

NATIONAL COMMANDER'S BANQUET, AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND

Lord Baltimore Hotel, January 20, 1942
Baltimore

THE American Legion is charged today with the greatest responsibility during its existence. Representing as it does the experience of war, it must conduct a never-ending campaign to drive home to our people the dangers that lie ahead.

America today faces a future fraught with uncertainty. The months and years immediately ahead are to decide whether freedom and liberty are to remain as the insignia of American citizenship.

Germany is preparing now for the mightiest offensive that the world has ever seen. Let us not be fooled by the reverses suffered at the hands of the sturdy Russians. The spirit of Germany is not crushed, and the years of preparation for conquest will bring forth armaments of a gigantic scale which may definitely affect the United States. Let us expect in the spring a German offensive which will put our Country and its Allies to the crucial test. The activity of enemy submarines off the Atlantic Coast is but the forerunner of what may happen in the fighting months which will follow this winter.

And yet our people are not fully awakened to the danger. The American Legion is needed to arouse Americans to what must be done if we are to overthrow the enemies of freedom and liberty. Let our people consider the military problems that faces us. My the end of 1942, the goal will probably be 5,000,000, and by the end of next year, our Country will point toward an Army of 8,000,000 or more, the largest in our history.

From Maryland have been taken 16,000 of the flower of our young manhood since the Selective Service went into effect. But that number will be multiplied before the peak is reached in our military organization. If we are to save from destruction as many of these young men as possible, we must intensify our efforts for production and for all-out war right now.

No longer can we be content to wait for the enemy to come to us. He has come, and American lives and American possessions have been lost as a result of the vicious and cowardly attacks which have been made. It is now for us to show to the Japs, to Hitler and to Mussolini that Americans will retaliate in the only way that they understand. Direct attack and relentless warfare against the Axis powers will be America's continuing answer when the necessary armaments and supplies have been amassed.

But to amass the weapons necessary for such a frontal attack, we have set a goal which will tax the capacities of our people to the very limit. During 1941 there were 55,000,000 working people in America, but only 5,000,000 were