then the assembly line and mass production could take over.

In contrast, the Germans made a better tank overall – they were and still are craftsmen, but their production system was more “boutique”. They made first class products but not as many as they were going to need for mechanized warfare. For all the historical “hoopla” about the German *Blitzkrieg*, the German army still had a huge dependency on horses. The American Sherman tanks may not have been as good as the German “Tigers” but there were so many more of them, and in an attritional war, numbers matter. (“Quantity has a quality all its own.” J. Stalin) By 1943, the mass production system was in full swing and the tide began to turn against the Axis, and not just because of the number of men in uniform.

As much as the vast amounts of materiel were being turned out, there was also social change was going on in America and a focal point of that was in Detroit, Michigan, the heart of war time production. African-Americans from the southern states moved north in search of lucrative paying jobs and a better life,

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

but along with them came the poor southern whites. The overt racial tensions that had been a part of the southern culture since the end of the American Civil War moved north. African-Americans were no longer willing to take a back seat and realized the hypocrisy of fighting Adolf Hitler's racial policies while enduring segregation at home. A. Phillip Randolph, a black labor union and civil rights leader, proposed a March on Washington in 1943 to highlight the injustices of the times, but FDR was able to placate him with the beginnings of desegregation policies in federal work places. But these small steps would be just beginning.

The effects of military logistics and domestic economic mass production have never been the center of the stories of World War II, but the symbiotic relationship between the soldiers on the battlefield and the materiel produced were a winning combination.

FURTHER READINGS:

- Maury Klein, *A Call to Arms* (New York: Bloomsburg Press, 2015).
- Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).
- David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Arthur Herman, *Freedoms Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2012).
- A.J. Baime *The Arsenal of Democracy* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).
- Paul A.C. Koistinen *Arsenal of WWII: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1939-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

Announcements:

- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 21 Mar. 2017 – *Sanitary & Christian Commissions* - www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 27 Mar. 2017 – *Hughes of Hudsons in 4th Wisconsin* - 715-386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net
- Cannon Valley CWRT - 18 Mar. 2017 – *Oliver Winchester in CW* – dnl1.peterson@gmail.com
- Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium - 8 April 2017 - info@tccwrt.com
- Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
- Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnang-museum.org 612-713-2523
- World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighter-swwiimuseum.org>.

Airshow - Eden Prairie - 15-16 July 2017 www.wotn.org 952-746-6100

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: - Preston, *A Higher Form of Killing WWI* - 22 Mar. - sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafm-n.org 651-455-6942

Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org

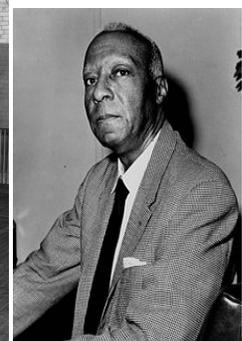
We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

Round Table Schedule 2017

23 Mar Gen. Lesley McNair

13 Apr Last Mission of the 93rd Bomb Group

11 May Corps Commanders of the Battle of Bulge



The Nashville Vultee Aircraft Bomberettes A.A.U. Champions,

A. Philip Randolph - Labor Union Leader

