

I am proud as a citizen to come to this honored institution and to have a part in the graduation exercises for the Naval Academy Class of 1963.

I am also proud for certain personal reasons to be here -- the first being, the uniform of a Naval officer which I was privileged to wear in the South Pacific in 1942; and the second being, a certain pin of a kind well known to each of you -- and to your fiances^{sweethearts} -- which is worn by my older daughter, at least most of the time.

I would not, of course, want to leave any

impression of partiality to one service. The Army Chief of Staff in the early Thirties, General Malin Craig, once told President Roosevelt, "Sir, I don't mind when you speak of the Army as 'them,' but I find it disturbing that you always refer to the Navy as 'us.'"

On this day thirty years ago, in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was the speaker here -- and he awarded the Bachelor of Science degree for the first time in the Naval Academy's history. I know each of you is proud of your new commission. I am sure you

are equally proud of your degree.

You have completed a demanding and difficult four-year course at the finest institution of its kind in the world. You go now to what is -- what must always be -- the strongest Navy on the seas.

There is no contradiction in our nation's reliance upon classroom and campus for training those to be entrusted with the leadership of our arms. On the contrary, it would be incompatible with our character as a nation if those who command our fleets and armies were not trained first in the values

of the society they defend.

The world you confront today is a complex world. Yet complex as it is, the choices of the world in this period are greatly simplified. We have -- and mankind has with us -- the choice of freedom or slavery, liberty or tyranny, alliance of subjugation, cooperation or destruction.

The basic choices are not hard. Actually, they are easy choices -- and we in America made them long ago. But the choice once made is not so

simply fulfilled. Choosing freedom and having freedom are two entirely different exercises -- and keeping freedom is the most complex and difficult of all.

A hazard of our open society is the tendency to assume that the simple choice simply made will be fulfilled by a succession of other simple choices. But this is not the case. If given your choice, I suppose some few of you might choose the life of an Admiral over the life of a Midshipman -- or even of an Ensign. That choice is simple. But with all due respect to

your past four years, the choices an Admiral must make are hardly so simple as the choice between his rank and yours.

Americans have made their choice of freedom. But there is a less than perfect understanding among us that decisions necessary to support, preserve and extend that freedom are not so simple nor are they so simply made.

In the history of our American politics, the traditional partisan appeal has been a promise to the people of a better life. Generations of political leaders

have offered to the people the hope of "a full dinner pail," "a chicken in every pot," "two cars in every garage," "a square deal," "a new deal," "a fair deal." If sometimes the words have gone sour -- to the embarrassment of the political "in's" and the delight of the political "outs" -- this cumulative promise of a better life at home is a promise fulfilled.

But in recent years, there appears to be a new climate of thought in which some chant slogans that are not merely extravagant but totally illusory -- and dangerous to our existence as a free people.

The path of responsibility is described as appeasement. High-sounding -- but low content -- phrases are put forward as spurious alternatives to national policy.

We are told that we should take "strong action" and our international troubles will evaporate. But when the advocates of this "strong action" are pressed for specifics they offer only "strong" words -- like the little boy shouting defiance at the neighborhood bully after he has gone home to supper.

We are told that we should take a "firm stand" and

the hobgoblins of international turmoil will go away. But when we ask where this "firm stand" is to be taken where it has not already been taken -- upon what ground, upon what battlefield -- it always turns out that the sloganeers mean in the pages of their favorite, slick paper magazine.

We are told that our national goal must be "victory" and that then our success will be assured. But when we ask who is against victory for our country, it always turns out that the champions of this phrase are not talking about victory for our

country but "victory" for their own, partisan clique over the current administration, whatever it may be.

It is unfortunate that these slogans, though empty, are dangerous. They are dangerous because they can serve as a substitute for hard, adult thought. And they also prepare the psychological climate for the type of irresponsibility that can mean disaster in the age of the nuclear reactor and outer space.

Sadly, it is true that there are forces, however

small, that would play the juvenile game of "chicken" with our national life and our national destiny.

We must not libel the roads that lead to peace or glamorize the roads that lead to war. We learned at a tragic price the folly of heeding orators who insisted our national strategy be permanent isolation. We would pay a higher price for heeding orators who insist our national strategy be instant intervention.

Our concept of civilian control over the military has served us well. But we must never permit partisan political passions to force irresponsibility

upon our military strategies. Every totalitarianism we have opposed in this century grew up around demagogues dictating national strategies from atop a soap-box or from the beer cellars of party halls.

You have been well grounded in studies of your own government and our political and economic institutions. You fully appreciate, as President Kennedy said from this platform two years ago, "Few of the important problems of our time have in the final analysis been solved by military power alone."

Because there has been more delay than decision

in many of our domestic realms, the political community in the United States faces today some of the most complex and difficult dilemmas and concerns of the twenty years since World War II.

In our national commitment to freedom, we have never had, we do not have now, we shall never have any goal or any objective short of victory. We know that victory lies only at the end of the road of responsibility. We have built the strength we now maintain, we have fashioned the unity which now

shields freedom, we have offered our helping hand to those who would enjoy freedom with us so that we might together make peace, rather than separately make war.

America does not strive to avoid war because we fear it -- but because we hate it. We do not strive for peace because we are weak -- but because we are strong. If I may say so, we are not patient because we as a nation lack guts -- but because we as a nation have guts.

Because we have courage, we must likewise insist always that civil government meets its domestic responsibilities without using our security commitments as an excuse for delay in overcoming insecurity in the lives of any of our people.

We have for nearly two hundred years kept this Republic. The Dynasties and Crowns and Thrones and Seats of Empire which stood when this young land was born have passed into oblivion. Our government of the people, by the people and for the people has risen

to the pinnacle of history.

Our nation has stood against the aggressors -- the mightiest aggressors of history. The line we drew fifteen years ago -- through Greece and Turkey and across Western Europe -- is a line which has remained unchanged. The enemy of freedom has been contained.

Our purpose now -- our goal now -- is more than mere containment for our adversaries. We hope, we aim, we pray and we work to achieve the ultimate breakthrough of freedom into all the world

around us and among the other worlds of space above us.

The services into which each of you enters -- and the Armed Forces into which you of our allied nations will go -- are instruments supporting the free community's determination to keep the peace and to fulfill the high promise and potential of freedom. If not in a day, if not in a year, if not in a lifetime our work is to be complete, we can still live with the confidence that our individual contributions -- in the

military or in the civil realm -- will be contributions toward peace for all the world.

You have chosen an honorable career. You leave now for an honored work. We as your elders, as your parents and as your fellow Americans, say to you, Well Done -- and Godspeed.

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Naval Academy
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