

COMBINED SERVICE CLUBS

December 18, 1941

Hagerstown

ON previous occasions I have had the pleasure of visiting Hagerstown in connection with events significant of the progress of your citizens and of your government. For instance, there was the laying of the cornerstone of the City Hall, at which impressive exercises were conducted by the Masonic Order. Later, the dedication of this imposing structure was held and, previously, appropriate ceremonies attending the formal opening of the airport. But on no occasion have I come on such a serious mission as that of today. It would be difficult to imagine circumstances and conditions, which present a greater challenge to representative citizens, than those under which we meet today.

War has been forced upon our Country. The treacherous assault of the Japanese brought us into the conflict. Possibly, only those living on the West Coast really expected to see the day when America and Japan would be engaged in a death struggle.

Much nearer to home, and much more likely to affect our State and the other states of the Eastern Seaboard, is the war with Germany and Italy, which has been looming upon the horizon these past two or three years. We're in war, total war, and we're in right up to our necks. Make no mistake about it, the complete cooperation of every one of the millions of Americans is going to be necessary before we bring these wars to a successful conclusion.

Over a period of months we have been busily engaged in planning for hostilities, in laying the foundation, here in the State, for the type of complete civilian defense that the experience of England has shown will be necessary in case of a hostile attack. The activities of the Maryland Council of Defense along these lines during the past 16 months have been hampered somewhat, however, because so many of our people refused to believe that war would come. All their thinking was based on a great big "IF." There was grave doubt in their minds that the plans being made would ever actually be necessary.

Under such conditions it is remarkable that we were able to make as much progress as we did, that we could arrive at such an advanced state of preparation throughout the 23 counties as had been achieved when the long-dreaded onslaught materialized at Hawaii, just eleven days ago.

When you "blackout" so successfully here last Sunday, undoubtedly many people were impressed deeply for the first time that something had occurred that was likely to disturb the routine of their lives. Many were impressed, beyond question, with the fact that other "blackouts" in the offing, will not be merely practice maneuvers but "blackout" in which the exploding bombs and screaming aircraft shells may afford totally undesired illumination.

We learned with stunned emotions of the sneaking attempt launched so devastatingly upon Hawaii by these Oriental savages, at the very moment