

March 16, 1940

[Christian Foreign Service Convocation]

FDR Speech File

12716

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
CHRISTIAN FOREIGN SERVICE CONVOCATION

MARCH 16, 1940.

I am glad to take part in this world broadcast today.

Before the advent of the Christian era, messengers and missionaries had traveled throughout the known world -- they were commonly traders or soldiers seeking advantage for themselves, or agents of conquerors carrying notice of invasion to come.

When the Apostles and Disciples of Christ crossed into Macedonia and visited one after another the countries of the Western world, they wrote a new chapter in human relations -- for they carried for the first time a message of brotherhood, of faith and good-will, and ^{et} peace among men.

Since those days the ideal of a peaceful world brotherhood has made glorious advances -- for that ideal is not confined to the followers of the Christian faith but has been accepted as a part of the philosophy of other great religions -- some of them older than Christianity and some more recent.

But the advance has not been in a straight line. It has met with serious reverses which have taken years and even centuries to offset. Nomad tribes from eastern Europe and western Asia required centuries of assimilation before they could understand the gospel of brotherhood. The early feudal days set castle against castle in thousands of tiny wars, ~~and~~ / in slaughters and slavery^{ies}, which ended only in the setting up of governments able to maintain peace within their borders.

Today we seem once more to be in a temporary era where organized ~~force is~~ ^{attacks me} seeking to divide men and nations from one another. That is why it is right and proper to call together the representatives of the great religious bodies which seek not to divide but to unite men and nations in the old message of brotherhood and good-will.

In dark days of the past that ideal has been saved in the long run by splendid efforts to maintain it in the minds and hearts of the average citizens in all nations.

Today we seek a moral basis for peace. It cannot be a real peace if it fails to recognize brotherhood. It cannot be a lasting peace if the fruit of it is oppression, or starvation, or cruelty, or human life dominated by armed camps. It cannot be a sound peace if small nations must live in fear of powerful neighbors. It cannot be a moral peace if freedom from invasion is sold for tribute. It cannot be an intelligent peace if it denies free passage to that knowledge of those ideals which permit men to find common ground. It cannot be a righteous peace if worship of God is denied.

On these fundamentals the world did not have a true peace in those years between the ending of the World War and the beginning of present wars.

The band of missionaries whom you now meet to honor understood this well. They permitted no threat to the integrity or the institutions of the nations in which they worked. They sought to promote an international order based on human justice.

The active search for peace which the early Christians preached meant meeting and overcoming those forces in the world which had set themselves against the brotherhood of man and which denied the equality of souls before the throne of God. In those olden days they faced apparently unconquerable force -- and yet were victorious.

I offer my greetings to you as a congregation of faith, in the certainty that you will help to keep alive that spirit of kindness and faith which is the essence of civilization. I am confident of your ultimate triumph; for the ideals of justice, kindness, brotherhood and faith cannot die. These are the highest of human ideals. They will be defended and maintained. In their victory the whole world stands to gain; and the fruit of it is peace.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
King - reading copy

March 16, 1940

The following address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House in connection with the Christian Foreign Service Convocation, Saturday, March 16, 1940, is for release in edition of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 3:12 P. M., E.S.T., today.

1445

PLEASE SAFEGUARD AGAINST PREMATURE RELEASE.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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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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CHRISTIAN FOREIGN SERVICE CONVOCATION
MARCH 16, 1940.

P.P.H.
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 15, 1940

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

The attached is a difficult speech to make. Either it is a meaningless tribute to missionaries; or it might be used to do something. My endeavor was to play down the "peace at any price" idea -- the Finnish business has pretty well proved that peace is not available at that price.



A. A. B., Jr.

Enclosure

March 15, 1940

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Broadcast at the Christian Foreign Service
Convocation, Saturday, March 16, 1940, at

3 p. m.

Nineteen hundred years ago, a new principle was brought into the affairs of nations. This was the sending abroad of men of faith and good will to carry a message of brotherhood. Before that time messengers and missionaries had traveled throughout the world, but they were commonly traders or soldiers seeking advantage for themselves, or agents carrying notice of conquest to come. Only when Christian missionaries crossed into Macedonia and their successors visited one after another of the countries which then composed the Western world, did we begin to think in universal terms, and to hope for an entire world at peace with itself and with God.

It is fitting today that we remember this. Much of the organized force in the world is now engaged in dividing men and nations one from another. Never was it more proper to call together the representatives of those great religious bodies

which seek to unite them.

If the world is ever to be united in a common ideal and a cooperative civilization, there must be peace: for war is the ultimate division. In spite of war, I believe minds and hearts of most of the world are concentrated on the hope that that peace may eventually come. What they seek is a moral basis for that peace.

In my view, no peace is real if the basis of it prevents recognition of the brotherhood which your missionaries preach. No peace can be ^{sound} ~~lasting~~ if it sacrifices the very essentials which permit men to live together. No peace can be considered lasting if the fruit of it is oppression, or starvation, or cruelty, or the creation of armed encampments designed for greater war. There is no peace when a small nation must live in fear of any powerful neighbor; when freedom from invasion is sold for tribute; when men are denied free passage of ideas which permit them to find common ground; or when the right to worship God is denied. ¶ We know this is true, because we have lived through a period of so-called peace that was not peace in the months preceding the outbreak of the

present war. It was not peace when every nation strained its resources to create greater armament; when every art of propaganda was used to weaken the social fabric; when the Gospel of Christ was proscribed; when immunity from invasion was bought by surrender; or when concessions which wrecked the lives and homes of thousands were extorted by threat of force.

Civilization has been a continuous struggle to mitigate and, if possible, end fear and suffering and ignorance. The struggle cannot be carried on when any group claims the right to create or inflict at will darkness and terror and pain. It cannot succeed if the powerful believe that the weak are at their mercy and must resign themselves to despairing acquiescence.

The band of missionaries whom you now meet to honor understood this well. There was no threat in their work to the integrity or institutions of the nations in which they worked, or whose well-being they served. Their aim was to strengthen, not to weaken, the national life of the lands in which they labored. The men to whom they offered their knowledge and their faith became better servants of their own countries and governments. Yet they also promoted an international order based on justice, and organized so that

men might live together.

In the light of that ideal, I ask a new consideration of the vision of peace abroad and at home. There cannot be an attitude of submission to any threat, nor a willingness to accept any oppression, nor a yielding to the desire which all of us must feel to escape the problems of the time. Neither the early nor the later missionaries sought to run away from contemporary problems. The active search for peace which the early Christians knew meant meeting and overcoming those forces in the world which had set themselves against the brotherhood of men, and denied the equality of souls before the throne of God. In their time they faced apparently unconquerable force, and yet were victorious. By resolute will they denied the right of oppression wherever they found it. We, in our time, will also find that peace must come from strength; from firm faith; from recognition that peace at any price is no peace at all.

Today, even the right to alleviate human suffering is not to be had merely for the asking. Today, no group anywhere, in any country, however far from the centers of conflict, can be assured of quiet unless its conscience is clear, and its right arm is strong. There

is no area which can claim assured immunity from the burden of this generation.

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