

LOYOLA COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES,

June 7, 1942

Baltimore

THESE are critical days. There are doubtful—and perilous—times ahead. To graduates about to take the fateful step from the shelter of these college walls into the confused, war-torn world of today, the outlook might seem to be a dubious one, at best. The old order has changed. Treasured civilizations, the culture of a thousand years, have gone into the discard through the mad onslaught of godless, inhuman militarists. Yes, the very future of civilization hangs in the balance.

All present might consider the emergency, through which the world is passing, as the most critical period in all history. Perhaps future historians may record it as such. It is likely, however, that those living during all the epochal periods of the past have so considered the particular emergencies which confronted them.

In 1917, for instance, the class of which your Reverend President and others were members, received their diplomas at a war-time commencement similar to this. They faced an outlook most unfavorable. Like you, they experienced mental confusion,—doubt both as to their own future and also as to the continued security of the State and Nation. Like you, they questioned in their hearts whether all the years of study within Loyola's classrooms had been spent possibly to no avail.

Today, as on that other graduation day in June 1917, uppermost in the graduate's mind and in the mind of every American, is the same thought, the same objective that gripped minds then. America was at war and all felt the inspiration, as you do today, to do everything to insure the victory that alone could perpetuate those free institutions which every American valued as dearly as life itself. If there were just reasons for such a will-to-win in 1917, how much more reason today! For in 1917 there were lacking the underlying threats to civilization, to our American way of life, to the freedom of all peoples, to religion, that is contained in the Axis fury now raging through the world.

America means so much to all its citizens, and to other millions abroad - - America with its unmatched freedoms, its opportunities - - that the possibility of an Axis victory is repugnant to our very beings. Only to look at conquered France or Poland, or brave Belgium, convices us of this. But we require no such proof. History has shown how great were the sacrifices of our forebears who made this Country possible, how justified was the toil of succeeding generations who strengthened and developed the American system, and brought it to its present eminence among the nations of the world.

Entirely fitting it is, therefore, that our men of every age are ready for the test, willing to shoulder their part for civilization's defense. Fitting, too, is