

*Depression Children Go To War: Genesee County, New York, 1941-1945*

by

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*Introduction*

In 1944 Willard Waller wrote a book entitled *The Veteran Comes Back*. Set within the context of a world war whose final resolution – and consequences – was as of yet still undetermined, he reminded his readers that those called upon to wage the struggle against fascism were typically people who had already experienced much of the worst that life has to offer:

They were a blighted generation  
before they ever studied war. These  
present soldiers were depression  
children. They have never known  
peace.

Waller could have expanded this to include all of this generation – including many who came of age during the 1930s and did not serve in the armed forces. This raises the obvious question – how did an entire generation of young Americans experience a war of the magnitude of World War Two? Crucially for us, how did that generation in Genesee County, New York experience a conflagration that consumed the lives of approximately fifty-five million human beings? How did Willard’s “blighted generation” in Genesee County experience the trauma of World War Two?

To begin to answer that question one must explore four areas of the county during that war. The first of these revolves around the issue of what Genesee County was fighting for in the wake of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war against the United States by Germany and Italy shortly thereafter. What motivated the members of the armed forces – and just as decisively, what inspired civilians at home to support the efforts of those in uniform? A second

area in need of exploration is how Genesee County organized itself for the momentous struggle unfolding in December of 1941 – and beyond. Rationing, a shortage of labor, agricultural reorganization, and blackouts were just some of life's aspects undergoing radical changes during the war years.

A third area of life revealing dramatic changes during these years was what can be called popular culture. For example, movies and the theatres they were shown in expressed what was on the minds of people – and maybe more than anything else what was on their mind was the need to escape from reality for a short time. Jack Benny's *The Meanest Man in the World*, described by the Lafayette Theater in Batavia as "Broadway's hilarious hit roars to the screen . . . with laughter!" is typical of the craving for a break from the anxiety and worry so much a part of these years. Finally, no account of the war years in Genesee County would be complete without examining the effects of the conflict on those actually confronting the enemy directly via the experience of prisoners of war put to work in Genesee County. The gap between the wartime images of the enemy and the experience of seeing about five hundred German prisoners of war in Oakfield's Haxton Foods warehouse is one that both drove home the reality of a conflict far from the county and yet one which had arrived – images and all – in Oakfield. Humanizing the enemy both personalized the war and yet undercut the hatred necessary to sustain an effort of this scope and duration. As we shall see the introduction of foreign workers – prisoners of war and otherwise – only served to complicate the imagery attached to foreignness even more, adding immeasurably to the complicated social patterns discernible during World War Two. But maybe the finest way to recall Depression Children later to be memorialized as the "Greatest Generation" is to acknowledge the ambivalence that sometimes permeated their understanding of the war. With this in mind, we shall turn first to the motivation for fighting the Axis as it appeared locally, in Genesee County.

### *Why We Fight in Genesee County*

A cursory examination of American life during World War Two – civilian and military – seems to reveal a narrow focus on the *cause*; one devoid of any uncertainty or hesitancy. While certainly the images projected by advertisements,

the federal government, and Hollywood are those of this devotion to the cause of defeating fascism, the reality for many, day to day, was much more pragmatic – there was a job to be done, and the sooner it was completed, the better for all Americans. In other words, there was not an ideological frenzy to smash fascism. Instead, there was a far more subdued stubbornness to complete a task forced upon Americans at Pearl Harbor – which means that for many the political dimensions of the war were typically not considered. In an August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1942 article in the *LeRoy Gazette*, we see this acknowledged:

It may be possible, as is claimed by many, that the people of the United States as a whole do not yet fully realize that we are engaged in the most significant and far-reaching war of all history . . .

Accordingly, in numerous accounts of the war years in Genesee County, there is a sense that the broad goals being fought for – President Franklin Roosevelt’s *Four Freedoms* (freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom from fear, and freedom from want) – could best be attained not through the inculcation of political ideology but, instead, through the daily, steady labor necessary to win a global wide war against militant adversaries. Not surprisingly, then, an article ostensibly about the lack of ideological awareness in the summer of 1942 was actually a defense of the American approach to the fighting. Instead of fascist zealots in the midst of loud and large Party rallies there was instead a quiet determination that revealed itself both on and off the battlefield. In this 1942 article, "Two LeRoyans Realize War," there is a focus on the necessity of "organizing and operating sugar and gasoline rationing . . ." Americans were fighting to secure the *Four Freedoms* via a quiet and efficient determination that no ideological furor could long compete with. As one historian put it:

German prisoners, asked to assess their various enemies, have said that the British attacked singing, and the French attacked shouting, but that the Americans

attacked in silence. They liked better the men who attacked singing or shouting, than the grimly silent men who kept coming on stubbornly without a sound.

Servicemen and women exhibited a solemn purposefulness designed to secure the *Four Freedoms* – along with the well-being of their comrades – a perspective and attitude equally visible on the home front. Genesee County's home front was not an exception to the national pattern. Given the experience of World War One it is probably not surprising that there was such a workmanlike approach to the struggle from 1941 on. The unfettered patriotic intensity accompanying U.S. entry into World War One in April of 1917 had produced unprecedented carnage – Genesee County lost seventy-eight members of the armed forces. That experience transformed many Americans into isolationists in the 1920s, and the ravages of the Great Depression did little to weaken that sense of detachment from the rest of the world. For example, look at just one article appearing in the *Wyoming County Times* on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918, in which the death toll in just Batavia had been steadily mounting:

Word was received in Batavia on Saturday of the death of William Kenneth Bray, of this place (Batavia), who was killed in action while fighting with the United States Marines in France on June 11. Mr. Bray's death makes the third Batavia young man who has given his life for his country. The other two were Glenn S. Loomis, who was killed on June 7<sup>th</sup> and Robert S. Spencer, who was killed on June 10<sup>th</sup>, who were also Marines.

The point here is that there had been much disillusionment resulting from the experience of World War One, and that had to be overcome, even in the wake of Pearl Harbor and strong isolationist sentiment through 1941. One clear way of

overcoming this isolationist movement produced, at least in part, by the seemingly unwarranted carnage of the First World War was to fashion a purpose resting more upon a steady procession towards defending core American values – the *Four Freedoms* – rather than reliance upon such high-minded ideals as “fighting to make the world safe for democracy.” As a result, there needed to be a rational and systematic organization of resources so as to support the fighting and sacrifice of a generation of young Americans whose fathers and mothers had weathered the disappointment following the “war to end all wars.” Like the country at large, Genesee County organized itself to win a war of attrition steadily and decisively with a minimum of idealism and militancy.

### *Organizing for the Long Haul*

Writing in a March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942 article entitled “How Strong Is Our Home Front?” in *The Nation*, Donald W. Mitchell worried about the response of the public to U.S. entry into World War Two. He openly displayed his distress regarding “civilians (who) either fail to realize the significance of the struggle or are so blindly selfish as to put personal gains above the threatened loss of all that makes democratic existence worth living.” Looking back, Mitchell clearly underestimated the dedication and resolution of millions of Americans seeking to secure the *Four Freedoms* by consistently supporting the war effort. In this sense too Genesee County organized itself in a manner repeated in countless locations around the United States.

The rationing of consumer goods was one obvious way that people in the county displayed a quiet and determined patriotism that clearly debunked the anxieties of such journalists as Mitchell. Metal, rubber, gasoline, and sugar were just some of the commodities that would grow scarcer as the war dragged on. Metal was an especially vital necessity for the war effort, and in October of 1942 a “scrap drive” was initiated throughout the county. Adults and children were encouraged to undertake a search for buried scrap metal that was collected in each town and village and then sold by the county at large in order to secure the best possible price. Each town and village subsequently received the value amount for the metal they had contributed – which could then be used for any

contribution to the war effort that the locale decided upon. Advertisements such as that shown below, complete with a diagram illustrating the conversion of a metal iron into a combat helmet, appeared during the October “scrap drive” effort:

### **Your Scrap is Important**

All that rusty iron junk in your attic or cellar is useful because about half the material used in making steel is scrap. And 18 million pounds of scrap can be used in making just one battleship. Other examples: one lawnmower is equal to six 3-inch shells; one refrigerator makes 12 submachine guns; five hayrakers make one armored scout car.

While scrap metal could be collected other valuable commodities, such as gasoline, rubber, and sugar, could only be accumulated via a process of simply not making these goods readily available. Hence the introduction of rationing – which many recalling this period had much to say. Once again, the concerns of writers such as Mitchell proved to be unfounded. For example, look at some of the recollections of the following county residents. Marion L. Babcock remembered such sacrifices as voluntarily refusing the gift of a dog:

. . . I had to refuse the gift of a pedigreed Great Pyrenees dog. I loved Blanco but he had to have a pound of beef a day, his owner said.

Or the recollection of Ann M. Smith; one which suggests that there was a generally upbeat and cooperative attitude about rationing, as many saw it as a necessary component in a steady erosion of Axis power and therefore a successful defense of the American way of life:

I don't recall how long it was before rationing of scarce items began, but it was done in an orderly fashion. We were issued ration books for each member of the family and when we made our purchases a stamp for that item was taken from the book by the grocer. Some of the foods rationed were sugar, butter, meat, and coffee. As gasoline was also rationed according to the need and importance of the vehicles used, it wasn't long before sharing rides and carpooling eased the situation for those needing a ride to work. This made what gasoline they were entitled to go further.

Examples of a concerted effort to work together to win the war, while cheerfully accepting the inconveniences, abound – and they even extend to the collection of milkweed. One Genesee County newspaper account from July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944, captures this spirit. Acknowledging that children love to open milkweed pods to see the “fish” inside while gazing at the plant's fibers floating upwards in the breeze, the article also reminds the readers that these fibers are a necessary part of life jackets and the outfits worn by pilots. Accordingly,

Because the Japanese cut off the nation's kapok fiber supply from the Dutch East Indies, the armed forces are asking for every pound of milkweed floss that can possibly be collected . . .

Bags for shipping the pods will be furnished and five cents a bag for drying service and 15 cents a bag for picking will be paid. The Milkweed Pod Collection and Purchase Program is being co-operated in by 4-H Club leaders, State Experiment Station

directors and staffs, state organizations,  
and the state and county War Boards.

Even though the collection of scrap metal and milkweed – along with the voluntary cooperation with rationing – all reveal a steady determination to organize for victory – it was quite possibly the willingness to submit to blackouts that best illustrates the resolve of the population. People voluntarily closed their drapes, stopped their automobiles, and refrained from lighting cigarettes. One knew when to do such things because of sirens that would sound the alarm, as some excerpts from the Corfu Police Department's *Instructions for Air Raid Signal and Black Out* made known:

The people of Corfu and Vicinity  
are requested to read these  
instructions carefully; and when  
and if it should become necessary  
to put them into practice, to abide  
by them absolutely.

Air Raid signal will be three (3) blasts  
from the Village Fire Siren – then a  
short interval, followed by three (3)  
blasts. The ALL CLEAR signal will be  
one (1) long blast on siren.

Those reading these instructions were then told that “when you hear this warning you are to remain off the street and follow these rules” (shown below):

1. Be sure no light from your houses is visible outside. . .
2. Do not keep the telephone operator busy trying to answer your questions . . .
3. If you should be on the street in your car, immediately turn out the lights and proceed on foot if possible to the nearest place of protection. . .



Christine Minor remembered that during a blackout

All around me was silence, complete darkness,  
no sign of life. People who were in their homes  
remained there: others stopped in their tracks.

Throughout the historical sources pertaining to the blackout in Genesee County one can detect the anxiety accompanying the resolve to defend America and defeat fascism in a conflict few had hoped for. The proximity of Niagara Falls and Buffalo made Western New York a prime target for the enemy, given the presence of power operations and defense plants. But that fear was not something easily yielded to – the pervasive sense was that there was a job to do, and the sooner it was completed, the better. It was in the popular culture of Genesee County that such apprehension – and determination – was also discernible during the war years.

### *The Popular Culture of World War Two in Genesee County*

One of the striking features of the era's popular culture was the transformation of many of those in uniform into avid readers. The federal government created the Armed Services Editions book program, in which approximately 123 million copies of books with 1,300 titles were made available to armed forces personnel. Scholars still speculate about the effects this program had on people who before the war may not have been committed readers.

The program was remarkably efficient, costing an average six cents per work. While the program had its detractors, some of whom questioned what the soldier or sailor was reading, this appears to be a minority view, as many more lauded the effort as the biggest book giveaway in history – one which included many books of unquestionable literary value. Uniformed personnel were introduced to Homer's *Odyssey*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. There are accounts of servicemen waiting for food while reading *The Robe* and *Moby Dick*, or even of laying in the shade of Army Air Force airplanes reading *Huckleberry Finn*.

Genesee County played a part in this dissemination of literature. For example, three articles in 1942 alone, all appearing in the *Daily News*, capture the effort to provide books to those serving in uniform. A little more than a month after Pearl Harbor, Batavia had over five hundred works ready for service members. Several weeks later, on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1942, an article entitled “City Book Drive Passes the Quota” reported that the *Victory Book Campaign* in Batavia collected almost 2,000 volumes in a campaign only aiming for 1,700. In studies conducted after the war, it was discovered that the books eventually ended up in hospitals, ships, and foxholes.

Along with books, movies and simply enjoying a night on the town were other forms of entertainment enjoyed by those in uniform. The Lafayette Theater offered films ranging from escapist comedies featuring Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour in *They Got Me Covered* to what was most likely the most popular World War Two film for those in the service – *Casablanca*, a beautifully crafted and realistic love story presented in a realistic fashion that so many in 1943 could relate to.

But regardless of the film being shown, the cinema in Genesee County exhibited two patterns similar to movie theaters around the country. One was the scheduled show times – it was not uncommon to see theaters open twenty-four hours per day in order to accommodate evening and night shifts in defense plants. Accordingly, the Lafayette Theater advertised its show times as beginning at seven p.m. and running continuously until a new movie began, which would then initiate yet another twenty-four hour cycle.

Yet there was another aspect to the movies that also revealed much about the role played by popular culture during World War Two. In this aspect of that culture, the theater was a respite from the many worries and emotions felt during these years – for a moment, it was a dark, comforting home away from home. For instance, look at the recollections of Helen Weidner. Acknowledging that “during the war the movies were the main form of entertainment,” she recalled a visit to the theater with her mother and the latter’s interaction with a teenage sailor:

One young man . . . was oblivious to the

action on the screen. He was a sailor, no older than nineteen, who had sat down next to my mother. As soon as he sat down, his head began to droop.

She goes on:

Before long, his head was resting precariously on my mother's shoulder. My mother lifted her arm. I assumed that my very proper mother, whom many considered unapproachable, was planning to push him away.

But, Weidner added,

To my surprise she gently lifted his head and put her arm about him. Still asleep, he sighed contentedly, settling comfortably against her. The sailor had found a safe port.

As my mother said on the way home, "It was the least I could do. Who knows what waits for him . . ."

However, not all service personnel on liberty or leave were quite as peaceful as the young sailor recalled by Weidner. By the end of 1942 the issue of public disorder in the United States was being debated across the country – young men in uniform, far away from home and all of its accustomed moral boundaries, combined with a spike in juvenile delinquency to produce a pervasive concern with the erosion of civic stability. With fathers in uniform and mothers working long hours in defense plants a pattern developed – that of widespread parental neglect in which unsupervised youths joined in some cases with servicemen not much older to create disorder on a Saturday night that greatly concerned local authorities. While Genesee County did not experience the likes of the ten days of rioting that took place in Los Angeles between June 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> of that month

in 1943 in which there was a clash between servicemen and young Mexican-Americans wearing “zoot suits,” there was nonetheless enough worry to prompt a *Daily News* article on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944. In this piece readers were informed that the “Army Sends MPs to Patrol Batavia” in response to complaints emanating from residents. The article explained that military “behavior (is) not up to par.” As a result,

Military Police will patrol Batavia Streets tonight for the first time.

Colonel John M. McDowell, Commanding officer of District No. 4, Second Service Command, announced from his Buffalo headquarters that reports had been received there relative to the behavior of certain military personnel from nearby installations.

Accordingly,

Since the conduct is judged as “not up to high standards established for members of the armed service,” a patrol of MPs will visit the city to correct this condition wherever it is evident.

The threat to public order posed by servicemen feeling free to act in ways that they would not have dared to consider if they were still home was only one source of anxiety in Genesee County during World War Two. Ironically, it was a concern anchored in the very effort to win the war – the need to maintain adequate agricultural production *and* the problem of how to house the vanquished fascist enemy brought home, to Genesee County.

*Prisoners of War and Jamaicans in Genesee County*

As the war deepened the necessity of locating a steady and adequate labor supply became more crucial. As an agricultural center, Genesee County embodied the effort throughout rural America to confront the acute agricultural labor shortage evident throughout the United States. While farmers and farm laborers were the most draft deferred groups in America, the fact remains that the labor shortage in American farming amounted to about one million workers by the spring of 1942. In May of 1942 *Life* magazine reported that agricultural workers comprised twenty-three percent of the male workforce – yet made up only fifteen percent of those drafted into the armed forces. A 1943 study revealed that in 1941 farms experienced a net loss of 1.35 million in population. This was *twice* that of 1940 and *three times* that of 1939.

The scant supply of agricultural labor could not be made up by simply relying upon migratory workers. Tire and gas rationing – not to mention employment possibility in industry – made it very difficult to ease the shortage through transient labor. Despite the efforts of groups such as the YMCA to organize as many as 80,000 young people for work in the countryside throughout the United States, such numbers simply could not satisfy needs during planting and harvesting seasons. Accordingly, a more stable labor force had to be imported into rural America. About 309,000 farm workers were brought in from such areas as Mexico, the Bahamas, and Jamaica. In the case of Jamaica, a total of about 10,000 agricultural laborers were from that island republic – and about 650 of them came to Elba, to join yet another group increasingly relied upon to meet wartime demands for labor – prisoners of war from Italy and Germany. Not surprisingly, then, both Italian and German POWs were in evidence in Genesee County during World War Two. Together with Jamaicans, they radically altered the culture of Genesee County few could have foreseen before 1941.

In 1943 the War Manpower Commission, a federal agency charged with the necessity of addressing labor shortages during World War Two, turned some of its attention to Genesee County's agricultural sector. While better known for its work with women workers through its promotional campaigns via radio programs, film and newspaper advertisements – all designed to present female wartime workers as labor that was not threatening to established gender norms –

the Commission, in the case of Jamaicans – also promoted and orchestrated the necessity of foreign labor.

Therefore, in May of 1943 the Commission announced plans to bring Jamaican agricultural workers to Western New York. The following month, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, 153 Jamaicans arrived in Elba. Brought to Elba by the West Shore Railroad, they walked three miles to the Farm Labor Supply Center, just to the north of Elba. They were part of a contingent of about 3,600 Jamaicans who had received a six-month passport to the United States. They had arrived in New Orleans on ships escorted by U.S. aircraft and naval vessels. They then made their way north via rail.

These Jamaicans were part of a displaced Jamaican farm labor force; dislodged from their usual work in the sugar cane, banana, and citrus fruit enterprises. By 1943 the war had interrupted Jamaican export of such cash crops. This created a pool of surplus labor that eventually made its way to Genesee County.

The Jamaicans arriving in Elba displayed a number of characteristics. They were experienced agricultural producers, typically unmarried, male, and in their early twenties. They enjoyed such American dances as the “jitterbug,” and were also fans of American films. Some of them had been to college as well. Pursuant to an agreement between the American and British governments, these men were paid fifty cents per hour. Out of this, one dollar was sent to their families, while another dollar was paid for their board and care.

There was considerable interaction between county residents and their Jamaican guests. In fact, the Jamaicans were so accepted by the community that an additional two hundred more were requested following a meeting of the Elba Farmer’s Committee at Elba Central School. The general consensus of the eighty or so farmers at this meeting was that the Jamaicans were efficient laborers – especially with regard to onion planting and harvesting. To maintain morale that translated into that efficiency an appeal for radios to be used by the Jamaicans appeared in the *Daily News*, while books were also donated for use during leisure hours. Indeed, the Jamaicans also benefited from instruction offered by the

Batavia Rotary and the Kiwanis Club. Here they were taught about baseball and volleyball.

But the experience of interaction between Jamaican farm workers and residents of Genesee County was one not replicated by the prisoners of war brought to the county. During the war years both German and Italian prisoners of war were in evidence in the county. In both cases, the prisoners were used to compensate for the labor shortage – but unlike the Jamaicans who functioned as members of the community, Italian and German POWs remained apart from local society. In the process, they brought home the reality of the war to the Genesee County home front.

For example, the *Daily News* published an article on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1943, entitled “Prisoners in Area Enjoy Their Work.” Housed at the County Fairgrounds, they were working on farms and in canneries, to which the Army transported about one hundred ten prisoners daily:

The prisoners, Italian veterans of Fascist defeats from Ethiopia to Sicily, are working under military guard and the business end of loaded machine guns . . .

In another article, again in the *Daily News* (January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944), we see that even at this late stage of the war, subsequent to Italy’s departure from the Axis Powers, “Prisoners From Italy (who) Are Working at Oakfield For the Gypsum Firm,” find themselves “under regular Military Police guard.”

The deep and understandable suspicion directed towards Italian prisoners in Genesee County is also discernible with regard to German prisoners. Once again, even though they are utilized as labor, they hardly constitute the same kind of presence as the Jamaicans. One long-time county resident, Bill Dougherty, remembered that as a boy, “truckloads of German war prisoners would come by on the way to or from work.” Another resident recalled that

. . . in Oakfield (there were) five hundred German war prisoners housed in the

Haxton Foods warehouse. They'd been captured in the African desert and brought to this country to help supplement the civilian work force.

The resident, Carlton G. Smith, then added that:

Every night they used to march the men up Maple Avenue in Oakfield, past our house, with a jeep in front with a machine gun and a jeep behind with a machine gun, and two MPs on each side with Thompson machine guns.

Unlike the Jamaicans who were seen as free laborers, the German, along with the Italian POWs, were a unique hybrid – half worker and half prisoner. American residents of Genesee County recognized the reality of labor scarcity – yet could not help but to also see foreign military personnel who represented a threat to social order and national security. On a more primal level, it is understandable that these prisoners could be viewed as having relative ease and comfort while county residents were in harm's way abroad. Indeed, they were seen as having killed loved ones and, as a result, could never be perceived as merely workers – regardless of how personable some individual Italian and Germans may have been. World War Two brought unique complexities to Genesee County – and the Depression Children going off to war in 1941.

### *Conclusion*

It is safe to say that World War Two may in fact be the most tragic disaster in the broad sweep of human history. Approximately fifty-five million people lost their lives in this conflict. The alternative to having to fight would have been a world dominated by a murderous fascism displaying an international presence – the massive suffering associated with European fascism applied with equal savagery to the Pacific as well. Along with the tremendous loss of life there was the large-scale physical and emotional suffering of countless human beings. Those



people included many Americans, and those Americans included the people of Genesee County, New York.

Along with the loss of life and the harm done to those who survived, there was as well the enormous disruption of life at home. Like so much of human history, that disruption reveals complexities with a wide variety of consequences. In this brief presentation I have endeavored to suggest just what some of those effects were here, at home.

But it should always be borne in mind that the group having the most realistic understanding of the struggle's true cost was of course the veterans. While it is undoubtedly true that most Americans lived for the day that final victory was achieved, veterans also came to understand – uncomfortably so – that there were some who prospered as a result of the war, and, accordingly, were anxious to see a continuation of the conflict in some form. This is an aspect of the home front that angered some veterans who acknowledged it – and it contributed to a sense of alienation from the civilian population who had not suffered the devastation felt by the Germans or the British or the Polish or the Russians, to name just some of the peoples seeing the carnage firsthand. These peoples, and many others like them, were directly affected by the fighting. Maybe this is what was being conveyed in “An Open Letter” published in the *Daily News* on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Amidst advertisements and articles about the bounty available in peacetime American stores veterans were reminding the public about the gap between themselves and the civilian population; a gulf still in evidence even after the Japanese surrender:

GIs are aware that civilians will not accept induction happily now that the war is over. And they can sympathize with an unwillingness to make the harsh economic, domestic and personal readjustments that climbing into a uniform requires. They can sympathize because they have been

through it.

Therefore, the writer warns,

If the people back home are determined to create the angriest group in our nation's history, they can succeed by informing the men overseas the occupation job is theirs until it's finished. In fact, they'll be telling them they're a lost generation, that they're trapped and there's nothing they can do about it.

As this excerpt suggests, putting the pieces of our society together after the sacrifices of so many Depression Children was an effort devoid of ease. Whether or not in the long run that undertaking will be successful is one that still remains to be seen.