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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**New York City, NY**

January 17, 1914

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FDR Speech File

Dutchess Co Soc. Dinner <sup>Pres. D</sup>

As this is positively the last <sup>7914</sup> public appearance of my fellow performer Ed Platt and myself at this Poughkeepsie, we are going to render that sensational and soul stirring two act drama entitled "Belone in Washington: or The Boy Scouts at the Helm."

While we have expected up to the last moment to send a few members of the Cabinet to take our places, we decided that the ~~little opportunity~~ <sup>billions</sup> afforded by the great audience in this tent ~~demanded~~ demanded our own presence. After I have shown you by indisputable figures that our Navy would ~~very~~ sink the capital of Switzerland tomorrow the Congressman will prove that a Democratic majority is necessary to the safety of our country, and to the salvation, ~~of~~ happiness & well being of the American people.

I also take this opportunity of announcing that in the near future

a Navy Yard will be established at Hyde Park and that Mr. Platt has secured two of the eight new regional reserve banks for Pennsylvania.

I had intended, as a real estate owner in Dutchess County, to speak feelingly about the crying need of higher prices for farm lands in that County; but a few days ago a person high in authority came into my office in Washington and wanted to know why gunboats at 1,000,000 apiece wouldn't be just as serviceable as battleships at 15,000,000! After I had gone up in the air, come down again and recovered my temper, I made a <sup>speech</sup> ~~statement~~, I would use the next opportunity that presented itself to unburden my mind of a lot of things I want to say about the Navy - so you, my fellow farmer, have got to be the witness tonight.

First - What sort of a navy have we got today? The answer is - Excellent, efficient, - exceeded in size only by Great Britain & Germany.

Second - How do we judge whether it is large enough? Answer: by stating whether our navy could <sup>obtain</sup> command of the seas in case of war.

3<sup>rd</sup> - How would it obtain command of the seas? Answer: By sinking or destroying the enemy's fleet.

And now I am going to discuss a moment to tell what a modern action would be like.

Just 100 years ago we fought the War of 1812. We emerged from that war with most of our hair still on not because of our own prowess - not because our navy won a few very brilliant single ship actions, but because the bloody battle seen but to create a sensation in called Miss Bonaparte.

Our Navy at the outbreak of the war consisted of a dozen frigates or sea going ships and of about 100 river or harbor gunboats - The British Navy consisted of nearly 1000 sea going ships - Because of Napoleon - England was able to release only about 50 ships for action against the U.S. - As a result our 12 ships were able to escape from harbors and to destroy much commerce and a number of the enemy's fighting ships in single ship actions - They did brilliant work and we are proud of them - But in 1815, just before peace was declared the majority of them were either captured or bottled up in our own harbors. They were not numerous enough to fight a decisive fleet action and only accomplished what they did because the bulk of the enemy's fleet was engaged against another foe. Now as to over 100 gunboats

I am a great admirer of Jefferson but that good & great gentleman had about as much knowledge or sound theory of naval protection as did the people of Portland Maine in 1898 when their fears of attack by the Spanish fleet were allayed by the arrival of a civil war monitor with a 15 inch smooth bore gun to protect Portland Harbor. Jefferson's theory that these gunboats, built at slight expense, hauled up in corn fields during peace & manuevered by honest farmers in time of war was ridiculed when the crisis came - at the capture of Washington, at the attack on New Orleans these gunboats proved not only of absolutely no use but were veritable death traps with brave officers & men who manuevered them -

Time moves on, but the same general lessons remain the same.

If you look at the statistics today you will find about 200 vessels in

war fleet - How many would really  
count in obtaining the command of the  
seas? About forty, probably - and this  
is the reason why -

The command of the seas will in all  
probability depend on one great fleet  
action - an action taking place off  
shore, fought between the first class  
battleships of each power, accompanied  
by a number of torpedo boat destroyers,  
gunboats, cruisers and submarines,  
and converted yachts will have no  
place.



Jan. 5, 1949.

Partial text (longhand draft) of speech delivered at Dutchess County Society Dinner, Hotel Astor, New York City, Jan. 17, 1914.

(Excerpts dealing with other portions of this speech may be found in newsclippings of the New York American, Sun, and Times of Jan. 18, 1914 in Scrapbooks 2, page 20 in Group 1)

RLJ

DUTCHESS COUNTY SOCIETY DINNER - Jan. 17, 1914.

As this is positively the last public appearance of my fellow performer Ed. Platt and myself at this Chautauque, we are going to render that sensational and soul stirring two act drama entitled "Alone in Washington: or The Boy Scouts at the Helm."

While we had expected up to the last moment to send a few members of the Cabinet to take our places, we decided that the ~~brilliant opportunity~~ ~~afforded-by-~~ great and brilliant audience in this Tent demanded our own presence. After I have shown you by indisputable figures that our Navy <sup>could</sup> ~~would~~ sink the capitol of Switzerland tomorrow, the Congressman will prove that a Democratic majority is necessary to the safety of our country and to the salvation, xxx happiness and well being of the American people.

I also take this opportunity of announcing that in the near future a Navy Yard will be established at Hyde Park and that Mr. Platt has secured two of the eight new regional reserve banks for Poughkeepsie.

I had intended, as a real estate owner in Dutchess County, to speak feelingly about the crying need of higher prices for farm lands in that County; but a few days ago a person high in authority came into my office in Washington and wanted to know why gunboats at 1,000,000 apiece wouldn't be just as service-able as battleships at \$15,000,000; After I had gone up in the air, come down again and recovered my temper, I made a solemn vow I would use the next opportunity that presented itself to unburden my mind of a lot of things I want to say about the Navy - so you, my fellow farmers, have got to be the victims tonight.

FIRST - What <sup>S</sup>fort of a Navy have we got today? The answer is - Excellent, efficient, - exceeded in size and power only by Great Britain and Germany.

SECOND - How do we judge whether it is large enough? Answer: By determining whether our Navy could obtain command of the seas in case of war.

3rd - How would it obtain command of the seas? Answer: By sinking or destroy-

ing the enemy's fleet.

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And now I am going to digress a moment to tell what a modern action would be like.

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Our Navy at the outbreak of the war, consisted of a dozen frigates or sea going ships and of about 100 river or harbor gunboats - The British Navy consisted of nearly 1000 sea going ships - Because of Napoleon - England was able to release only about 50 ships for action against the U. S. As a result our 12 ships were able to escape from harbors and to destroy much commerce and a number of the enemy's fighting ships in single ship actions. - They did brilliant work and we are proud of them - But in 1815, just before peace was declared the majority of them were either captured or bottled up in our own harbors. They were not numerous enough to fight a decisive fleet action and only accomplished what they did because the bulk of the enemy's fleet was engaged against another foe.

Now as to <sup>our</sup> 100 gunboats - I am a great admirer of Jefferson - but that good and great gentleman had about as much knowledge or sound theory of naval protection as did the people of Portland, Maine, in 1898 when their fears of attack by the Spanish fleet were allayed [sic] by the arrival of a civil war monitor with a 15 inch smooth bore gun to protect Portland Harbor. Jefferson's theory that these gunboats, built at slight expense, hauled up in corn fields during peace and manned by honest farmers in time of war was riddled when the crisis came.- At the capture of Washington, at the attack on New Orleans, these gunboats proved not only of absolutely no use, but were veritable death traps to

the brave and efficient men who manned them. - Time moves on, but the same general lessons remain the same.

If you look at the statistics today you will find about 200 vessels in our fleet. - How many would really count in obtaining the command of the seas? About forty, probably - and this is the reason why -

The command of the seas will in all probability depend on one great fleet action - an action taking place off shore, fought between the first class battleships of each power, accompanied by a number of torpedo boat destroyers, Gunboats, cruisers and submarines and converted yachts will have no place.