

Address by The Honorable Louis Johnson,  
The Assistant Secretary of War  
Commencement Exercises  
Army Industrial College  
Washington, D C  
June 23, 1938, 10 00 a.m., L S T.

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Colonel Jordan, Distinguished Guests, Members and Friends of the  
Graduating Class of the Army Industrial College

Almost a year ago you and I started out on a common venture. You, by War Department orders, and I, at the mandate of the President, and, at the direction of the Congress, set out to learn the tactics and strategy of keeping America prepared on its industrial front. That you have done your job well, I have ample evidence in your searching committee reports that have been placed before me from time to time. They have aided me immeasurably on my job and I am happy at this time to acknowledge my indebtedness to you.

As part of my work, I have considered it my duty to carry the message of industrial mobilization to the citizens of our country. I am very happy to report to you that at no previous period in our peace time history has America been more alive to the problem of supply preparedness. Under the leadership of our President and with the cooperation of the Congress, the War Department program of industrial mobilization is receiving vigorous support and substantial help. Business men, great and small, industrial leaders and college professors voluntarily have come to the War Department to offer their facilities, their energy and their brains to aid us in our work. Newspapers and radio stations, reporters, editors and commentators have given freely of their space and their time to report our problems and to interpret our needs. Today, America knows that to win a war the marshaling of munitions has become coordinate with the mobilization of men.

In this awakening of America to the significance of industrial mobilization, officers on procurement duty in the districts have proved of inestimable value. In every city where I made an address, I found that officers of the supply branches, most of them graduates of this school, had already laid the foundations in their communities for our industrial program. Those of you who have been assigned to procurement duties in the field have a tradition to support, standards to uphold and an enthusiasm for your work to maintain that your predecessors have definitely established. I am confident that you will prove faithful to your trust.

In September, you came to the Army Industrial College as quartermasters, ordnance officers and representatives of other branches of the service. You registered as representatives of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Today, you graduate as members of a great military industrial staff to serve in practically every capacity on the broad front of national defense in the realm of supply.

Staff officers, with a horizon looking beyond the limitations of their own branch, line officers, with a conception of warfare extending beyond the needs of the front lines, Navy and Marine officers, with a military outlook recognizing the needs of wholehearted teamwork by all of our services in the interests of national defense--you now return to your posts, your ships and your stations better equipped to tackle the duties that may be assigned you. Enriched in experience and strengthened in character, you have become a real asset to the national defense program of our country. Your individual branch and service will receive you hospitably. The office of The Assistant Secretary of War will welcome you warmly. Moreover, I assure you that your qualifications will be remembered and that in an emergency you will be assigned to duties where

the War Department may take full advantage of your specialized training and experience.

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You have studied principally the tactics and strategy of materiel and only incidentally the art and science of war as it pertains to men themselves. At the Command and General Staff School and at the Army War College the emphasis is reversed. There the handling of men is the basic consideration. On the one hand, you have realized that before men can fight they must have efficient weapons in their hand. Without equipment, armament and supplies, they are helpless. On the other hand, you who have devoted this year principally to the question of supply, must not lose sight of the fact that when procured and when mobilized, the sinews of battle will have to be placed in the hands of human beings. Remember, that there is no armament, no weapon, no contrivance constructed by mere men that, in the last analysis, can replace the backbone of all military effort of flesh, blood and spirit. The combined fighting qualities of men and men alone ultimately achieve victory.

In the course of your studies you have made a survey of the American economic system. You have learned of the American genius that added to its greatness, of the American character that persevered toward its development and of the American loyalty that contributed toward its preservation. I am confident that out of your studies, your faith in the capitalistic system has been reenforced and that your devotion to the ideals of American business has been strengthened.

There are weaknesses in our economic system of which you are well aware. They may check our progress in peace. They may retard victory in war. Despite these defects, I know that you will agree with me that compared with the rest of the world we are still the economic ideal toward which all other peoples instinctively strive. Our private capitalistic system is tuned to the nobler traits of human nature. In justice, in happiness, in respect for life and property, in freedom of thought, expression and religion, in all the ideals for which government is basically conducted, we in America have made a nearer approach to realization than the people of any other country.

That system of ours is worth maintaining in peace and preserving in war. I trust that all of you are now convinced that to conduct a war successfully our capitalistic system need not be scrapped to make way for new and untried forms of control typical of communistic or fascistic forms of government. In our preparation for industrial mobilization we have enjoyed the wholehearted support of both capital and labor. We have every reason to believe that these cordial relations will be continued and that our capitalistic system will prove competent to take care of our war needs without any revolutionary changes. I need hardly tell you that the nationalization of all capital in case of war is contrary to the ideals and fundamental principles of American government and to our business practice and experience. Our war plans must in no way look toward the taking over of industry by government.

Before bidding you godspeed on your new duties, I want to express my appreciation publicly to the Navy Department for its cooperation in the successful conduct of this school and in helping us to perfect our plans for industrial mobilization. Whether in the classroom, on the staff of the faculty, or back in the offices of the Navy Department, Navy and Marine officers have ever been ready to help us in all of our projects. You of the Navy and Marine Corps who are students, I know have not felt yourselves merely visiting guests. We have looked upon you as members of our own group. Out of this close association that we have enjoyed at the Army Industrial College should grow stronger bonds of friendship and understanding which should prove valuable assets to the united efforts of all of our fighting forces in time of war.

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Officers of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, all of you leave this school today better equipped to serve our country. May it never need you in battle but if ever it does, the lessons you learned here at the Army Industrial College will aid America in exerting its full power in our battle efforts, in reducing our casualties at the front and in hastening victory in the field.

Gentlemen, you have my own and the best wishes of the War Department for your happiness and continued success.

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