

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED BY RADIO
FROM THE WHITE HOUSE
Proclaiming an Unlimited National Emergency
May 27, 1941

MY FELLOW AMERICANS OF ALL THE AMERICAS; MY FRIENDS:

I am speaking tonight from the White House in the presence of the Governing Board of the Pan-American Union, the Canadian Minister, and their families. The members of this Board are the Ambassadors and Ministers of the American Republics in Washington. It is appropriate that I do this for now, as never before, the unity of the American Republics is of supreme importance to each and every one of us and to the cause of freedom throughout the world. Our future -- our future independence is bound up with the future independence of all of our sister Republics.

The pressing problems that confront us are military and naval problems. We cannot afford to approach them from the point of view of wishful thinkers or sentimentalists. What we face is cold, hard fact.

The first and fundamental fact is that what started as a European war has developed, as the Nazis always intended it should develop, into a world war for world domination.

Adolf Hitler never considered the domination of Europe as an end in itself. European conquest was but a step toward ultimate goals in all the other continents. It is unmistakably apparent to all of us that, unless the advance of Hitlerism is forcibly checked now, the Western Hemisphere will be within range of the Nazi weapons of destruction.

For our own defense we have accordingly undertaken certain (obviously) obvious necessary measures:

First, we have joined in concluding a series of agreements with all the other American Republics. This further solidified our hemisphere against the common danger. And then, a year ago, we launched, and are successfully carrying out, the largest armament production program we have ever undertaken.

We have added substantially to our splendid Navy, and we have mustered our manpower to build up a new Army which is already worthy of the highest traditions of our military service.

We instituted a policy of aid for the democracies -- the nations which have fought for the continuation of human liberties.

This policy had its origin in the first month of the war, when I urged upon the Congress repeal of the arms embargo provisions in the old Neutrality Law and in that Message of September, 1939, I said, "I should like to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass.

I cannot. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead."

In the subsequent months, the shadows (deepened) did deepen and (lengthened) lengthen. And the night spread over Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France.

In June, 1940, Britain stood alone, faced by the same machine of terror which had overwhelmed her allies. Our Government rushed arms to meet her desperate needs. In September, 1940, an agreement was completed with Great Britain for the trade of fifty destroyers for eight important off-shore bases.

And in March, 1941, this year, the Congress passed the Lend-Lease Bill and an appropriation of seven billion dollars to implement it. This law realistically provided for material aid "for the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States."

Our whole program of aid for the democracies has been based on hard-headed concern for our own security and for the kind of safe and civilized world in which we wish to live. Every dollar of material that we send helps to keep the dictators away from our own hemisphere, and every day that they are held off gives us time to build more guns and tanks and planes and ships.

We have made no pretense about our own self-interest in this aid. Great Britain understands it -- and so does Nazi Germany.

And now -- after a year -- Britain still fights gallantly, on a "far-flung battle line." We have doubled and redoubled our vast production, increasing, month by month, our material supply of the tools of war for ourselves and for Britain and for China -- and eventually for all the democracies.

The supply of these tools will not fail -- it will increase. With greatly augmented strength, the United States and the other American Republics now chart their course in the situation today.

Your Government knows what terms Hitler, if victorious, would impose. They are, indeed, the only terms on which he would accept a so-called "negotiated" peace.

And, under those terms, Germany would literally parcel out the world -- hoisting the swastika itself over vast territories and populations, and setting up puppet governments of its own choosing, wholly subject to the will and the policy of a conqueror.

To the people of the Americas, a triumphant Hitler would say, as he said after the seizure of Austria, and as he said after Munich, and as he said after the seizure of Czechoslovakia: "I am now completely satisfied. This is the last territorial readjustment I will seek." And he would of course add: "All we want is peace and friendship, and profitable trade relations with you in the New World."

(And) Were any of us in the Americas so incredibly simple and forgetful as to accept those

honeyed words, what would then happen?

Those in the New World who were seeking profits would be urging that all that the dictatorships desired was "peace." They would oppose toil and taxes for more American armament. And meanwhile, the dictatorships would be forcing the enslaved peoples of their Old World conquests into a system they are even now organizing -- to build -- to build a naval and air force intended to gain and hold and be master of the Atlantic and the Pacific as well.

They would fasten an economic strangle-hold upon our several nations. Quislings would be found to subvert the governments in our Republics; and the Nazis would back their fifth columns with invasion, it necessary.

No, I am not speculating about all this. I merely repeat what is already in the Nazi book of world conquest. They plan to treat the Latin American nations as they are now treating the Balkans. They plan then to strangle the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada.

The American laborer would have to compete with slave labor in the rest of the world. Minimum wages, maximum hours? Nonsense: Wages and hours (would be) fixed by Hitler. The dignity and power and standard of living of the American worker and farmer would be gone. Trade unions would become historic(al) relics, and collective bargaining a joke.

Farm income? What happens to all farm surpluses without any foreign trade? The American farmer would get for his products exactly what Hitler wanted to give. (He would) The farmer would face obvious disaster and complete regimentation.

Tariff walls - Chinese walls of isolation - would be futile. Freedom to trade is essential to our economic life. We do not eat all the food we (can) produce; and we do not burn all the oil we can pump; we do not use all the goods we can manufacture. It would not be an American wall to keep Nazi goods out; it would be a Nazi wall to keep us in.

The whole fabric of working life as we know it -- business and manufacturing, mining and agriculture -- all would be mangled and crippled under such a system. Yet to maintain even that crippled independence would require permanent conscription of our manpower; it would curtail the funds we could spend on education, on housing, on public works, on flood control, on health and, instead, we should be permanently pouring our resources into armaments; and, year in and year out, standing day and night watch against the destruction of our cities.

Yes, even our right Of worship would be threatened. The Nazi world does not recognize any God except Hitler; for the Nazis are as ruthless as the Communists in the denial of God. What place has religion which preaches the dignity of the human being, of the majesty of the human soul, in a world where moral standards are measured by treachery and bribery and Fifth Columnists? Will our children, too, wander off, goose-stepping in search of new gods?

We do not accept, (and) we will not permit, this Nazi "shape of things to come." It will never be forced upon us, if we act in this present crisis with the wisdom and the courage which have

distinguished our country in all the crises of the past.

Today, the Nazis have taken military possession of the greater part of Europe. In Africa they have occupied Tripoli and Libya, and they are threatening Egypt, the Suez Canal, and the Near East. But their plans do not stop there, for the Indian Ocean is the gateway to the (East) farther East . . .

To the other American nations -- twenty Republics and the Dominion Of Canada -- I say this: the United States does not merely propose these purposes, but is actively engaged today in carrying them out.

And I say to them further: you may disregard those few citizens of the United States who contend that we are disunited and cannot act.

There are some timid ones among us who say that we must preserve peace at any price -- lest we lose our liberties forever. To them I say this: never in the history of the world has a nation lost its democracy by a successful struggle to defend its democracy. We must not be defeated by the fear of the very danger which we are preparing to resist. Our freedom has shown its ability to survive war, but (it) our freedom would never survive surrender. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

There is, of course, a small group of sincere, patriotic men and women whose real passion for peace has shut their eyes to the ugly realities of international banditry and to the need to resist it at all costs. I am sure they are embarrassed by the sinister support they are receiving from the enemies of democracy in our midst -- the Bundists, (and) the Fascists, and Communists, and every group devoted to bigotry and racial and religious intolerance. It is no mere coincidence that all the arguments put forward by these enemies of democracy -- all their attempts to confuse and divide our people and to destroy public confidence in (our) Government -- all their defeatist forebodings that Britain and democracy are already beaten -- all their selfish promises that we can "do business" with Hitler -- all of these are but echoes or the words that have been poured out from the Axis bureaus of propaganda. Those same words have been used before in other countries -- to scare them, to divide them, to soften them up. Invariably, those same words have formed the advance guard of physical attack.

Your Government has the right to expect of all citizens that they take (loyal) part in the common work of our common defense -- take loyal part from this moment forward.

I have recently set up the machinery for civilian defense. It will rapidly organize, locality by locality. It will depend on the organized effort of men and women everywhere. All will have opportunities and responsibilities to fulfill.

Defense today means more than merely fighting. It means morale, civilian as well as military; it means using every available resource; it means enlarging every useful plant. It means the use of a greater American common sense in discarding rumor and distorted statement. It means recognizing, for what they are, racketeers and fifth columnists, (who are) the incendiary bombs in

this country of the moment.

All of us know that we have made very great social progress in recent years. We propose to maintain that progress and strengthen it. When the nation is threatened from without, however, as it is today, the actual production and transportation of the machinery of defense must not be interrupted by disputes between capital and capital, labor and labor or capital and labor. The future of all free enterprise -- of capital and labor alike -- is at stake.

This is no time for capital to make, or be allowed to retain, excess profits. Articles of defense must have undisputed right of way in every industrial plant in the country.

A nationwide machinery for conciliation and mediation of industrial disputes has been set up. That machinery must be used promptly -- and without stoppage of work. Collective bargaining will be retained, but the American people expect that impartial recommendations of our Government conciliation and mediation services will be followed both by capital and by labor.

The overwhelming majority of our citizens expect their Government to see that the tools of defense are built; and for the very purpose of preserving the democratic safeguards of both labor and management, this Government is determined to use all of its power to express the will of its people, and to prevent interference with the production of materials essential to our nation's security.

Today the whole world is divided, divided between human slavery and human freedom -- between pagan brutality and the Christian ideal.

We choose human freedom -- which is the Christian ideal. No one of us can waver for a moment in his courage or his faith.

We will not accept a Hitler-dominated world. And we will not accept a world, like the post-war world of the 1920's, in which the seeds of Hitlerism can again be planted and allowed to grow. We will accept only a world consecrated to freedom of speech and expression -- freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- freedom from want -- and freedom from (terrorism) terror.

Is such a world impossible of attainment?

Magna Charta, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Emancipation Proclamation and every other milestone in human progress --all were ideals which seemed impossible of attainment -- and yet they were attained. As a military force, we were weak when we established our independence, but we successfully stood off tyrants, powerful in their day, tyrants who are now lost in the dust of history.

Odds meant nothing to us then. Shall we now, with all our potential strength, hesitate to take every single measure necessary to maintain our American liberties? Our people and our

Government will not hesitate to meet that challenge.

As the President of a united and determined people, I say solemnly:

We reassert the ancient American doctrine of freedom of the seas.

We reassert the solidarity of the twenty-one American Republics and the Dominion of Canada in the preservation of the independence of the hemisphere.

We have pledged material support to the other democracies of the world -- and we will fulfill that pledge.

We in the Americas will decide for ourselves whether, and when, and where, our American interests are attacked or our security threatened.

We are placing our armed forces in strategic military position.

We will not hesitate to use our armed forces to repel attack.

We reassert our abiding faith in the vitality of our constitutional republic as a perpetual home of freedom, of tolerance, and of devotion to the word of God.

Therefore, with profound consciousness of my responsibilities to my countrymen and to my country's cause, I have tonight issued a proclamation that an unlimited national emergency exists and requires the strengthening of our defense to the extreme limit of our national power and authority.

The nation will expect all individuals and all groups to play their full parts, without stint, and without selfishness, and without doubt that our democracy will triumphantly survive.

I repeat the words of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence -- that little band of patriots, fighting long ago against overwhelming odds, but certain, as (are we) we are now, of ultimate victory: "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." (Warm applause)