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. 1250

1939 October 26

Radio Address to the Herald Tribune Forum
I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, two eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

It is the magic of radio that has so greatly increased the usefulness of the forum. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate over the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the more dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and the radio. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the majority of the press and the radio.
Through a period of grave anxiety both have tried to discriminate between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and to give their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. It is a good rule in one, why is it not a good rule in the other?

From the end of the World War onwards this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion -- some alluring, attractive, even speciously inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum. Many Americans lost their heads because several plausible fellows lost theirs in expounding schemes to end barbarity, to give weekly handouts, to give everybody a better job -- or, more modestly, to put a chicken or two in every pot -- all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social system. And they all burst like bubbles.
Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere — others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dimes and quarters of the poor. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there always exists in a democratic society a large group which champs at the bit over the slowness of democracy. That is why it is right for us who believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes progressive — moving forward with the advances in civilization. That is why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of stagnation increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now.

There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy — the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of ideals at a pace too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic to function — people who by insistence on too great speed foster an oligarchic form of government such as Communism, or Naziism or Fascism.
The other group, which presents an equal danger, is composed of that small minority which complains that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as being slow, people who would have the whole of government put into the hands of a little group of those who have proved their efficiency in lines of specialized science or specialized private business. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously too, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Naziism or Fascism.

Extreme Rightists and extreme Leftists should not be taken out by us and shot against the wall, for they sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is "just a little bit left of center".

I am reminded of four definitions:

A Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted --

in the air.
A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk.

A Reactionary is a somnambulist walking backwards.

A Liberal is a man who uses his legs and his hands at the behest of his head.

It has been a good thing that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when it has been based on nostrums or prejudices.

It has been a good thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between honest spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of voters and the propaganda type of mass appeals.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world situation today I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this evening's discussion,
as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to the United States".

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That, I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any state government, or in any city government, or in any county government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument a shameless and dishonest fake.

I have not the slightest objection to make against the amateurs who, to the reading and listening public, discourse on the inner meanings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm because the average citizen
is acquiring the gift of discrimination -- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateur armchair strategists the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.

The fact of the international situation -- the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice -- is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that presentation of real news has sharpened the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion --
and we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is iterated and reiterated. Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.

[Signature]

***************

[Handwritten text]
INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT TONIGHT WILL BE AS FOLLOWS--

"AND NOW WE COME TO THE CLIMAX AND FINAL SPEECH OF OUR PROGRAM.

EXTREMISTS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY ARE APT TO BELIEVE THAT THE NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE NEVER SAYS A FRIENDLY WORD ABOUT OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

EXTREMISTS AMONG REPUBLICANS ARE CONVINCED THAT WE PUBLISH A DEMOCRATIC PAPER. THE RIGHT GROUND IS IN BETWEEN WHERE DIFFERENCES AND AGREEMENTS OF OPINION BOTH EXIST. IN THE CURRENT PROBLEM BEFORE CONGRESS AND THE COUNTRY AS TO LIFTING THE EMBARGO THERE HAS BEEN NO MIDDLE GROUND.

WE AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION AND HAVE GIVEN HIM OUR UTMOST SUPPORT IN CLARIFYING THE ISSUE AND AIMING TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT ENDING THE EMBARGO WILL PROVE A KEYSTONE IN THIS COUNTRY'S DETERMINED EFFORT TO STAY OUT OF WAR. I HAVE THE HONOR TO PRESENT TO YOU IN A BROADCAST FROM THE WHITE HOUSE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES^.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION FOLLOWING HIS TALK MRS. REID WILL ACKNOWLEDGE AS FOLLOWS:

"IN THANKING OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR THE SPEECH WHICH WE HAVE JUST LISTENED TO I WISH OUR ENTIRE AUDIENCE BOTH YOU WHO ARE ASSEMBLED HERE AND YOU WHO ARE LISTENING IN ON THE RADIO TO KNOW OF THE HELPUL COOPERATION WHICH HE HAS GIVEN IN PREPARING THE FORUM PROGRAM. IT WAS ONLY WITH HIS AID THAT WE COULD HAVE THE PRESENTATION BY SOME OF HIS CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF ADMINISTRATION THINKING, AN ESSENTIAL OF COURSE FOR GIVING YOU A COMPLETE PICTURE OF CURRENT PROBLEMS. I EXTEND TO HIM FOR MYSELF FOR THE PAPER WHICH I REPRESENT AND FOR THE FORUM OUR DEEPEST GRATEFULNESS^.
The following address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House to the New York Herald Tribune Forum, is for release in editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 11:00 P.M., E. S. T., October 25, 1939.

PLEASE SAFEGUARD AGAINST PREMATURE RELEASE.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, too eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

It is the magic of radio that has so greatly increased the usefulness of the forum. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate over the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the more dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and the radio. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the majority of the press and the radio. Through a period of grave anxiety both have tried to discriminate between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and to give their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. If it is a good rule in one, why is it not a good rule in the other?

From the end of the World War onwards this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion — some alluring, attractive, even speciously inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum. Many Americans lost their heads because several plausible fellows lost theirs in expounding schemes to end barbarity, to give weekly handouts, to give everybody a better job — or, more modestly, to put a chicken or two in every pot — all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social system. And they all burst like bubbles.

Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere — others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dime and quarters of the poor. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there always exists in a democratic society a large group which champs at the bit over the slowness of democracy. That is why it is right for us who believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes progressive — moving forward with the advances in civilization. That is why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of stagnation increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now.
There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy -- the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of ideals at a pace too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic to function -- people who by insistence on too great a speed foster an oligarchic form of government such as Communism, or Nazism or Fascism.

The other group, which presents an equal danger, is composed of that small minority which complains that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as slow, people who would have the whole of government put into the hands of a little group of those who have proved their efficiency in lines of specialized science or specialized private business. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously too, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Nazism or Fascism.

Extreme rightists and extreme leftists should not be taken out by us and shot against the wall, for they sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is "just a little bit left of center."

I am reminded of four definitions:

A Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted -- in the air.

A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk.

A Reactionary is a somnambulist walking backwards.

A Liberal is a man who uses his legs and his hands at the behest of his head.

It has been a good thing that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when it has been based on nostrums or prejudices.

It has been a good thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between honest spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of voters and the propaganda type of mass appeals.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world situation today I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this evening's discussion, as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to the United States."

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That, I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any state government, or in any city government, or in any county government, has ever suggested in any sense, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument a shameless and dishonest fake.

I have not the slightest objection to make against the amateurs who, to the reading and listening public, discourse on the inner workings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm because the average citizen is acquiring the gift of discrimination -- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateurs, the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.
The fact of the international situation — the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice — is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that presentation of real news has sharpened the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion — and we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is reiterated and reiterated. Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.
The general thought that the Herald-Tribune Forum and every one of similar forums in the United States is useful and because of their existence in the past we are better able as citizens to understand what existing world conditions actually mean. (Note: A dirty dig along this line.)

In the average forum, whether conducted on the speech or the debate method, the audience present, and those present on the radio, learn an absolutely essential lesson -- how to discriminate between the poor speaker who in a simple way states logical facts without appeal to passion and without exaggeration and on the other side an expert speaker who appeals to passions and prejudices and tries to carry his audience with him into believing that false facts are true facts and glosses over the untenable aspects of his subject.

In other words, the reading and listening public in these days of real public discussions are acquiring a better discrimination than they have ever before had.

In this the press and the radio, especially recently, are contributing to the presentation of both sides of international subjects in a way which would serve as a model for future presentations of domestic subjects. (Take a good shot in example). Since the end of the World War this country like many others went through a phase -- a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion -- some attractive, even inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum.

This is proved that there were millions of people in the United States who would believe the lurid description of the campy-fall that was presented to them either over the radio or through intensively organized propaganda. Many of us want wild over several of our fellow citizens who were going to end barbarity, take care of the aged, give everybody an immediate and a permanent job at higher salary than that ever received.
before -- all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social
system. It was a good thing that this happened. It has been a good
thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been
deluged from time to time by organized and letter-sending campaigns.

The Congress itself has learned the lesson. It begins to
discriminate between unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of
the voters and the propaganda types -- (that means a little development,
the President says) and the voters themselves are beginning to discriminate
between quiet arguments that stick to facts -- whether the arguments take
place in the Congress, in the press, or over the radio or in the forums
-- on the one side and arguments that do not confine themselves to facts
but seek either to sell a nostrum or scare the country half to death by
setting up imaginary bogey men. It is only because the whole country is
interested in the world situation today that I take an expression from the
field of international relations. In and out of Congress we have heard
orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming
against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battle fields
of Europe. That, I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fake
arguments in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginative
(pick up from Grace Tally)
CONTINUATION OF PARAGRAPH

It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man for the simple reason that no person in any responsible place in the National Administration in Washington or in any State government or in any City government or in any County government has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American Mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe.

I have not the slightest objection to the amateurs who to the reading and listening public discourse on the inner meanings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. I have not the slightest objection to the armchair strategists that exist in every community throughout the land. They do no harm because the average citizen has, again, acquired the gift of discrimination -- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateurs the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.

The fact of the international situation -- the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice, is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and still are making up their minds about the relative merits of current events on other Continents.
Second Draft
I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, two eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Their fruits of forums have been rich and plentiful.

It is the magic of radio that has magnified the forum, rightly called, sometimes, the cornucopia of the air. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate over the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the more dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and by means of the radio. These discussions have contributed mightily to the development of increasingly efficient standards of discrimination on the part of the reader or the listener. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the press and the radio. Through a period of grave anxiety both have discriminated between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and have given their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. If, in a good mind, one may not wish for it?

From the end of the World War onwards this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion. Some alluring, attractive, even inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum. Many of us lost our heads because several plausible fellows just lost theirs in expounding schemes to end
Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere -- others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dimes and quarters of the poor. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there exists always a large group in a democratic society which chomps at the bit over the slowness of democracy. That is why it is right for us who believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes progressive -- moving forward with the advances in civilization. That is why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of stagnation increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now.

There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy -- the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of ideals at a pace too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic and people, by insistence on too great speed foster an oligarchic form of...
government such as Communism, or Nazism or Fascism. The other group, which presents an equal danger, is composed of that small minority which complaining that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as being slow, who would have the whole of government put into the hands of a little group who have proved their efficiency in lines of science or private business. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Nazism or Fascism.

Extreme Rightists and extreme Leftists should not be taken out by us and shot against the wall, for they sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is just a little bit left of center.

I am reminded of four definitions:

A Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted -- in the air.

A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs, however, he never learned to walk.
A Reactionary is a somnambulist walking backwards.

A Liberal is a man who uses his legs and his hands at the behest of his head.

It has been a good thing that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when it has been based on nostrums or prejudices.
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
barbarity, to take care of the needs, to give everybody a better job -- or,
more modestly, to put a chicken in every pot -- all by adoption of some
new financial plan or some new social system. And they all burst like bubbles.

It was a good thing that all this happened. It has been a good
thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been
deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House
of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between
honest and spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of
evoters and the propaganda type of opinion.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world
situation today I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on
international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this
evening's discussion, as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to the
United States".

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators
and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys
of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That, I do not
hesitate to label as one of the worst fake arguments in current history.
It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth
is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration
in Washington, or in any state government, or in any city government, or in
any county government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the
 remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on
the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument
a Nemesis and a disease that has been shall be and shall not

I have not the slightest objection to make against the amateurs
who, to the reading and listening public, discourse on the inner meanings
of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm
because the average citizen possesses the gift of discrimination
-- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateurs, the more
discussion -- and we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is iterated and reiterated. Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.
the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.

The fact of the international situation — the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice — is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion. The ideal of freedom of discussion in the twentieth-century forum, however, must be that upheld by Voltaire when he wrote to a correspondent: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

And adherence to those principles of freedom and integrity of thought and statement which we uphold in radio communications still carries its ancient force if applied in the use of the older medium which Gutenberg gave to the world.
The following address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House to the New York Herald Tribune Forum, is for release in editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 11:00 P.M., E. S. T., October 26, 1939.

PLEASE SAFEGUARD AGAINST PREMATURE RELEASE.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, the eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

It is the magic of radio that has so greatly increased the usefulness of the forum. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate over the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the more dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and (the) radio. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the majority of the press and the radio. Through a period of grave anxiety both have tried to discriminate between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and to give their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. If it is a good rule in one, why is not a good rule in the other?

From the end of the World War onwards this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion—some alluring, attractive, even speciously inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum. Many Americans lost their heads because several plausible fellows lost theirs in expounding schemes to end barbarity, to give weekly handouts, to give everybody a better job—or, more modestly, to put a chicken or two in every pot—all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social system. And they all burst like bubbles.

Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere—others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dime and quarters of the poor. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there always exists in a democratic society a large group which chomps at the bit over the slowness of democracy. "That is why it is right for us who believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes progressive—moving forward with the advances in civilization. That is why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of stagnation increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now."
There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy -- the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of ideals at a pace too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic to function -- people who by insistence on too great speed foster an oligarchic form of government such as Communism, or Nazism or Fascism.

The other group, which presents an equal danger, is composed of a small minority which complains that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as being slow, people who would have the whole of government put into the hands of a little group of those who have proved their efficiency in lines of specialized science or specialized private business. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously too, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Nazism or Fascism.

Extremes rightists and extremists (plural) cannot be taken out by us and shot against the wall, for they sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is just a little bit left of center.

I am reminded of four definitions:

A Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted -- in the air.

A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk.

A Reactionary is a somnambulist walking backwards.

A Liberal is a man who uses his legs and his hands at the behest of his head.

It has been a good thing that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when it has been based on nostrums or prejudices.

It has been a good thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between honest spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of voters and the propaganda type of mass appeals.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world situation today I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this evening's discussion, as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to the United States".

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any state government, or in any city government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument a shameless and dishonest fake.

I have not the slightest objection to make against the amateurs who, to the reading and listening public, discourse on the inner meanings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm because the average citizen is acquiring the gift of discrimination -- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateur armchair strategists the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.
The fact of the international situation — the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice — is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about the relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that presentation of real news has sharpened the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion — and we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is iterated and reiterated. Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.
I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, too eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

It is the magic of radio that has so greatly increased the usefulness of the forum. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate between the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the worst dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during the recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and the radio. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the majority of the press and the radio. Through a period of grave anxiety both have tried to discriminate between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and to give their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. If it is a good rule in one, why is it not a good rule in the other?

From the end of the World War one across this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion — some alluring, attractive, even especially insipirning, public presentation of a nostrum. Many Americans lost their heads because several plausible fellows lost theirs in expounding schemes to end hunger, to give weekly handouts to give everybody a better job — or, more modestly, to put a chicken or two in every pot — all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social system. And, all too, it burst like bubbles.

Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere — others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dimes and quarters of the poor. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there always exists in a democratic society a large group which one might call the victims, and that at the bit over the slowness of democracy there is right for us to believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes moving forward with the advances in civilization. This is my why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of stagnation increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now.
There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy -- the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of ideals at a pace too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic to function -- people who in insistance on too great speed foster an oligarchic form of government such as Communism, or Nazism or Fascism.

The other group, which presents an equal danger, is composed of small minority which complains that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as being slow; people who would have the whole of government put into the hands of a little group of those who have proved their efficiency in lines of specialized science or specialized private business. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously too, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Nazism or Fascism.

Extremist Rightists and extremist Leftists should not be taken out by us and shot against the wall, for they sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is "Just a little bit of centur.

I am reminded of your definitions:

A Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted -- in the air.

A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk forward.

A Reactionary is a communistist walking backwards.

But a Liberal is a man who puts his legs and his hands at the behest of his head.

It has been a good thing that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when it has been based on nostrums or prejudices.

It has been a good thing for the country that the Congress of the United States has been deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between honest spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of the average voter and the propaganda type of mass appeals.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world situation today, I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this evening's discussion, as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to the United States".

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That, I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any state government, or in any mayor city government, or in any county government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument a shameless and dishonest fake.

I have not the slightest objection to make against the amateur who, to the reading and listening public, discourses on the inner meanings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm because the average citizen is acquiring the gift of discrimination -- and the more all of these subjects are talked about by amateur armchair strategists the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.
The fact of the international situation—the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice—is that the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, as I have said before, impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that presentation of real news has sharpened the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion—we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is iterated and reiterated. Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.

---
ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
To the New York Herald Tribune Forum
Delivered from the White House
October 26, 1939, 11:05 F. M., E. S. T.

MRS. REED, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HERALD TRIBUNE FORUM:

I am glad to say a word in this forum because I heartily approve the forum idea. After all, two eighteenth century forums in Philadelphia gave to us the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

It is the magic of radio that has so greatly increased the usefulness of the forum. Radio listeners have learned to discriminate over the air between the honest advocate who relies on truth and logic and the more dramatic speaker who is clever in appealing to the passions and prejudices of his listeners.

We have had an example of objective reporting during the recent weeks in the presentation of international subjects, both in the press and (the) radio. Right here I should like to throw bouquets to the majority of the press and the radio. Through a period of grave anxiety both have tried to discriminate between fact and propaganda and unfounded rumor and to give to their readers and listeners an unbiased and factual chronicle of developments. This has worked so well in international reporting that one may be pardoned for wishing for more of it in the field of domestic news. It's a good rule. If it is a good rule in
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.

...
one, why is it not a good rule in the other?

From the end of the World War (onwards) twenty-one years ago, this country, like many others, went through a phase of having large groups of people carried away by some emotion -- some alluring, attractive, even speciously inspiring, public presentation of a nostrum, a cure-all. Many Americans lost their heads because several plausible fellows lost theirs in expounding schemes to end barbarity, to give weekly handouts to people, to give everybody a better job -- or, more modestly, for example, to put a chicken or two in every pot -- all by adoption of some new financial plan or some new social system. And (they all) all of them, all of them burst like bubbles.

Some proponents of nostrums were honest and sincere -- others, too many of them, were seekers of personal power; still others saw a chance to get rich on the dimes and quarters of the poorer people in our population. All of them, perhaps unconsciously, were capitalizing the fact that the democratic form of government works slowly, that there always exists in a democratic society a large group which, quite naturally, champs at the bit over the slowness of democracy and that is why it is right for us who believe in democracy to keep the democratic processes progressive -- in other words, moving forward with the advances in civilization. That is why it is dangerous for democracy to stop moving forward because any period of
stagnation, of standing still increases the numbers of those who demand action and action now.

There are, therefore, two distinct dangers to democracy -- the peril from those who seek the fulfillment of fine ideals at a pace that is too fast for the machinery of the modern body politic to function - people who by insistence on too great speed foster an oligarchic form of government, a form of government such as Communism, or Nazism or Fascism.

And, the other group, (which) that presents an equal danger, is composed of (that) what is really a small minority which complains that the democratic processes are inefficient as well as being too slow, people, in other words, who would have the whole of their government put into the hands of a little group of those who have proved their efficiency in lines of specialized science or specialized private business and do not see the picture as a whole. They equally, and in most cases unconsciously too, are in effect advocating the oligarchic form of government -- Communism or Nazism or Fascism.

Extreme Rightists and extreme Leftists (should) ought not to be taken out by us and shot against the wall, (for they) because people like that sharpen the argument and make us realize the value of the democratic middle course -- especially if that middle course, in order to keep up with the times, is, and I quote what I have said
before, "just a little bit left of center."

I am reminded of four definitions:

A Radical -- a Radical is a man with both feet firmly planted -- in the air.

A Conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk forward.

A Reactionary is a somnambulist walking backwards.

A Liberal is a man who uses his legs and his hands at the behest -- at the command -- of his head.

It has been a good thing for us that during the past twenty years we have seen the effect of organized propaganda even when (it) that propaganda has been based on nostrums or prejudices.

It has been a good thing for (the) our country that the Congress of the United States has been deluged from time to time by organized propaganda. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate begin to discriminate nowadays between honest spontaneous, unsolicited expressions of opinion on the part of the voters and the propaganda type of mass appeals.

Because the country is so profoundly interested in the world situation today I do want to leave with you one thought bearing on international relations. I make bold to do this because the topic of this evening's discussion, as I understand it, is "The War's Challenge to
the United States.

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That — that, I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person, no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any state government, or in any city government, or in any county government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. And that is why I label that argument as a shameless and dishonest fake.

I have not the slightest objection to make against (the) those amateurs who, to the reading and the listening public, discourse on the inner meanings of the military and naval events of the war in Europe. They do no harm because the average citizen is acquiring rapidly the gift of discrimination — and the more all (of) these subjects are talked about by amateur armchair strategists the more the public will make up its own mind in the long run. The public, the American voting public will acquire the ability to think things through for themselves.

The fact of the international situation, the
world situation -- the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice -- is that the United States of America, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war. That we can be neutral in thought as well as in act is, (as I have said before,) impossible of fulfillment because again, the people of this country, thinking things through calmly and without prejudice, have been and are making up their minds about the relative merits of current events on other continents.

It is a fact increasingly manifest that presentation of real news has sharpened the minds and the judgment of men and women everywhere in these days of real public discussion -- (and) we Americans begin to know the difference between the truth on the one side and the falsehood on the other, no matter how often the falsehood is iterated and reiterated. **My friends, remember that repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.**