
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 783

1935 June 12

**West Point, NY - Address to U.S. Military
Academy Graduating Class**

*M.A.L.
Original file
Personal file
JDR*

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE GRADUATING CLASS
OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY,
WEST POINT, N. Y., JUNE 12, 1935.

As one who was born and reared within a few miles of West Point, I have ~~long~~^{always} been familiar with the long and glorious record of the United States Military Academy, and have thought of the officers and cadets stationed here as my friends and neighbors. I wish I could have been here to attend in person the brilliant ceremonies, reviews and the entertainments of the past few days.

At this moment we come to the culmination -- an event which marks not only the close of four years of preparation for a great career but also the induction into the Army of the United States of its annual infusion of new blood whereby our military leadership is kept young, forward-looking and virile.

This Academy, with its sister school of Annapolis, are the personification of democracy in the equality of opportunity they afford, uninfluenced by prior social position or economic standing. They nurture patriotism and devotion to country. They teach that honor, integrity

and the faithful performance of duty are to be valued above all personal advantage or advancement. Their success is written in the long and brilliant record of service which their graduates rendered to the Nation. It is true that in your curriculum you have been studying a profession -- one in which the need of specialization has greatly increased in recent years. But this is true of many other professions. The development of modern civilization calls for specialization.

yet, with specialization it is essential that those who enter upon a profession, civilian or military, must eternally keep before their eyes the practical relationship of their own profession to the rights, the hopes and the needs of the whole body of citizens who make up the Nation. One of the most difficult tasks of government today is to avoid the aggrandizement of any one group and to keep the main objective of the general good clear and unimpaired.

The captain of a company will fail if in thinking only of his company he forgets the relationship of his company to the company on his right and the company on his left -- the relationship of his company ^{to} the regiment as a whole.

The successful commander of an army must give consideration to all of the units which make up his army and in addition must of necessity remember the existence, the condition and the ultimate strength of his reserves and of the civilian population which is serving the same cause behind the lines.

A sense of proportion is essential to the effective attainment of any great objective. I shall always remember a day in the Summer of 1918 when I visited the headquarters of General Foch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied and Associated Armies. With a single aide I motored from Paris and came to a delightful old chateau far behind the lines and lying within its little walled park in the most peaceful, bucolic surroundings you can imagine. One sentry at the gate. Within the park a few chickens and a couple of cows. At the door, nobody. In answer to our ring, the door was opened by a captain and in a moment we found ourselves in the presence of General Foch, who was sitting in a comfortable chair in a large drawing room, reading a French novel. I spent an hour with the General and discovered that his entire staff consisted of half a dozen officers and a dozen privates.

While I was there a young British dispatch rider came in bearing the daily report from Marshal Haig. That report

was written in longhand on one sheet of paper. It said in effect: "My dear General: No advances or retirements of major importance today. Reserves increased 1500 men since yesterday. They now total 275,000. Very sincerely yours."

A few minutes later a similar note was brought by an aide of General Pershing.

I marveled at the simplicity of the General's headquarters and at the apparent lack of detail which he received from the generals in command of the various armies. Foch said to me, "If I concerned myself with details, I could not win the war. I can consider only major advances or major retirements. The knowledge of two or three kilometers ^{Morments de} ~~difference~~ here or there would confuse me by diverting my attention from the great objective. Only major results and major strategy concern a commander-in-chief. Most especially am I concerned with the reserve power of men, of guns, of ammunition and of supplies. That includes of necessity consideration of what the people of France, the people of England and the people of the United States are doing and can do to keep the Allied Armies in a position to make victory a certainty."

You who are about to become officers of the highly efficient regular army of the United States will recognize that you are an integral part not only of that Army but also of the citizenship of the United States. As a nation, we have been fortunate in a geographic isolation which in itself partially protected our boundless resources. To that happy circumstance has been added the priceless blessing of friendship with our near neighbors.

It is in full appreciation of our advantageous position and of our own devotion to the cause of peace that our Nation's defensive system has always reflected the single purpose that that name implies. We maintain an army to promote tranquility and to secure us from aggression but it is so created and so modest in proportion as to furnish proof that no threat or menace to the rights of others is even remotely intended. On some occasions in our history we have reduced our army to a level ~~unnecessary~~ unjustified by a due regard to our own safety. It was in the conviction that we had again drifted too far in that direction that I have recently approved Acts of the Congress to accomplish a partial restoration of the Army's enlisted strength and increasing the enrollment of cadets in the United States Military Academy.

The greatest need of the world today is the assurance of permanent peace -- an assurance based on mutual understanding and mutual regard. During your careers you will go to many stations at home and abroad, enjoying unusual opportunities to mingle with our own and other people, to learn their points of view and to appreciate their aspirations. If you strive at all times to promote friendship and to discourage suspicion, to teach respect for the rights of others and to decry aggression, to oppose intolerance with a spirit of mutual helpfulness - then, indeed, your services will be of full value to your Government and a source of satisfaction to yourselves. Sympathetic understanding of fellowmen has ever been the hallmark of the leader. Last, but by no means least, you will be worthy of the illustrious traditions of West Point.

Personally, I extend to each and every one of you who graduate today my congratulations and best wishes. As Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States, I tell you that I am proud of you and wish you God speed.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF THE
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT, NEW YORK

June 12, 1935

Mr. Secretary, General MacArthur, General Connor,

Gentlemen of the Class of 1935:

As one who was born and reared within a few miles of West Point, I have always been familiar with the long and glorious record of the United States Military Academy; and I have thought of the officers and cadets stationed here as my friends and neighbors.

This is peculiarly your day, nobody else's, not even the President's. It is your day.

I wish I could have been here to attend in person the brilliant ceremonies, reviews and the entertainments of the past few days. I have attended some of them in by-gone years.

At this moment we come to the culmination -- an event which marks not only the close of four years of preparation for a great career but also the induction into the Army of the United States of its annual infusion of new blood whereby our military leadership is kept young, forward-looking and virile.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

... turned around, suddenly listened intently and

:8581 to 8582 off to himself

self was a little better has had new car etc etc

self off 8581 think need exams and I think too
you know what I mean self to Roosevelt and myself has

Enclosed check has enclose off to Roosevelt and I have

enclosed one check up to credit

for a safe return, and now you all right

and they all right, I think and you

are all good off credit and I have

and I am off to Roosevelt and I think we're back off to Roosevelt

... credit enclose all

as to collection off of any or from him will be

very to carry out to enclose off who has been doing have

self nothing off who has been doing nothing about nothing

to collection I mean off to collect before off to you off

you off to credit you know you've got to do it

... credit has paid off

This Academy, with its sister school of Annapolis, (are) is the personification of democracy in the equality of opportunity (they) that such schools afford, uninfluenced by prior social position or economic standing. (They) These schools nurture patriotism and devotion to country. They teach that honor, integrity and the faithful performance of duty are to be valued above all personal advantage or advancement. Their success is written in the long and brilliant record of service which their graduates have rendered to the Nation. It is true that in your curriculum you have been studying a profession -- one in which the need of specialization has greatly increased in recent years. But (this) that is true of (many) every other profession(s). The development of modern civilization calls, of necessity, for specialization.

Yet, with specialization it is essential that those who enter upon a profession, civilian or military, must eternally keep before their eyes the practical relationship of their own profession to the rights, the hopes and the needs of the whole body of citizens who make up the Nation. One of the most difficult tasks of government today is to avoid the aggrandizement of any

one group and to keep the main objective of the general good clear and unimpaired.

The captain of a company will fail if in thinking only of his own company he forgets the relationship of his company to the company on his right and the company on his left -- the relationship of his company to the regiment as a whole. The successful commander of an army must give consideration to all of the units which make up his army and in addition must of necessity remember the existence, the condition and the ultimate strength of his reserves and of the civilian population which is serving the same cause behind the lines.

A sense of proportion is essential to the effective attainment of any great objective. I shall always remember a day in the Summer of 1918 when I visited the headquarters of General Foch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied and Associated Armies. With a single aide I motored (from) out of Paris on a road that had no markers and we came to a delightful old chateau far behind the lines and lying within its little walled park in the most peaceful, bucolic (surroundings) conditions you can imagine. One sentry at the gate. Within the

park a few chickens and a couple of cows. At the door, nobody. That was headquarters of all the armies in France. In answer to our ring, the door was opened by a very young looking captain and in a moment we found ourselves in the presence of General Foch, who was sitting in a comfortable chair in a large drawing room, reading a French novel. (Laughter) I spent over an hour with the General and I discovered that his entire staff consisted of half a dozen officers and perhaps a dozen (privates) enlisted men.

While I was there a young (British dispatch rider) lieutenant from British headquarters came in bearing the daily report from Marshal Haig. That report was written in longhand on one side of a sheet of note paper. It said in effect: "My dear General: No advances or retirements of major importance today. Reserves increased 1500 men since yesterday. They now total 275,000. Very sincerely yours, Haig."

(A few) About ten minutes later (a similar note was brought by an aide of General Pershing) one of our own lieutenants came in from General Pershing's headquarters bearing a single note written on one page making essentially a similar report to General Foch.

I marveled at the simplicity of it all (of the General's headquarters), at the simplicity of his headquarters and at the apparent lack of detail which he received from the generals in command of the various armies. Foch said to me, "If I concerned myself with details, I could not win the war. I can consider only major advances or major retirements. The knowledge of movements of two or three kilometers here or there would confuse me by diverting my attention from the great objective. Only major results and major strategy concern the major objectives of a commander-in-chief. Most especially am I concerned with the reserve power of men, of guns, of ammunition and of supplies, and with that I have to give constant and necessary consideration to (that includes of necessity consideration of) what the people of France, the people of England and the people of the United States are doing and can do to keep the Allied Armies in a position to make victory a certainty."

I think that little story has a good deal of application to anybody who is in a position of command, great or small. You who are about to become officers of the highly efficient regular army of the United States will

recognize that you are an integral part not only of that Army but also of the citizenship of the United States. As a Nation, we have been very fortunate in a geographic isolation which in itself has partially protected our boundless resources. To that happy circumstance has been added the priceless blessing of friendship with our near neighbors.

It is in full appreciation of (our) this advantageous position and in full appreciation of our own devotion to the cause of peace that our Nation's defensive system has always reflected the single purpose that (that name) those words, "defensive system", implies. We maintain an army to promote tranquillity and to secure us from aggression, but it is so created and so modest in proportion to the size of the population of the Nation as to furnish proof that no threat or menace to the rights of others is even remotely (intended) considered. On some occasions in our history we have reduced our army to a level unjustified by a due regard (to) for our own safety. It was in the conviction that we had (again) once more drifted too far in that direction that I have recently approved Acts of the Congress to accomplish a partial

restoration of the Army's enlisted strength and increasing the enrollment of cadets in the United States Military Academy. (Applause)

The greatest need of the world today is the assurance of permanent peace -- an assurance based on mutual understanding and mutual regard. During your careers you will go to many stations at home and abroad, enjoying unusual opportunities to mingle with our people (own) and with other people, to learn their points of view and to appreciate their aspirations. If you strive at all times to promote friendship and to discourage suspicion, to teach respect for the rights of others and to decry aggression, to oppose intolerance with a spirit of mutual helpfulness -- then indeed your services will be of full value to your Government and a source of satisfaction to yourselves. A sympathetic understanding of fellow men has ever been the hallmark of (the) a leader. Last, but by no means least, you will be worthy of the illustrious traditions of West Point.

And so, gentlemen, personally, I extend to each and every one of you who graduate today my congratulations and best wishes. As Commander-in-Chief of the Army (of the United States) I tell you that I am proud of you and wish you Godspeed.

CAUTION

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HOLD FOR RELEASE FOR AFTERNOON PAPERS APPEARING ON THE STREETS
NOT EARLIER THAN TWELVE O'CLOCK NOON EASTERN DAYLIGHT
SAVING TIME WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 1935.

M. H. McIntyre,
Assistant Secretary to the President

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SEARCHED AND INDEXED BY Kannanee

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Yet, with specialization it is essential that those who enter upon a profession, civilian or military, must continually keep before their eyes the practical relationship of their own profession to the rights, the hopes and the needs of the whole body of citizens who make up the Nation. One of the most difficult tasks of government today is to avoid the aggrandizement of any one group and to keep the main objective of the general good clear and unimpaired.

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