
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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1916 January 4

Poughkeepsie, NY

January 4, 1916

[Poughkeepsie, NY]

FDR Speech File

F. D. ROOSEVELT MAKES URGENT PLEA FOR COUNTRY'S PREPAREDNESS

That the people of the United States must as soon shake off the attitude of indifference to the question of national preparedness and come to an immediate realization of the needs of the country in this respect in order to take the first great step toward adequate preparedness was the statement stressed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the Navy, in his lecture on "What is Naval Defense?" delivered last night at Vassar Institute.

There was a large audience present to greet the guest from Dutchess County, who has been one of the most important factors in the administration of the nation's affairs. Mr. Roosevelt gave an interesting and comprehensive description of the American navy as it is today, and then discussed the needs of the navy which must be met to set it on a proper basis of strength.

Broader views should govern the protection of the ideals and the traditions for which this nation stands and upon which the foundation rests, Mr. Roosevelt said. Preparedness is no idle jest but rather the most important question which today confronts the United States as a nation, collectively and individually.

But touching on the present situation and on the proposal to greatly increase the size of the navy, he said: "The defense is now inadequate," he said, "and we must make it adequate, and the adoption of the present naval program would be a tremendous step in advance. Defense is a relative term; everything is relative and we must have as large a navy as the other fellow. Our increase must be faster."

"If it cost a billion dollars extra each year we might come close to giving this country adequate defense. Just because it costs more to be prepared is a new one it doesn't mean that we should sit around and talk about it for a few years before we make a decided move."

"We are only three-quarters as prepared as our experts tell us we should be in twelve years or so we should be. And this difference is very large. It is the difference between having control of the seas and being a navy that can only be bottled up."

"The present program is that five hundred million be spent in five years on new battleships. We are now spending fifty million a year. It is true that we can't make it. Congress has limited it to 5,000. We can only accept one out of every six men who apply for seamen and marines. Fifty million dollars extra gives us in 1923 one-eighth of the navy that is on a basis of cleaning out five of the antiquated vessels. Even if the recommendation goes through the navy will be smaller than it should be."

"And why is this? Why are we smaller? Because we haven't been interested. We thought our representatives at Washington were seeing to this end of the work. And it's our own fault. We haven't thought enough about it. Then, too, we have not believed what our naval experts have reported on the needs of the enlarged navy. You have thought the experts talked that they were alarmists and doing it for selfish motives. But let me tell you that the average naval expert has 300 per cent broader knowledge of the needs of the navy than the average citizen of Poughkeepsie. It should be known to every man here that adequate preparedness means that if you don't your blood and that of your children may be on our heads."

Light Taxes the Trouble.
"A great trouble has been the light taxes. The people would be up in arms if they were over two per cent, yet in England they are not ten, twenty and thirty per cent. If it cost a billion extra each year we might come close to giving this country the adequate defense it needs. Just because it's a new question doesn't mean we must sit around and talk about it a year before we start to act."

fore we start to act. President Wilson himself has told you that our defenses are inadequate and that if the program is adopted it will be a tremendous step in advance."

"The navy during the past two years has increased faster than any two years previous. We added five capital ships. Yes, these have been large hulls we have had to make, but as at large as the other fellow's defense is a relative term; everything is relative. We must see what the other fellow is doing. We should still increase faster, but our navy is not fourth among the nations of the world. Ten years ago it stood second."

Haphazard Policy.
"Our policy has been haphazard and the navy has not increased. It should have, it costs us more here for our men, who are better paid than the men in the other navies. It costs us more to repair the warships than it does the other fellows. Our scale of wages is higher. Of course our navy costs more than the other fellows' but every cent spent goes into American pockets."

"We are facing a situation now which makes us think and realize our own individual duties to this nation. We should take a broader view of the situation and realize the needs of this nation and protect all it stands for. Democracy is now at stake. We have had little experience with troubles from outside. I am still enough of an American and optimist to believe the same thought which made us free will keep us free."

Mr. Roosevelt described many of the boats not in the first fighting line as being antiquated, that they looked all right on review in the North River with a string of electric lights suspended from their masts, but if they were in battle a good battle cruiser could sink six of them without getting scratched. "These ships," he said continuing, "—there are six of them—won't even give us control of the sea, but they are not fit for fighting line ships."

"Naval defense means ability to control the seas, by attacking by means force to relieve as point at which a hostile attack is directed. If we have adequate defense it means we can help other nations in the protection of the Monroe Doctrine. It means that we will be able to guard these lanes of commerce on which our nation depends. "If we are going to stand by the traditions of our country we are going to have a sea going navy. I don't know how to get a sea going submarine in this country, I must admit. We may be able to get one in two or three years, but all the money in the country couldn't give us one by next July if everything in this country is made for one. We have a good deal of trouble with submarines, mainly because we have to try to put the machinery that should go in a five story building in a one story building and we can't have all the air we want and get rid of the foul odors."

Weapon of Opportunity.
"The submarine is a weapon of opportunity although it can't go out to sea, and destroyers are asked for. We are doing all a battleship can. We are doing all a battleship can to perfect them, but other nations, I must admit, know more about them than we do. The day hasn't arrived as yet when the submarines will do all the second duty of the navy and we still have to rely on the scout ships, which our navy does not possess. The main reason why I call the maneuvers last summer to show that the destroyers which we were using for scout ships should not be used for that purpose as they were unfit."

"A scout should be a ship that can travel about thirty miles an hour and carry lots of fuel so it can stay at sea a long time. Its duty is to run ahead of the fleet and spy the enemy. It must be of a type that can keep at sea in heavy weather and still move at high speed. The recent maneuvers showed the need of this type of ship to do the advance work until the aircraft is perfected."

"What it is the battleships that wins the wars whether it fights or doesn't. That's perfectly clear, and it is in the capital ships that the navy is weak. The programme in 1915 was that in sixteen years we would have all new first fighting line ships, building two ships a year, with the provision that one additional ship be constructed every three or four years. Today we have but 33 first line ships and five of an antiquated design, which if called out for severe duty would not amount to much."

In proferring his talk he said that the people in Washington and over the country for the last year and a half have been giving thought to a question which to us is a new subject. Considerable thought has been given to the subject of national defense. The younger people have thought of it in terms of history of the Spanish War. The question in this country has not been a live one until a year and a half ago, but is now being thought of in concrete terms. There has been much loose talk and writing on the subject by both extreme pacifists and extreme militarists. I have tried to get a birds-eye view

and a cross section of the subject by eliminating this and that to get to the heart of the question. First, we must separate those who don't want soldiers in it. There are some high minded men who don't believe in preparedness and who believe that invasion should be repelled by high thinking and by soldiers. They don't believe in it. There are some high minded men who don't believe in preparedness and who believe that invasion should be repelled by high thinking and by soldiers. They don't believe in it. There are some high minded men who don't believe in preparedness and who believe that invasion should be repelled by high thinking and by soldiers. They don't believe in it."

Divided Into 3 Classes.
"Then there are some who believe that a world nation should maintain itself as one group. If, however, we believe in the nation and defending it by force of arms we can divide into three classes. In the first class is Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the New York Evening Post, who says that the present state of affairs is adequate and that, that we have enough resources for preparedness. The other extremists say we have nothing at the present time, literally nothing, and we must build up a national defense not only money but in the citizenship of the community. The other class is composed of the average citizen who believes in national defense and who wants to be sold the real story. There is a great deal of misconception of the term defense."

"Ought we not define the word? What does it mean?—some preparation that will prevent the enemy coming up the Hudson River and occupying the homes of the citizens of this city, the prevention of invasion of the sea board. Is that defense adequate? I will draw you a picture of defense from that kind of attack. I can't say what nations we will prepare against, but we know we will be more friendly with some than others. We will accept it as a possibility. The first thing we will try to do is to try and find what weapons our adversary has."

"Supposing we put barbed wire entanglements along the coast from Maine to the Rio Grande backed by rows of trenches, manned with machine guns and heavy artillery, and also on the western seaboard. If the attack came the U. S. would try to live in itself for a number of years. We would have to give up our territories, Alaska, Hawaii, the Philippines and the guardianship of Cuba. We would be cut from the friendly association of the South American countries. Commerce would be cut off and it would not be unusual to say that the conditions would be the same as they are in Germany today, with its two precarious outlets. Its ocean born commerce gone. How long can Germany stand it? It is having its effect on economic conditions there, and we don't know. Our country would be in this same position if we put barbed wire along the coast. This is a definition of defense."

Naval Defense Means Control.
"Naval defense means control of those portions of the sea where the seas are wished to be kept open. Any war that comes to us, I believe, will be one of aggression on the part of the other nation."

The assistant secretary told of the time when Theodore Roosevelt occupied the chair he occupies now when a destroyer from Maine was sunk at the time of the Spanish War and wanted an iron clad to protect Portland, Maine. From threatened invasion by the Spanish fleet. They wanted a ship to protect Portland and Maine. A panic then. Secretary Roosevelt ordered an old monitor that had been in the Civil War which could shoot a 15-inch shell almost a mile, off the mudbank, and towed up there. It was anchored in the Portland harbor, as it began wouldn't work. Luckily invasion never came. If adequate defense means we are going to protect commerce we are going to protect territory. Then we must control the sea."

The speaker described a possible attack on the Panama Canal which was protected by a garrison of 6,000 men. He told of how a hostile fleet could attack the canal, or land and land harbor, as it began wouldn't work. Luckily invasion never came. If adequate defense means we are going to protect commerce we are going to protect territory. Then we must control the sea."

C. N. E. INCREASES FREIGHT TRAFFIC

Will Put on Fifteen New Locomotives in This City—Seek Railroad Men

To meet the increase in the freight traffic which has been rushing its lines to capacity and provide for a better scheduling of the trains, the Central New England Railroad has ordered 15 new locomotives which will be delivered in this city the last of next week. New the company is seeking (wounded) railroad men to operate these engines and the task is in the hands of Arthur Cook, chief examiner of the employment bureau.

More than 400 men are employed by the railroad in shoveling snow from the cars which have been piled up in the terminals of the road and Superintendent Clark announces that the company will employ more men. He does not anticipate a coal famine in the east if there is no other heavy snow.

TONIGHT

Germania Singing Society, Germania Hall.
Court Jewell, Daughters of Israel, No. 69, Columbus Institute.
Old Fellow Mutual Benefit Association, 251 Main street.
Silkman Encampment, No. 36, Palladium Building.
Master Builders' Association, Columbus Institute.
Poughkeepsie Glee Club, No. 119, Kitchin of Moriches, 251 Main street.
Armour Temple, No. 18, Pythian Sisters, 251 Main street.
Poughkeepsie Commandry, No. 11, K. T. Masonic Temple.
Poughkeepsie Council, No. 231, Royal Arcanum, 251 Main street.
Star of Poughkeepsie, No. 12, Washington street.
Union No. 55, Painters, Paperhangers and Decorators of America, Labor Hall.
Amusements.
Coburn's-Vandeville and Moving Pictures.
Best—Mortimer Pictures.

Speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt at Vassar Institute, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., January 4, 1916. (Article in the Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise, January 5, 1916.)

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DUBOIS CARPENTER

ARCHITECT

45 Market Street,

Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

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That will be the "best ever" is to resolve to send all your laundry work to Courtney's and let this large and modern laundry relieve the home of the work and worry incidental to "wash day."

COURTNEY'S

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F. D. ROOSEVELT MAKES URGENT PLEA FOR COUNTRY'S PREPAREDNESS

That the people of the United States must at once shake off the attitude of indifference to the question of national preparedness and come to an immediate realization of the needs of the country in this respect in order to take the first great step toward adequate preparedness was the statement stressed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the Navy, in his lecture on "What Is Naval Defense?" delivered last night at Vassar Institute.

There was a large audience present to greet the man from Dutchess county who has taken such an important place in the administration of the nation's affairs. Mr. Roosevelt gave an interesting and comprehensive description of the American navy as it is today. He then enumerated the needs of the navy which must be met to set it on a proper basis of strength.

Broader views should govern the protection of the ideals and the traditions for which this nation stands up on which the foreign nations see Mr. Roosevelt said. Preparedness is no idle jest but rather the most important question which today confronts the United States and its people, collectively and individually.

But touching on the present situation and on the proposal to greatly increase the size of the navy, he said: "The defense is now inadequate," he said, "and we must make it adequate, and the adoption of the present naval program would be a tremendous step in advance. Defense is a relative term; everything is relative and we must have as large a navy as the other fellow. Our increase must be faster."

"If it cost a billion dollars extra each year we might come close to giving this country adequate defense. Just because the question of preparedness is a new one it doesn't mean that we should sit around and talk about it for a few years before we make a decided move."

"We are only three-quarters as prepared as our experts told us twelve years ago we should be. And this difference is very large. It is the difference between having control of the seas and having a navy that can only be bottled up."

The Present Program.

"The present program is that five hundred million be spent in five years on new battleships. We are now spending fifty million a year. It means that we can't man but one half of our ships because Congress has limited it to 5,000. We can only ac-

fore we start to act. President Wilson himself has told you that our defenses are inadequate and that if the program is adopted it will be a tremendous step in advance."

"The navy during the past two years has increased faster than two years previous. We added five capital ships. Yes, these have been large bills we have had to meet, but not as large as the other fellows. Defense is a relative term; everything is relative. We must see what the navy is doing. We should still increase faster, but our navy is now but fourth among the nations of the world. Ten years ago it stood second."

Haphazard Policy.

"Our policy has been haphazard and the navy has not increased as it should have. It costs us more here for our men, who are better paid than the men in the other navies. It costs us more to repair the warships than it does the other fellows, our scale of wages is higher. Of course our navy costs more than the other fellow's but every cent spent goes into American pockets."

"We are facing a situation now which makes us think and realize our own individual duties to this nation. We should take a broader view of the situation and realize the ideas of this nation should prevail. It stands for. Democracy is now on trial. We have had little experience with troubles from outside. But I am still enough of an American and optimist to believe the same thought which made us free will keep free."

Mr. Roosevelt described many of the boats not in the first fighting line as being antiquated, that they looked all right on review in the North River with a string of electric lights suspended from their masts, but if they were in battle a good little cruiser could sink six of them without getting scratched. "These ships," he said continuing, "—there are six of them—won't ever give us control of the sea, because they are not list fighting line ships."

"Naval defense means ability to control the seas, by attacking by mean force to relieve a point at which a hostile attack is directed. If we have adequate defense it means we can help other nations in the protection of the Monroe Doctrine; it means that we will be able to guard those larger of commerce on which our nation depends."

"If we are going to stand by the

and a cross section of the subject by eliminating this and that to get to the general of the question. First, we must separate those who do and don't believe in it. There are some high minded men who don't believe in preparedness and who believe that invasion should be repelled by high thinking and by education. They talk of the brotherhood of man, of nations, and open arms to all comers. They don't believe in national defense.

Divided Into 3 Classes.

"Then there are some who believe that a world nation should maintain itself as one group. If, however, we believe in the nation and defending it by force of arms we can discuss national defense. We are divided into three classes. In the first class is Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the New York Evening Star, who says that the present state of affairs is adequate and that that we have enough resources for preparedness. The other extremists say we have nothing at the present time, literally nothing, and we must build up a colossal defense not only money but in the citizenship of the community. The other class is composed of the average citizen who believes in national defense and who wants to be told the real facts. There is a great deal of misconception of the term defense."

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Siloam Encampment, No. 36, Full-hill Building.
Master Builders' Association, Columbus Institute.
Poughkeepsie Tent, No. 819, Knights of Maccabees, 233 Main street.
Armour Temple, No. 28, Pythian Sisters, 235 Main street.
Poughkeepsie Commandry, No. 43, K. of M. Masonic Temple.
Poughkeepsie Council, No. 291, Royal Arcanum, 261 Main street.
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"And, why is this so, why are we smaller? Because we haven't been interested. We thought our representatives at Washington were adequate to this end of the work. And it's our own fault we haven't thought enough about it. Then, too, we have not believed what our naval experts have reported on the needs of the enlarged navy. You have thought the experts biased that they were selfish motives. But let me tell you that the average naval expert has 200 per cent. broader knowledge of the needs of the navy than the average citizen of Poughkeepsie. - It should be known to every man here what adequate preparedness means. If you don't pour blood and that of your children may be on our heads.

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Weapon of Opportunity.

"The submarine is a weapon of opportunity although it can't go out to sea and stay like a battleship can. We are doing all we can to perfect them, but other nations, I must admit, know more about them than we do. The day hasn't arrived as yet when the aeroplane will do almost everything of the navy and we still have to rely on the scout ships, which our navy does not possess. This was the reason why I call the manoeuvres last summer to show that the destroyers which we were using for scout ships should not be used for that purpose as they were unfit."

"A scout should be a ship that can travel about thirty-five miles an hour and carries lots of fuel so it can stay at sea a long time. Its duty is to run ahead of the fleet and carry the message. It must be of a type that can keep at sea in heavy weather and still move at high speed. The recent manoeuvres showed the need of this type of ship to do the advance work until the aeroplane is perfected.

"But it is the battleships that wins the wars whether it fights or doesn't. That's perfectly clear, and it is in the capital ships that the navy is weak. The programme in 1903 was that in sixteen years we would have a new fleet fighting line ships, building two ships a year, with the provision that one additional ship be constructed every third or fourth year. Today we have but 37 first line ships and five of an antiquated design, which if called out for severe duty would not amount to much.

In prefacing his talk he said that the people in Washington and over the country for the last year and a half have been giving thought to a question which to us is a new subject. Considerable thought has been given to the subject of national defence. The younger people have thought of it in terms of history of the Spanish War. The question in this country has not been a live one until a year and a half ago, but is now being thought of in concrete terms. There has been much loose talk and writing on the subjects by both extreme pacifists and extreme militarists. I have tried to get a birdseye view

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Weakness of Naval Defense.

"Naval defense means control of those portions of the sea where the seas are wished to be kept open. Any war that comes to us, I believe, will be one of aggression on the part of the other nation."

The assistant secretary told of the time when Theodore Roosevelt occupied the chair, he occupies now when a delegation from Maine went to him at the time of the Spanish War and wanted an iron clad to protect Portland, Maine, from threatened invasion by the Spanish fleet. They wanted a ship to protect Portland and prevent a panic there. Secretary Roosevelt ordered an old monitor that had been in the Civil War which could shoot a 16-inch shell almost a mile, off the mudbanks, and towed up there. It was anchored in the Portland harbor, as it engines wouldn't work. Luckily invasion never came. If adequate defence means we are going to protect commerce we are going to protect territory. Then we must control the sea.

The speaker described a possible attack on the Panama Canal which was protected by a garrison of 6,000 men. He told of how a hostile fleet could land perhaps fifty or a hundred miles from the canal batteries and then creep up and storm the garrison while the nation's fleet could block at the entrance to the gates on the Pacific.

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For this big store it has been one of the best years.

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WHY TRUST TO CHANGE

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Safe Deposit
Boxes for rent
\$2.50 and up per year.

DUBOIS CARPENTER ARCHITECT

45 Market Street,
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