

optimism. We have been told again and again that the way to victory and salvation is going to be torturous, dark and fraught with danger and death. We should thank our leaders for their candor—for their open confidence in the ability of free men to know and to face the truth.

Nor have our leaders—civil or military—Roosevelt or MacArthur—ever for a moment left us in doubt as to the final outcome. Men who see this bitter picture in its entirety—in its vast world-wide immensity—know that whatever the cost, whatever the length of the struggle, it can have but one result—that of a righteous triumph over the powers of evil.

We accept that proposition, unwelcome though it is, with complete faith that the better things will be there for us at the end.

It has been said in public places—even in the Halls of Congress—that we ought to reinforce those islands and rescue our forces along with their valiant Filipino allies.

But stop and think. How long, let us ask, could the British Island of Bermuda hold out if the United States happened to fling an undeclared war against England. The situation (unthinkable, but useful for demonstration purposes) would be the exact parallel with what goes on in the Pacific. Could England, do you think, reinforce Bermuda against the entire might of the American fleet—against the swarms of airplanes and parachutists—that we could send from our adjacent shore bases? If we took less than four days to capture the island, we should rightly feel that we had done very badly indeed. Yet the battle of the Philippines has lasted over four months! It has cost Japan thousands of tons of shipping, thousands of lives in battle, the using up of uncountable stores of ammunition, and the death by suicide of a General. And still the fight goes on, every hour of every day adding to the wonder of the world that, as MacArthur said of the Bataan defense, an army can “do so much with so little.”

And for this to happen puts the responsibility squarely up to us at home. A nation's armed forces are never more than a relatively small selection from its total population. The army is the fist that strikes—the rest of us are the body behind that blow. We must give it weight. We must be sure that the fist is driven with the muscles of a trim, well-conditioned body.

I spoke recently and used the phrase “aggressive defense.” No other kind of defense is any good. Mere passive cooperation with the great war effort is useless. We must work as if each turn of our machines were pumping bullets at the foe. We must guard our skies, we must train ourselves to every service and every sacrifice that makes toward the common goal. And we must do these things aggressively, and with the same will to win that is in our fighting forces. And if we do, as I know we are doing now, why then the way may be shorter than we think—the end will come that much the sooner.