

June 19, 1944

[Harvard Commencement Speech]

FDR Speech File

1370

On original the President wrote
in longhand.

"This is the original Watson
baritone score".

Message of the President to the
Special convocation of the Univ.
of Oxford held at Harvard commence-
ment, Cambridge, Mass. June 19,
1941 and read by maj. gen. emw

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
SPECIAL CONVOCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
HELD AT
HARVARD COMMENCEMENT, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
JUNE 19, 1941
AND READ BY MAJOR GENERAL EDWIN M. WATSON, U.S.A.

MR. CHANCELLOR:

I am directed by the President to express to you, and to this Special Convocation of the University of Oxford, his regret and sorrow that, for reasons of which you are aware, he is unable to be present in person to accept the great honor which you have conferred upon him.

He has asked me to convey this message to his old associates of Harvard University, and especially to his new associates of the University of Oxford. The message is this:

"All the world can be enriched by a new symbol which supports truth and the search for truth.

In days like these, therefore, we rejoice that this Special Convocation, in breaking all historic precedent, does so in the great cause of preserving the free learning and the civil liberties which have grown stone upon stone in ~~gmg~~ lands through the centuries. That is why I am proud to be permitted to have a part.

It is right that this unfettered search for truth 'is universal and knows no restriction of place or race or creed'. There have been other symbols throughout the years and in the present. The American Ambassador in Britain gave recognition to this recently when he said:

'Only this week in London in the early morning hours of the Sabbath Day, enemy bombs destroyed the House of Commons room of the Parliament and smashed the altar of Westminster Abbey. These two hits seemed to me to symbolise the objectives of the dictator and the pagan. Across the street from the

wreckage of these two great historic buildings of State and Church, Saint-Gaudens' statue of Abraham Lincoln was still standing. As I looked at the bowed figure of the Great Emancipator and thought of his life, I could not help but remember that he loved God, that he had defined and represented democratic government, and that he hated slavery.

And as an American I was proud that he was there in all that wreckage as a friend and sentinel of gallant days that have gone by, and a reminder that in this great battle for freedom he waited quietly for support for those things for which he lived and died'.

We, too, born to freedom, and believing in freedom, are willing to fight to maintain freedom.

We, and all others who believe as deeply as we do, would rather die on our feet than live on our knees'.



DRAFT #1

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REPORT OF SPEECH

delivered by

The Hon. J. G. Winant

Ambassador of the United States of America

at the

English-Speaking Union

Wednesday, May 14th, 1941

(Reprinted from *The Daily Telegraph*)

The English-Speaking Union was formed in the summer of 1918 just before the last World War came to an end. That was the first war in which all English-speaking peoples united to preserve their common ideals.

It is because of this fact that I am particularly happy to speak to you with Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. We worked in the pre-war days to preserve the rule of law and social justice among nations. We served in the last war in the Allied armies. Many of our friends fell in France. There they died, and many are buried, that we and our children might live in a free and peaceful world. But now across the Western Front an invader holds sway, and over the Free France of La Fayette and Foch waves the Swastika.

The common ideals of the English-speaking peoples of this world are not ideals from which other peoples of the world are excluded. They are ideals which are alien in no country that loves liberty and hates tyranny. They are ideals which are common to all men and women of this earth who do justice, who love mercy, and who walk humbly with God.

The English-speaking countries of the world are peopled by men and women of diverse nationalities and different religions. Our strength comes from diversity and our freedom is born of tolerance—tolerance of other

people's origins, other people's religions, and other people's ideas.

And that is true of England no less than the English-speaking countries overseas. It was in this little island that the Angles, the Saxons and the Normans learned to live together and call themselves Englishmen. Even the English language is a mixture of diverse tongues, and the book—the Bible—which has had a greater influence on English life and literature than any other is a book translated from tongues never spoken in this island.

In past centuries, England, like other English-speaking countries, has offered sanctuary to the oppressed, persecuted and rejected of other lands. It is therefore no accident that, in our own century, among her Prime Ministers have been those of Welsh, Scot and American descent, or that one of the most distinguished members of her War Cabinet during the last war should have been a South African of Dutch descent.

It is probably the crowning virtue of English-speaking countries that they recognise and respect virtue wherever they find it and are not inclined to beguile themselves with the primitive and barbaric idea that they themselves have a monopoly of it. That is the reason that to-day throughout Europe, and throughout the world, the common people of all races and of all religions are hoping and praying and, wherever given a chance, fighting for victory for Britain and for the English-speaking countries which are rallying to Britain's aid.

For to-day the English-speaking peoples are again being drawn together in a struggle to preserve not only their common heritage but the common ideals of civilised men everywhere.

Only this week in London, in the early morning hours of the Sabbath Day, enemy bombs destroyed the House of Commons room of the Parliament and smashed the altar of Westminster Abbey. These two hits seemed to me to symbolise the objectives of the dictator and the pagan. Across the street from the wreckage of these two great historic buildings of State and Church, Saint-Gaudens' statue of Abraham Lincoln was still standing. As I looked at the bowed figure of the Great Emancipator and thought of his life, I could not help but remember that he loved God, that he had defined and represented democratic government, and that he hated slavery.

And as an American I was proud that he was there in all that wreckage as a friend and sentinel of gallant days that have gone by, and a reminder that in this great battle for freedom he waited quietly for support for those things for which he lived and died.

With Machiavellian cunning, totalitarian tyranny has sought to divide and conquer peoples and nations that should stand together. By blackmail and terror, by intrigue and deceit, they have sought to weaken and undermine national unity in those countries whose freedom they would destroy. They have sought to revive and inflame old and discredited class and racial hatreds. They have missed no chance to make bad blood between friendly nations in order to delay and frustrate common action against international banditry and aggression which threaten the freedom of all nations.

But make no mistake! So far the totalitarians have been appallingly successful. Experience has proved that they have a way of keeping their threats and breaking their promises. They have destroyed, one by one, one free nation after another. While a few short years ago these lawless men could have been put down by a few simple police measures, had the then free nations of the world had the will and wisdom to act together, now the forces and resources of all the remaining free nations of the world must be employed if we are to look forward to a world freed from the domination of fear and force.

For men and women of good will there is only one choice. When dictators conspire together, men and women of good will everywhere must act together. This is no time for vain regrets or futile recriminations. We have all slept, while wicked and evil men plotted destruction. We have all thought that we might save ourselves from the holocaust and that what happened to far distant countries could never happen to us.

We have all tried to make ourselves believe that we are not our brother's keeper. But we are now beginning to realise that we need our brothers as much as our brothers need us.

The freedom-loving, peace-loving peoples of this earth are coming to realise that this is not Britain's fight alone. When clever, cunning dictators are striking with lightning speed at any and every free nation that dares

to stand in their way, the time has come for democratic nations to prove to the world that, while they are free to debate, they have the power and the will to act.

On the wise use of the navies of the world may hang the destinies of the free peoples of the world. A kindly Providence at this time of stress and danger has placed at the heads of the two great English-speaking peoples two men whose knowledge of the sea is probably greater than that of any statesmen of any time. The problems that are before them in the defence of their countries are not simple problems but complicated problems. In the controversy that has arisen in regard to sinkings of goods manufactured in the United States, I hope that the people here and at home realise that a mere statement of the sinkings of ships from America does not tell the whole story. It only proves, as does the successful transport of troops to the Middle East, the protective power of an adequate convoy.

Such figures do not show the necessity of selection. They do not disclose what food may have to be taken from the children of Britain to give her soldiers arms. They tell only a small part of the Battle of the Atlantic and of the shipping problem to be faced in the prosecution of this total war. In total war it is total strength that counts.

We are engaged in the greatest struggle in all history to preserve freedom in the modern world. We have made our tasks infinitely more difficult because we failed to do yesterday what we gladly do to-day. Much that we must do to-day would not have been necessary had we done enough yesterday.

The longer the delay, the more protracted will be the war and the greater the sacrifices which will be required for victory.

Let us stop asking ourselves if it is really necessary to do more to-day. Let us, all of us, ask ourselves what more we can do to-day so that we may have less to do and sacrifice to-morrow. If we, all of us, will only not put off for to-morrow what can be done to-day, victory for freedom will come sooner than we dare to hope.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 14, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE PRESIDENT

FOR USE AT CAMBRIDGE:

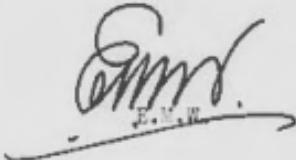
"Most of us would rather die
on our feet than live on our knees."

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

6-12-41

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Lord Halifax sent this down
as a rough draft of what would happen
from his standpoint and yours.



A handwritten signature in cursive ink, appearing to read "E. M. W.", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a large loop at the top.

AT THE CEREMONY.

TIME

1. On the conclusion of the Harvard University Commencement ceremony, the University Marshal will read the following communication received from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

"My dear President,

The Council of the University of Oxford has charged me with the pleasant duty of conveying to you with warm fraternal greetings the following: The University of Oxford has empowered its Chancellor Viscount Halifax to confer upon the Honourable Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law at a special Convocation to be held at an appropriate time and place in the United States. This is a departure from our customary practice but wholly in keeping with the conception of Universities as a spiritual federation pledged to guardianship of free learning and the unfettered search for truth. This search is universal and knows no restriction of place or race or creed. Each of our Universities is therefore proud to have its members widely scattered through the world. An academic function of Oxford is to be held outside its own walls. For this no place can be more fitting than the home of its sister society in Massachusetts. They share a common tradition by which they live and which both are concerned to maintain. I am therefore asked to express the hope that it may be agreeable to Harvard University to permit the holding of this special Convocation within its precincts on the occasion of

/its

its forthcoming Commencement. Thus may be furnished one more bond in the history of the happy intercourse between our Universities.

Believe me to be,

Yours sincerely,

George Gordon."

*Cecil
R. Howard*

*Ruf. Smith
Introducing Party*

2.

The University Marshal will then make the following announcement:

"The ordinary and honorary degrees having been duly conferred, the President and Fellows of Harvard College will now give place to a delegation of the University of Oxford, who, acting by authority of the Council of that University, will hold a Special Convocation within these precincts, The Right Honourable Viscount Halifax, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America, presiding".

3. The Chancellor, accompanied by the appointed officers and members of the University of Oxford, will withdraw, moving to the back of the Chair.

4. Then will be sung the Psalm following:
CXLVII
Psalm Cxlvii. Laudate Dominum.

(Quote in full).

5. The procession being marshalled, the Chancellor, attended by his page, will take his place at the head of the procession, which will enter the auditorium through Sever Hall, the trumpets sounding a fanfare.

6. At the entry of the procession, all will rise, and join in singing the hymn following:

"/"All

"All people that on earth do dwell,
 Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
 Him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,
 Come ye before him, and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed,
 Without our aid he did us make;
 We are his folk, he doth us feed,
 And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
 Approach with joy his courts unto;
 Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
 For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good:
 His mercy is for ever sure;
 His truth at all times firmly stood,
 And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
 The God whom heaven and earth adore,
 From men and from the Angel-host
 Be praise and glory evermore. Amen."

7. The Chancellor will take the Chair, the Delegates, Pro-Proctors, Doctors, Masters and Bachelors taking the places duly assigned to them, the Public Orator being at the Chancellor's left hand.

8. When all have reached their places, the National Anthems will be played, the company still standing.

9. The company being seated, the Chancellor will declare Convocation open in the accustomed form,

as follows:

"Causa huius Convocationis est ut gradus Doctoris in Jure Civili in Virum Illustrissimum conferatur honoris causa.

Placetne Venerabili Convocationi in Virum Franklin Delano Roosevelt gradus Doctoris in Jure Civili conferatur honoris causa?

Placetne vobis Domini Doctores? Placetne vobis Magistri?".

The Doctors and Masters shall answer:
"Placet".

The Public Orator will bow to the Chancellor and say:

"Insignissime Domine Cancellarie, licetne Anglice eloqui?"

The Chancellor will reply:
"Licet".

10. The Public Orator will present the President of the United States.
11. The Chancellor, Delegates, and Pro-Proctors will then rise and uncover and the Chancellor will briefly state the reasons for which the University of Oxford has asked leave to confer the degree of Doctor of Civil Law honoris causa upon the President of the United States.
12. After the conferment of the Degree and the Chancellor, Doctors and Pro-Proctors being seated, the President of the United States, if he so wishes, will reply.

13. The Chancellor will rise, and close the Convocation with the accustomed words:
"Dissolvimus hanc Convocationem".

14. The following Latin hymn will then be sung:

(Quote in full)

15. During the singing of the hymn the Chancellor, preceded by the bedells and attended by the Delegates, Doctors, Masters and Bachelors, will leave the theatre.

file June 19, 1941
Speech
[Copied 11/13/57]

FULLNESS OF DAYS

by

Lord Halifax

Dodd, Mead & Company
New York 1957

pp. 277-279

Oxford University had wished to confer an Honorary Degree upon President Roosevelt, but it was clearly not going to be possible for him to attend in person at Oxford to receive it for a long time to come. The University would no doubt have wished to make special arrangements, but before anything of this sort had reached the point of practical planning, another suggestion was made by Mr. Justice Frankfurter, whose acuteness of mind and quickness of imagination have made his companionship a delight to all his friends. This suggestion was that by permission of the President of Harvard, Dr. Conant, when the Harvard proceedings were completed, Harvard should be converted into Oxford, the Harvard element being withdrawn from the platform and replaced by the essential ingredients of an Oxford Convocation. This was done, the whole business being ordered with meticulous care and skill by Charles Peake. All who could be discovered in the United States with Oxford Doctors' or Masters' Degrees were got together; two Masters became Proctors for the occasion; my Chancellor's black and gold gown was sent over, a page was selected and appropriately clad; the procession was marshalled and moved in through the serried ranks of Harvard alumni still in their places; and all together Oxford made a creditable showing. The President unfortunately was indisposed and at the last moment was unable to come, as he had fully intended to do. He therefore asked General Watson (Pa) to deputise for him, which meant that Pa had to read the President's speech. It was a very hot day in June, and though Pa was in white cotton uniform, the combined effect of the blazing sun on the huge marquee in which we were and his own surprise in finding himself the central figure in an academic setting caused him to perspire freely. After his death Mrs. Watson gave me the typescript from which her husband had read the President's acceptance speech and which is now lodged in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is historically interesting, not only for its connexion with what I believe to be a unique occasion in the history of Oxford University, but also for the marginal note by the President near its end, "Here Pa will sing 'Take me back to Old Virginny.'"