

November 11, 1939

[~~Adams~~: Virginia Military Institute]

FDR Speech File

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Telephone to the Virginia Military Institute
November 11, 1939

GENERAL KILBOURNE, FRIENDS OF VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE:

It gives me peculiar pleasure to participate in this observance of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Virginia Military Institute. I very deeply regret that I cannot carry out my hope and expectation of being with you in person, but I know you will understand my difficulty of being away from Washington at this trying time and also my desire to attend the already historic simple ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington.

We, as a nation, like V. M. I. are determined to pursue our way within the Scriptural command not to "remove the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set." And like our ancestors we work for peace, we pray for peace, and we arm for peace.

The whole history of V. M. I. is a triumphant chronicle of the part which the citizen soldier can play in a democracy. V. M. I. bears eloquent witness to the

necessity for institutions of learning which, while adhering to the primary purpose of preparing men for work in the arts and sciences, have also a by-product in their military training system. We need today as we have always needed and always shall need, citizens trained in the art of military defense. By no other means can we hope to maintain and perpetuate the democratic form of constitutional, representative government.

On this account I greet V. M. I. as it celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of its beginning; and what associations come to mind as we commemorate this anniversary. We remember among countless others that the immortal name of "Stonewall" Jackson is part of the imperishable heritage of V. M. I. And we honor not less, the town of Lexington as the resting place of that superb soldier and his dauntless chief, that knightly figure without reproach and without fear, another of the great commanders of history, Robert E. Lee.

There is nothing inconsistent in saying a word about peace at this anniversary of a great school of arms. In our history, the two have always had a connection. We have never had the illusion that peace and freedom could be based on weakness.

Jackson and Lee, famous for their military courage , never lost sight of the fact that the only legitimate aim of armed force was to restore civil peace, in which armed force would no longer be needed.

The only object of arms is to bring about a condition in which quiet peace under liberty can endure. It is fitting to remember this today. In this season we have been used to celebrating the anniversary of the Armistice of the World War. Now we need a new and better peace: a peace which shall cause men at length to lay down weapons of hatred which have been used to divide them; and to forego purposeless ambitions which have created fear, -- ambitions which in

the long run serve no useful end. We seek a language in which neighbor can talk to neighbor; in which men can talk to men; and by which the common and homely and human instincts which are found everywhere may reach expression through the elimination of fear.

I have sought -- I still seek -- in all simplicity, to try to find the road toward this peace. It must be the goal not only of men trained to arms, but of all of us everywhere, whose dearest desire is a quiet peace under liberty.

To all of you -- Faculty, Students and Graduates of the Virginia Military Institute, I send my warm greetings on your Centennial. Live up to your great heritage, your noble record and your simple faith throughout the second century that lies before you.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Orig. grading copy

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NOTE: The following address of the President, to be delivered by telephone from the White House to the Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary, is for release in editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 11:30 A.M., E.S.T., November 11, 1939.

CAUTION: Please safeguard against premature release.

WILLIAM D. HASETT

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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.

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670 words

Greeting to be sent by telephone in connection with the 100th Anniversary of Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia, from the Cabinet Room, the White House, at 11:30 A.M., E.S.T., November 11, 1939.

GENERAL KILBOURNE, FRIENDS OF VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE:

It gives me peculiar pleasure to participate in this observance of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Virginia Military Institute. ^A This noble institution of learning, now venerable with the associations of a century, stands for an idea that is fundamental in our conception of democracy.

^{V.M.I.} Since, as a nation, ~~we seek no conquest and have no imperial designs,~~ ^{V.M.I.} we are determined to pursue our way within the Scriptural command not to "remove the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set." ^{Let our ancestors say} And ~~just as we are without imperial ambitions we are resolved to limit our armed forces to the needs of national defense alone, with no thought of armaments other than those adequate to repel attack, to defend ourselves against any assault on our national liberties. We work for peace, we pray for peace, and we arm for peace.~~

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Jackson and Lee
~~Both~~, famous for their military courage, never lost sight of the fact that the only legitimate aim of armed force was to restore *civil* peace, in which armed force would no longer be needed. ~~On the seal of Massachusetts is the motto "By the sword she seeks quiet peace under liberty"; and on the Great Seal of Virginia, referring to a like struggle, is the single word "Perseverance".~~

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- 50th anniversary - in all
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