

ROTARY CLUB MEETING, LORD BALTIMORE HOTEL

October 27, 1942.

Baltimore

Three years ago ONE MAN with Napoleonic ideas challenged the rights and the humane principles upon which free nations were founded. He disparaged in speech, and threatened by act, the privileges Americans cherish—the rights our forefathers have shed blood to obtain and struggled to retain.

At first Americans were inclined to side-step his challenge on the basis that he was not treading on our toes. In our eyes, he was but one man usurping all powers unto himself and leading his people to a sanguinary downfall.

However, when the criminal cunning, he unleashed his diabolical plan in all its fullness—America halted in its snug complacency.

Last December 7th our people finally saw the Axis threat for what it was—a treacherous, brutal attempt to overthrow the freedoms upon which our American forebears had constructed one of the greatest citadels dedicated to liberty, and to replace them with the shackles of slavery and military despotism.

Then not one man, but 130,000,000 freedom-loving people, declared war. 130,000,000 pledged determination to eradicate this scourge from the earth. 130,000,000 declared their willingness to set aside their priceless privileges—their comforts—and come what may, cost what it may, to pursue the conduct of this war until this Hannibal of our modern world is exterminated. The people of America are united as never before.

More than a century ago, Jefferson wrote these simple words:

“When we reflect that the eyes of the virtuous all over the earth are turned with anxiety on us, as the only depositories of the sacred fire of liberty, and that our falling into anarchy would decide forever the destinies of mankind and seal the political heresy that man is incapable of self-government, the only contest between divided friends should be who will dare farthest into the ranks of the common enemy.”

His words ring as true in 1942 as they did then, flinging down the challenge efficient Democracy as against the tyranny that then threatened it. And the efficiency of Democracy stands or falls not only upon the triumph of our arms but also upon the willingness of our backs and shoulders to accept and discharge the unglamorous and continuing duties and obligations at home.

While our people generally may not realize it, our Nation is involved in a double conflict. Upon the outcome of either or both of the two struggles will depend the future course of life and the liberties of every man, woman and child, not only of America, but of many nations and generations to come.