

Remarks made by

Rear Admiral E.C. Kalbfus, U.S.N.,  
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at Graduation Exercises

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It seems almost unnecessary to call attention, each year, to the fact that the Chief of Staff and the Officers of the Staff of the College have performed their duties efficiently and well. They always do and, from this standpoint, comment is entirely unnecessary. But if I were to omit mention altogether, I would be deprived of the opportunity, which I have eagerly grasped on similar occasions in the past, and eagerly grasp today, of expressing to this group of officers my deep appreciation of their services, and my commendation of their efficiency.

The same applies to the civilian employees. Their duties have been performed with the same loyal efficiency as always and, as in the past, I am happy to bestow on them my commendation. They constitute a link between successive administrations which not only preserves the continuity of routine and established custom, but permits the highly desirable alternation of the officer personnel between sea and shore duty. With the approval of the Navy Department I was able, last May, to assure this faithful and indispensable group that there is no disposition to disrupt this organization even in emergency. The emergency is here and the organization remains intact. There is still no change in prospect.

To the Graduating Classes I have already privately expressed my appreciation of their application and industry,

reported for duty under instruction. During the year, therefore, service demands had taken away 19 officers, nearly half of those who started. It is pertinent to note that those who actually did finish were on the anxious bench, throughout the year, not knowing from day to day who would be the next to go. It was simply not possible to reconcile the requirements of an eleven months course with the unforeseen and unforeseeable emergency demands.

Shortening the course to five months has completely relieved this highly undesirable situation. Last July, 52 officers reported for duty under instruction. Today 51 officers are receiving their diplomas. Only one officer has been detached prior to graduation to fill a vacancy caused by sudden illness.

Although the matter is of no particular moment under present circumstances, it is historically a fact that, prior to October, 1911, the annual sessions, known as Summer Conferences, lasted only about four months. Actually, therefore, the College, for the first twenty-seven years of its existence, operated with sessions shorter than the one terminating today. An abbreviated course is really nothing new.

There is, however, another important characteristic of the schedule under which the College is now operating. For the first time in the history of the College, the

Classes have included officers of the Naval Reserve. This procedure is not only fundamentally sound but it is required in the interest of the national security. The Naval Reserve is an integral and essential part of the Navy and, as such, an indispensable feature of the national defense. Not long since, I made a public statement to the effect that the revised College schedule has proved to be an unqualified success. The fact that the reserve officers of these Classes have acquitted themselves so remarkably well, and have shown such fine grasp of fundamentals, is one of the reasons why I was able to make this statement.

I feel qualified to speak for the Naval Reserve from another angle. During the late war, I had the privilege of commanding a large ship engaged in troop transport. We made many trips back and forth across the Atlantic and met our schedule each time. There were some forty officers in the ship's complement. Of the line officers, my Executive and myself were the only regulars. In any and all wars we can rely on the Naval Reserve.

It is now more than two years since a madman began stalking through Europe. At each of the two preceding graduations we have commented, from this platform, on the seriousness of affairs abroad. Each time, it has seemed as if the worst had already happened and each time there has been more diabolical mischief afoot. Last May, although

nearly all of Europe was under the tyrant's heel, we observed, with some concern, a tendency to discount the danger to our free institutions. Among other things, we noted a strange distortion of the word "defense" which permits no action to circumvent the marauder until he reaches our doorstep. We believe that the number of those who now consider that their safety, and ours, is assured by burying the head in the sands of isolationism is reduced to a negligible few.

There is today a greater willingness on the part of the people to face the facts. They have better understanding of the fundamental truth that he who seeks to avoid trouble through inaction may find himself in worse trouble through the very fact of having failed to take action.

At this moment our Government, with the support of the entire American people, is maintaining a firm and unyielding stand in the face of an aggressor's attempts at intimidation and compromise. The nation is looking both East and West, across both the Atlantic and the Pacific, waiting to see what the next hour brings forth. It is in this hour of grave danger that the members of these two Classes, fortified in fundamentals and abreast the modern technique, go to join other graduates of this College who are to be found in all the highest command positions, afloat and ashore, which it is the province of the Navy to fill.

These officers, who are graduating today, are fortunate

in that they will receive their diplomas at the hands of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation. His charge is the personnel of the entire Navy, and all that pertains thereto, including the Naval War College. His responsibilities are manifestly tremendous, the smoothness and efficiency of his organization outstanding. Without his powerful support it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that this College would now be closed, as it was during the World War. But he has forestalled every attempt, avoided every mistaken expedient which would make of this great institution merely a peacetime hobby.

It is my privilege and pleasure to present that distinguished officer, my valued friend, my shipmate and associate for more than a third of a century, Rear Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

