

Part Five: Building Our Military

President Franklin Roosevelt: We must increase production facilities for everything needed for the Army and Navy for national defense. I believe that this nation should plan at this time a program that will provide us with 50,000 military and naval planes.

Narrator: To protect our shores, we authorized construction of a two-ocean navy, the greatest the world has ever known. At least it would be the greatest navy when completed in 1944. But then, in 1940, it was only a paper navy. Our fighting forces at that time consisted of an Army of 187,000 men; a Navy of 120,000; and this lot was the Air Corps, 22,387 strong. All told, 330,000 men. We had makeshift supplies, makeshift equipment, stove pipes for cannons, bags of flour for bombs, and trucks were labeled tanks. Our infantry had exactly 488 machine guns. We possessed 235 pieces of field artillery, 10 light and 18 medium tanks. That was the Army of the United States in May 1940, the month in which the Nazis overran France. So we called our Minutemen, the National Guards of the 48 states, and placed them into federal service. And most important, Congress passed the Selective Service Act. For the first time in our history we began mobilizing an army while still at peace.

President Franklin Roosevelt: The first number is serial number 158.

Men Singing:

This is the Army Mister Jones,
No private rooms or telephones.
You had your breakfast in bed before,
But you won't have it there anymore.

President Franklin Roosevelt: The second number which has just been drawn is 192.

Men Singing:

This is the Army Mister Green,
We like the barracks nice and clean.
You had a housemaid to clean your floor,
But she won't help you out anymore.

Do what the buglers command,
They're in the Army and not in a band.

This is the Army Mr. Brown,
You and your baby went to town.
She had you worried but this is war,
And she won't worry you anymore, more, more,
No she won't worry you anymore.

Narrator: It wasn't too soon. Time was running out. The Nazis had begun their shattering blitz on Britain.

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Edward Murrow: Hello America, this is Edward Murrow speaking from London. There were more German planes over the coast of Britain today than at any time since the war began. Anti-aircraft guns were in action along the southeast coast today.

Narrator: Back on Main Street, U.S.A., daily we followed Britain's life struggle, for if Britain died we would be in grave peril. Our first line of defense in the Atlantic, the British fleet, might go to Nazi Germany. We would be unprotected, our shores, our people, our homes in danger. Britain must not fall. In our harbors, idle and rotting, lay ancient destroyers. They had been built for World War I, but this was World War II, and this gave us an idea. Fifty tired over-age destroyers were revitalized, transferred to Great Britain.