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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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**File No. 162**

**1920 September 11**

**End of Maine Campaign (lgh.)**

Put this with original in long-hand and file in my papers. It was a speech I made in the 1920 campaign.

SPEECH PREPARED BY FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

and was to have been delivered at

BANGOR, MAINE

on the night of September 11, 1920

The NEW YORK TIMES of Saturday, September 11, 1920  
(page 3, col. 1) carried this statement verbatim:  
with the following comment:

"BANGOR ME. Sept. 10-1920: Owing to the  
death of his uncle, Warren Delano at Barry-  
town, N.Y., which necessitated his return  
home, Franklin D. Roosevelt will be unable  
to deliver his speech here tomorrow night,  
and has authorized its release in the form  
of a statement to be made at the close of  
his Maine Campaign. \* \* \*

"Mr. Roosevelt's statement opens with the  
charge that the Republicans are trying to  
make it appear that Democrats were not good  
Americans and preferred an international  
flag to the Stars and Stripes. \* \* \*

"It is in large part a reply to the  
assertions of Will H. Hays, Chairman of the  
Republican National Committee, and refers  
to the text of Mr. Hays' address - 'Under  
Which Flag?'"

A few weeks ago a prominent politician in a carefully prepared speech used the American flag as his text and tried to make the point that those who differ with him on an important issue of this campaign are not good Americans and that they prefer an international flag to their own. In doing this he was offering a deliberate insult to many millions, probably a majority, of our citizens, and he was guilty not only of bad taste but of poor political judgment.

For when all is said and done the overwhelming body of voters are in every way loyal and will resent any attempt by one group of leaders to take out an exclusive patent on our flag. To claim that one party doctrine is the only American one is to infer that those who belong to another party faith are un-American. That sort of campaigning ought not to be excused even in the heat of an election. I would be the first to insist that Republicans, rank and file, are just as sincerely proud of our country and flag as Democrats are, and I would even admit that people like Mr. Will Hays are patriotic, but they may differ with me in the big conception of the great purpose of which our flag is the symbol. That is very different from seeking to expatriate one's opponents.

The same gentleman has used with inaccurate but deliberate carelessness the word "internationalism". With evident design he has sought to convey the impression that people who believe in the League of Nations are "Internationalists" in the sense used by certain radical groups who do not believe in nations at all, or who seek a super government in place of true national governments. For political purposes he would reason that one who seeks international peace, and international agreements and international justice is thereby an international "red". The whole falsity of this position is

shown by asking the simple question of whether the 37 nations who have already joined the League of Nations have given up their own sovereignty, their own constitutional rights, their own flags? Even Switzerland, most jealous of independence and wary of alliances has voted by popular referendum, to join the League.

But to get back to the attempt to use our flag for political purposes, it is clear that attempts of this kind will be not glossed over by thinking voters but will be actively rebuked. Mr. Hays may differ from me and from many others on what is the best course for this nation to pursue on questions of foreign policy, just as we may differ in our reading of history.

To me our flag has stood for something more than a distinguishing mark to be flown on ships and to be carried in processions during all the years. It denotes more than the property or the individual it may happen to cover. It stands for more than party government or the election of any individuals or groups.

The American flag is a spirit, a thing intangible yet very real in the message it carries. Its spirit lives in the past, the present and the future. Its message is not for the American people alone but for countless millions in every other part of the world. It has been an expression of the composite ideals and the great spiritual purposes of an unselfish nation.

All through our history this has been true. The American Revolution, itself the very birth of the flag, was more than the obtaining of independence and self government by the thirteen colonies. Our Revolution carried a definite message to other nations. It was a successful attack on despotism; and it was followed by the establishment of a new but successful form of democratic-republican government. We know from history how that step was watched by other peoples, and how the new flag influenced thought in other

lands.

Later the young nation in its relations with others continued to send a message with its flag. In the War with the Barbary powers, in the War of 1812, we stood for a doctrine of ideals, the freedom of the seas. The whole course of peaceful world commerce was affected, for ours was not a policy of selfishness, but was of importance to all nations who used the ocean highways.

Only a few years later the American spirit was again of world influence in the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine. Europe recognized that in undertaking to regard as unfriendly any aggression against the smaller republics of the American continent who had just obtained liberty and set up governments modelled largely on our own, we were doing more than thinking of our own self protection. That Monroe Doctrine was the first expression of self-determination for nations, the first championing of new and relatively weak states against the power of imperialism and despotism. For nearly a hundred years it has had a marked effect on the political and economic thought of the Old World.

So through the rest of the last century the flag continued to express a new ideal for the older populations. In our stand against the slave trade, in our efforts to establish friendly and fair commercial relations with China and Japan we brought a new morality to international relations.

In our own generation the War with Spain was another instance. The American people fought that fight for the ideal of a free Cuba. Europe laughed cynically at our protestations that we would not annex Cuba, but Europe understands today that we meant what we said.

Since then our leaders continued to work for the extension of the ideals, and the flag's message continued to give hope to the downtrodden in other lands and to the progressively minded people everywhere. Long before 1914, American

statesmen advocated a League of Nations. Some, like President Taft, favored one that frankly called itself a League to Enforce Peace. Yet he was not called a traitor or a follower of internationalism.

We had seen the failure of the Hague Tribunal to prevent war. We had seen indeed an increase in wars and in the preparations for war. The other nations were well aware that the American flag carried a new message of hope, that it represented a great people opposed to aggression and willing to change the existing conditions of mistrust and competitive armament.

The great war came, and America at last became a party to the struggle. But we did not join forces for the mere sake of crushing the Kaiser on the field of battle. It was not alone Kaiserism or the Central Powers themselves that we were fighting. We fought for something constructive in addition to the fight against something destructive. Men and women of all parties united in demanding in 1917 that the evil in the previous relationship between nations should be in the future removed. Mere good will would not remove the danger, mere international courts had been proven a failure. A definite, business-like concrete association was demanded, something that would prevent the causes of trouble and not wait till trouble itself had come to a head.

In all of this the nation was united. With this spirit and purpose our flag was carried across the seas by the splendid men of our Army and Navy. The peoples of Europe, too, understood the message. They welcomed the accession of military strength, they knew that the allies would win in the end, but they saw in the American Flag the first sign of hope for their children and grandchildren.

I was in France during the war. I talked to mothers of children. The fathers were dead in battle. The women of France understood the big purpose

of America. They were thinking of European history, and what its perpetuation in the same model would mean to their children. They were thinking of the next great war that would come at the time when the little boy of five had reached military age. They had begun to grow cynical. They said "What is the use of having our children grow up at all; it means death or sorrow." But America changed all this. The flag's message went straight to the hearts of those mothers. It made life and effort worthwhile.

When the war ended the promise of the American Flag seemed to have come true. International law, the relation between nations was to be put on a new basis. Even the peoples of the Central Empires took hope. Kaiserism was ended, the new relationship was promised in the very terms of the Armistice.

Through all this period our people at home held to the ideal. It was constantly before their eyes. The flag they knew and loved was still spreading through the world the American spirit of service and unselfishness. No voice was heard in opposition to America's proposal that a new order should supersede the old. We were proud that we could have the opportunity to point the way to world peace, not mere cessation of conflict but the peace of permanence.

An organization to that end was drawn up by the assembled nations, and through it all America's part was the clearest, the cleanest, and the highest-minded of all.

In every nation men and women rejoiced that the spirit of America's flag was being translated into actual accomplishment, and in that rejoicing we shared.

Today the accomplishment of the League of Nations has been made. Thirty-

seven of the peoples of the world have joined hands. We, the nation whose ideals made it possible, we remain without. The flag which carried the hope and the promise is viewed with different eyes.

Go back, ask those mothers of France. They will tell you that they still believe in that flag, that they still await its sympathy and its help: Not in more marching Yankees through the fields of France, but in the spirit that it stands for. Not in more wars but in the great influence which it can yield to make the lives of their little children safe, and the lifting from future generations of that horror which makes them shudder still.

Not only in France, not only in Europe, but in all the peoples of all the world lies that hope in our flag. They ask us to go in. They ask not for a new peace commission, not for a new theory, not for a new conference to draw up a new set of rules. They ask a fair trial for what they have undertaken. They ask that America help in the name of humanity. They ask that they be given again the inspiration of our flag.

Shall we refuse? Shall we for partisanship stand aloof? Shall we forget our history and the history of our flag?

America will not fail in the crisis. America will not turn back. America will not forget.

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A few weeks ago a prominent politician in a carefully prepared speech used the American flag as his text and tried to make the point that those who differ with him on an important issue of this campaign are not good Americans and that they prefer an international flag to their own. In doing this he was offering a deliberate insult to many millions, probably a majority, of our citizens, and he was guilty not only of bad taste but of poor political judgment.

For when all is said and done the overwhelming body of voters are in every way loyal and will resent any attempt by one group of leaders to take out an exclusive patent on our flag. To claim that one party doctrine is the only American one is to infer that those who belong to another party faith are un-American. That sort of campaigning ought not to be excused even in the heat of an election. I would be the first to insist that Republicans, rank and file, are just as sincerely proud of our country and flag as Democrats are, and I would even admit that people like Mr. Will Hays are patriotic, but they may differ with me in the big conception of the great purpose of which our flag is the symbol. That is very different from seeking to expatriate one's opponents.

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shown by asking the simple question of whether the 37 nations who have already joined the League of Nations have given up their own sovereignty, their own constitutional rights, their own flag? Even Switzerland, most jealous of independence and wary of alliances has voted by popular referendum, to join the League.

Not to get back to the attempt to use our flag for political purposes, it is clear that attempts of this kind will be not closed over by thinking voters but will be actively rebuffed. My views may differ from me and from many others on what is the best course for this nation to pursue on questions of foreign policy, just as we may differ in our reading of history.

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BRADY \*ANW

Sept 11, 1920

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For President  
JAMES M. COX

# HEADQUARTERS Franklin D. Roosevelt

For Vice-President  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

GRAND CENTRAL PALACE  
NEW YORK

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2007 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

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Go back, and those  
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Speech, Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
Release morning papers, Sunday, 9/12/20

Maine, Sat. eve., 9/11/20

A few weeks ago a prominent politician in a carefully prepared speech used the American flag as his text, and tried to make the point that those who differ with him on an important issue of this campaign are not good Americans, and that they prefer an international flag to their own. In doing this he was offering a deliberate insult to many millions, probably a majority of our citizens, and he was guilty not only of bad taste, but of poor political judgment.

For, when all is said and done, the overwhelming body of voters are in every way loyal, and will resent any attempt by one group of leaders to take out an exclusive patent on our flag. To claim that one party doctrine is the only American one is to infer that those who belong to another party faith are un-American. That sort of campaigning out not to be excused even in the heat of an election. I would be the first to insist that Republicans, rank and file, are just as sincerely proud of our country and flag as Democrats are, and I would even admit that people like Mr. Will Hays are patriotic, but they may differ with me in the big conception of the great purpose of which our flag is the symbol. That is very different from seeking to expatriate one's opponents.

The same gentleman has used with inaccurate, but deliberate carelessness, the word "internationalism". With evident design he has sought to convey the impression that people who believe in the League of Nations are 'Internationalists' in the sense used by certain radical groups who do not believe in nations at all, or who seek a supergovernment in place of true national governments. For political purposes, he would reason that one who seeks international peace and international agreements and international justice is thereby an international "red". The whole falsity of this position is shown by asking the single question of whether the thirty seven nations who have already joined the League of Nations have given up their own sovereignty, their own constitutional rights, their own flags? Even Switzerland, most jealous of independence and wary of alliances, has voted by popular referendum to join the League,

But to get back to the attempt to use our flag for political purposes, it is clear that attempts of this kind will not be glossed over by thinking voters, but will be actively rebuked. Mr. Hays may differ from me and from many others, on what is the best course for this nation to pursue on questions of foreign policy, just as we may differ in our reading of history.

To me, our flag has stood for something more than a distinguished mark to be flown on ships and to be carried in processions during all these

years. It denotes more than the property or the individual it may happen to cover. It stands for more than party government or the election of any individuals or groups.

The American flag is a spirit, a thing intangible, yet very real in the message it carries. Its spirit lives in the past, the present and the future. Its message is not for the American people alone, but for countless millions in every other part of the world. It has been an expression of the composite ideals and the great spiritual purposes of an unselfish nation.

All through our history this has been true. The American Revolution itself, the very birth of the flag, was more than the mere obtaining of independence and self-government by thirteen colonies. Our Revolution carried a definite message to other nations. It was a successful attack on despotism, and its followed by the establishment of a new but successful form of democratic-republican government. We know from history how that step was watched by other peoples, and how the new flag influenced thought in other lands.

Later the young nation, in its relations with others, continued to send a message with its flag. In the war with the Barbary powers, in the War of 1812, we stood for a doctrine of ideals, the freedom of the seas. The whole course of peaceful world commerce was affected, for ours was not a policy of selfishness, but was of importance to all nations who used the ocean highways.

Only a few years later, the American spirit was again of world influence in the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine. Europe recognized that in undertaking to regard as unfriendly any aggression against the smaller republics of the American continent who had just obtained liberty and set up governments modelled largely on our own, we were doing more than thinking of our own self-protection. That Monroe Doctrine was the first expression of self-determination for nations, the first championing of new and relatively weak states against the power of imperialism and despotism. For nearly a hundred years it has had a marked effect on the political and economic thought of the Old World.

So through the rest of the last century the flag continued to express a new ideal for the older populations. In our stand against the slave trade, in our efforts to establish friendly and fair commercial relations with China and Japan, we brought a new morality to international relations.

In our own generation, the War with Spain was another instance. The American people fought that fight for the ideal of a free Cuba. Europe laughed

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cynically at our protestations that we would not annex Cuba, but Europe understands today that we meant what we said.

Since then our leaders continued to work for the extension of the ideals, and the flag's message continued to give hope to the downtrodden in other lands and to the progressively-minded people everywhere. Long before 1914 American statesmen advocated a League of Nations. Some, like President Taft, favored one that frankly called itself a League to Enforce Peace. Yet he was not called a traitor or a follower of "Internationalism."

We had seen the failure of the Hague Tribunal to prevent wars. We had seen, indeed, an increase in wars and in the preparations for wars. The other nations were well aware that the American flag carried a new message of hope, that it represented a great people opposed to aggression and willing to change the existing conditions of mistrust and competitive armament.

The great war came, and America at last became a party to the struggle. But we did not join forces for the mere sake of crushing the Kaiser on the field of battle. It was not alone Kaiserism or the Central Powers themselves that we were fighting. We fought for something constructive, in addition to the fight against something destructive. Men and women of all parties united in demanding in 1917 that the evil in the previous relationship between nations should be in the future removed. Mere good will would not remove the danger, mere international courts had been proved a failure. A definite, business-like, concrete association was demanded, something that would prevent the causes of trouble and not wait until trouble itself had come to a head.

In all of this the nation was united. With this spirit and purpose our flag was carried across the seas by the splendid men of our Army and Navy. The peoples of Europe, too, understood the message. They welcomed the accession of military strength; they knew that the Allies would win in the end, but they saw in the American flag the first sign of hope for their children and grandchildren.

I was in France during the war. I talked to mothers of children. The fathers were dead in battle. The women of France understood the big purpose of America. They were thinking of European history, and what its perpetuation in the same model would mean to their children. They were thinking of the next great war that would come at the time when the little boy of five had reached military age. They had begun to grow cynical. They said, "What is the use of having our chil-

dream ~~grey~~ grow up at all; it means death of sorrow. " But America changed all this. The flag's message went straight to the hearts of those mothers. It made life and effort worth while.

When the war ended, the promise of the American flag seemed to have come true. International law, the relations between nations, was to be put on a new basis. Even the peoples of the Central Empires took hope. Kaiserism was ended, the new relationship was promised in the very terms of the armistice.

Through all this period our people at home held to the ideal. It was constantly before their eyes. The flag they knew and loved was still spreading through the world the American spirit of service and unselfishness. No voice was heard in opposition to America's proposal that a new order should supersede the old. We were proud that we could have the opportunity to point the way to world peace, not mere cessation of conflict, but the peace of permanence.

An organization to that end was drawn up by the assembled nations, and through it all America's part was the clearest, the cleanest, and the highest-minded of all. In every nation, men and women rejoiced that the spirit of America's flag was being translated into actual accomplishment, and in that rejoicing we shared.

Today the accomplishment of the League of Nations has been made. Thirty seven of the peoples of the world have joined hands. We, the nation whose ideals made it possible, we remain without. The flag which carried the hope and the promise is viewed with different eyes.

Go back, ask those mothers of France. They will tell you that they still believe in that flag, that they still ~~want~~ await its sympathy and its help. Not in more marching Yankees through the fields of France, but in the spirit that it stands for. Not in more wars, but in the great influence which it can yield to make the lives of their little children safe, and the lifting from future generations of that horror which makes them shudder still.

Not only in France, not only in Europe, but in all the peoples of all the world, lies that hope in our flag.. They ask us to go in. They ask not for a new peace commission, not for a new theory, not for a new conference to draw up a new set of rules. They ask a fair trial for what they have undertaken. They ask that America help in the name of humanity. They ask that they be given again the inspiration of our flag.

~~we must reform our policies and our lives~~  
~~we forget our history and the history of the world. America will not fail in this~~  
~~America will not turn back. America will not change.~~

S        Shall we refuse?   Shall we for partisanship stand aloof?   Shall  
we forget our history and the history of our flag?

America will not fail in the crisis. America will not turn back.  
America will not forget.