

May 30, 1916

[Speech at New Rochelle, NY]

(Typed copy)

FDR Speech File

Speech
of
Franklin D. Roosevelt
New Rochelle, N.Y.
May 30, 1916

[Copied from the New Rochelle, N.Y., Evening Standard, May 31, 1916.]

PEACE, PATRIOTISM, PREPAREDNESS IN NEW ROCHELLE

Big Public Demonstration Participated in by all Classes in City -- Long Parade Followed by Exercises at Hudson Park in which Secretary Roosevelt and Senator Towne Sound Warning Note -- Former Urges Strong Army and Navy -- Latter Predicts War with Japan if Country is Unprepared -- Reception at New Rochelle Yacht Club --

EXERCISES AT HUDSON PARK, WITH STIRRING SPEECHES

"America must be strong enough to take care of itself, or it will soon be under foreign domination."

This was the message of two national speakers at the "Peace, Patriotism, Preparedness" demonstration in Hudson Park yesterday afternoon.

After breaking the speed laws in a dash across the county from Harmon-on-Hudson, accompanied by former Mayors Henry S. Clarke and Frederick H. Waldorf, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt made a speech at Hudson Park that fired the patriotism of every American within hearing.

Senator Towne, Minnesota, and formerly from New York, was the other national speaker.

Mr. Roosevelt was given a rousing welcome and seventeen guns from the flagship "Friendship" of the New Rochelle Yacht Club. In opening his address, he said:

"On my way here, I was met by the junior naval reserve. This proved the navy is growing." Then he went into his subject, "Our First Line of Defense."

Pointing to the three destroyers in Echo Bay, he said:

"You see, in the harbor, a visible sign of our first line of defence, the navy. I wish the navy were too big to get into New York harbor."

Speaking of the meaning of Memorial Day, Mr. Roosevelt said:

"On Memorial Day, we think of the dead who have given up their lives for their country. But the memories of this day would not be complete, if we did not think of the reasons why some of the men of this city and this state and this Union did not come back from the Civil War and from the war with Spain. They

were killed or succumbed to fever and disease, many of them because the country was not prepared. We were not ready because we had an idea that we could raise an army of a million volunteers over night. But the day of the fowling piece over the mantel-piece, and of the revolver in the bureau drawer, are past. Today is the day of modern warfare of trained men. You are going to lose some of these boys who marched in the parade today, and some of these fathers and brothers and husbands through neglect, if war should come. That's talking facts."

Mr. Roosevelt told the story of a town on the coast of Maine in 1898. When it was reported that the Spanish fleet was on its way to America, the people of this town figured that Portland, Me., would be the first place attacked, and they sent their wives and children and other valuables a mile or two back from the coast and then telegraphed to Theodore Roosevelt, who was then assistant secretary of the navy, demanding that he send them an "iron clad" to defend them. Mr. Roosevelt had an old iron-clad monitor pulled off a sand bar, where it had been since the Civil War, and it was towed to the harbor of Portland, where it was propped up and anchored. On it was one fifteen-inch gun that would send a round cannon shot almost a mile. The people saw the iron-clad and were happy, and brought back their wives and jewelry.

"They didn't know what naval war meant," said the speaker. "Naval warfare today means a fleet big and strong enough to fight whatever battles it must engage in a thousand miles off our coast. Put not your trust in submarines. They are all right when they work, and under only the most favorable conditions. They are weapons of opportunity. We need many of them, of course, for harbor defence.

"But, first, last and all the time, the main reliance for naval protection is the sea-going battleship fleet. Our battleship fleet ranks among the nations of the world a bad third or a good fourth. We ought to have a fleet twice the size of the present one. It means money, but it will be the best investment this country has ever made."

Farther along in his address, Mr. Roosevelt spoke of the necessity for a second line of defence. "The men in khaki," he said, "have a part. So have the men in "mufti" the citizens in all walks of life. You have a duty to perform for the right to call yourselves American citizens. It is your duty to do something now that will make you a better asset to your nation, in case anything happens. The two most democratic nations outside the United States—Switzerland and Australia—have universal training. Some day we will come to it. I make that prophecy now in New Rochelle. The kind of universal training that will make better citizens of your boys and girls. The great nations of the world are under arms. This country is not only not under arms, but could not get under arms for two years."

The speaker went on: "Many men who died in the Civil War and in the war with Spain died through lackbad leadership and through lack of preparedness in military training and sanitation. Your future lines of defense must be made

up on the lines of 1916 and kept up to date in order to keep any enemy at arm's length. Your second line, the army, is just as important as the navy. Let it be a citizen soldiery. That's right. A kind that would have at least a chance to make good and save the country. I am glad this section of the country understands, for I believe our state has learned the lesson of what Memorial Day means, but it is only one of 48 states.

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