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. 1394

1941 November 11

Armistice Day Address

962 words

DRAFT #1 ARMISTICE DAY ADDRESS

Among the great days of national remembrance, none is more deeply moving to Americans of our generation than the Eleventh of November, the Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918, the day sacred to the memory of those who gave their lives in the war which that day ended.

Our observance of this Anniversary has a particular significance in the year 1941.

For we are able today as we were not always able in the past to measure our indebtedness to those who died.

A few years ago, even a few months, we questioned, some of us, the sacrifice they had made. Standing near to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Sergeant York of Tennessee, on a recent day spoke to such questioners. "There are those in this country today", said Sergeant York, "who ask me and other veterans of World War Number One 'What did it get you?'"

Today we know the answer -- all of us. All who search their hearts in honesty and candor know it.

We know that these men died to save their country from a terrible danger of that day. We know, because we face that danger once again on this day.

"What did it get you?"

People who asked that question of Sergeant York and his comrades forgot the one essential fact which every man who looks can see today.

They forgot that the danger which threatened this country in 1917 was real -- and that the sacrifice of those who died averted that danger.

Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

Because our armies were victorious they demanded wh y our armies had fought.

Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty is worth defending as

those alone whose liberty is lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

But because the war had been won we forgot, some of us, that the war might have been lost.

Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years or months ago, we know now that the danger of brutality and tyranny and slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

We know why these men fought to keep our freedom -- and why the wars that save a people's liberties are wars worth fighting and worth winning -- and at any price.

"What did it get you?"

The men of France, prisoners in their cities, victims of searches and of seizures without law, hostages for the safety of their masters' lives, robbed of their harvests, murdered in their prisons -- the men of France would know the answer to that question. They know now what a former victory of freedom against tyranny was worth.

The Czechs too know the answer. The Poles. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

We know it now.

We know that it was, in literal truth, to make the world safe for democracy that we took up arms in 1917. It was, in simple truth and in literal fact, to make the world habitable for decent and self-respecting men that those whom we now remember gave their lives. They died to prevent then the very thing that now, a quarter century later, has happened from one end of Europe to the other.

Now that it has happened we know in full the reason why they died.

We know also what obligation and duty their sacrifice imposes upon us. They did not die to make the world safe for decency and self-respect for five years or ten or maybe twenty. They died to make it <u>safe</u>. And if, by some fault of ours who lived beyond the war, its safety has again been threatened then the obligation and the duty are ours.

It is in our charge now, as it was America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it "that these dead shall not have died in vain". Sergeant York spoke thus of the cynics and doubters: "The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them".

The people of America agree with that. They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it.

This duty we owe, not to ourselves alone, but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us -- to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages.

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THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON

November 4, 1941

Dear Grace:

Here is the third draft of the November 11 speech. I have cut it somewhat and it could be cut further by stopping at the place I have marked on the bottom of page four.

If it is all right as it is, I will be very pleased. If it isn't, I'd take it kindly if you would shoot it back to me with comments and let me work at it some more.

Faithfully yours,

Archibald MacLeish

Enclosure

Miss Grace Tully
Secretary to the President
The White House

A. MacL.
November Eleventh Speech
Third Draft

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Our observance of this Anniversary has a particular significance in the year 1941.

For we are able today as we were not always able in the past to measure our indebtedness to those who died.

A few years ago, even a few months, we questioned, some of us, the sacrifice they had made. Standing near the tomb of the Unknown Soldier on armistice day, Sergeant York of Tennessee spoke to such questioners. "There are those in this country today", said Sergeant York, "who ask me and other veterans of World War Number One 'What did it get you?'"

Today we know the answer - all of us. All who search their hearts in honesty and candor know it.

We know that these men died to save their country from a terrible danger of that day. We know, because we face that danger once again on this day.

"What did it get you?"

People who asked that question of Sergeant York and his comrades forgot the one essential fact which every man who looks can see today.

They forgot that the danger which threatened this country in 1917 was real - and that the sacrifice of those who died averted that danger.

Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

Because our armies were victorious they demanded why our armies had fought.

Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty is worth defending as those alone whose liberty is

lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

But because the war had been won we forgot, some of us, that the war might have been lost.

Because our freedom was secured we took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died.

We know now.

Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years ago, ~~or a few months,~~ we know now that the danger of brutality and tyranny and ~~force~~ slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

We know why these men fought to keep our freedom — and why the wars that save a people's liberties are wars worth fighting and worth winning - and at any price.

"What did it get you?"

The men of France, prisoners in their cities, victims of searches and of seizures without law, hostages for the safety of their masters' lives, robbed of their harvests, murdered in their prisons - the men of France would know the answer to that question. ~~They know what victory~~ They know now what a former victory of freedom against tyranny was worth.

The Poles;

The Czechs too know the answer. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

We know it now.

We know that it was, in literal truth, to make the world safe for democracy that we took up arms in 1917. It was, in simple truth and in literal fact, to make the world habitable for decent and self-respecting men that those whom we now remember gave their lives. They died to prevent then the very thing that now, a quarter century later, has happened from one end of Europe to the other.

Now that it has happened we know in full the reason why they died.

We know also what obligations and ~~responsibilities~~ duty their sacrifice imposes upon us. They did not die to make the world safe for decency and self-respect for five years or ten or maybe twenty. They died to make it safe. And if, by some fault of ours who lived beyond the war, its safety has again been threatened then the obligation and the ~~responsibility~~ duty are ours. It is ~~our responsibility~~ in our charge now, as it was ~~our responsibility as a people~~ America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it that these dead shall not have died in vain.

Sergeant York who can speak as no other man from the armies of the war of 1917 and 1918 answered the cynical in words they should

Grace: We can stop here if we need to cut more now. I hope we won't have to.

~~remember. People who talk that way, he said, forget one thing.~~
Sergeant York spoke these of the cynics and doubters:
"The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them".

That.
The people of America agree with ~~Sergeant York.~~ They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it. This duty ~~they~~ we owe, not ~~only~~ to ~~themselves~~, but to the many dead who died to gain ~~their~~ our freedom for ~~them — and~~ us — to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages.

ARMISTICE DAY ADDRESS

NOVEMBER 11, 1941

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Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

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Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty is worth defending as those alone whose liberty is lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

But because the war had been won we forgot, some of us, that the war might have been lost.

Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years or months ago, we know now that the danger of brutality and tyranny and slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

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"What did it get you?"

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The Czechs too know the answer. The Poles. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

We know it now.

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It is in our charge now, as it was America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it "that these dead shall not have died in vain". Sergeant York spoke thus of the cynics and doubters: "The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them".

The people of America agree with that. They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it.

This duty we owe, not to ourselves alone, but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us -- to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Orig. reading copy

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
DELIVERED IN THE
AMPHITHEATRE, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY,
ARMISTICE DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1941, 11:06 A.M.
AND BROADCAST OVER A NATIONWIDE RADIO HOOKUP

You who have served, you serve today.

Among the great days of national remembrance, none is more deeply moving to Americans of our generation than the Eleventh of November, the Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918, the day sacred to the memory of those who gave their lives in the war which that day ended.

Our observance of this Anniversary has, I think, a particular significance in the year 1941.

For we are able today as we were not always able in the past to measure our indebtedness to those who died.

A few years ago, even a few months, we questioned, some of us, the sacrifice they had made. Standing near (to) the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Sergeant York of Tennessee, on a recent day spoke to such questioners. "There are those in this country today", said Sergeant York, "who ask me and other veterans, veterans of the World War Number One 'What did it get you?'"

Today we know the answer -- all of us. All who search their hearts in honesty and candor know it.

We know that these men died to save their country from a terrible danger of that day. We know, because we face that danger once again on this day.

"What did it get you?"

People who asked that question of Sergeant York and his comrades forgot the one essential fact which every man who looks can see today.

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.

They forgot that the danger (which) that threatened this country in 1917 was real -- (and) that the sacrifice of those who died averted that danger.

Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

Because our armies were victorious they demanded why our armies had fought.

Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty (is) was worth defending as those alone whose liberty is lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

But because the war had been won we forgot, some of us, that the war might have been lost.

Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years or months ago, we know now that the danger of brutality, (and) the danger of tyranny and slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

We know why these men fought to keep up our freedom -- and why the wars that save a people's liberties are wars worth fighting and worth winning -- (and) at any (price) cost. (applause)

"What did it get you?"

The men of France, prisoners in their cities, victims of searches and of seizures without law, hostages for the safety of their masters' lives, robbed of their harvests, murdered in their prisons -- the men of France would know the answer to that question. They know now what a former victory of freedom against tyranny was worth.

The Czechs (too) know the answer too. The Poles. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

We know it now.

We know that it was, in literal truth, to make the world safe for democracy that we took up arms in 1917. It was, in simple truth and in literal fact, to make the world habitable for decent and self-respecting men and women that those whom we now remember gave their lives. They died to prevent then the very thing that now, a quarter of a century later, has happened from one end of Europe to the other.

Now that it has happened we know in full the reason why they died.

We know also what obligation and duty their sacrifice imposes upon us. They did not die to make the world safe for decency and self-respect for five years or ten or maybe twenty. They died to make it safe. And if, by some fault of ours who lived beyond the war, its safety has again been threatened then the obligation and the duty are ours. It is in our charge now, as it was America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it "that these dead shall not have died in vain". Sergeant York spoke thus of the cynics and the doubters: "The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. You do not do that. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them". (applause)

The people of America agree with that. They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it.

This duty we owe, not to ourselves alone, but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us -- to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages. (applause)

*****

Mr. Ingling

P.P.F.

NOTE: TIME 11:06 is correct.

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NOVEMBER 11, 1941

Armistice Day

CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be delivered in the Amphitheatre, Arlington National Cemetery, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 11:06 A.M., E.S.T., November 11, 1941. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

WILLIAM D. HASSETT

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862 words

DRAFT #1 **ARMISTICE DAY ADDRESS**

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Our observance of this Anniversary has a particular significance in the year 1941.

For we are able today as we were not always able in the past to measure our indebtedness to those who died.

A few years ago, even a few months, we questioned, some of us, the sacrifice they had made. Standing near to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Sergeant York of Tennessee, on a recent day spoke to such questioners. "There are those in this country today", said Sergeant York, "who ask me and other veterans of World War Number One 'What did it get you?'"

Today we know the answer -- all of us. All who search their hearts in honesty and candor know it.

We know that these men died to save their country from a terrible danger of that day. We know, because we face that danger once again on this day.

"What did it get you?"

People who asked that question of Sergeant York and his comrades forgot the one essential fact which every man who looks can see today.

They forgot that the danger which threatened this country in 1917 was real -- and that the sacrifice of those who died averted that danger.

Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

Because our armies were victorious they demanded wh y our armies had fought.

Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty is worth defending as

those alone whose liberty is lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

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Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years or months ago, we know now that the danger of brutality and tyranny and slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

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"What did it get you?"

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The Czechs too know the answer. The Poles. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

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We know why these men fought to keep our freedom -- and why the wars that save a people's liberties are wars worth fighting and worth winning -- and at any price.

"What did it get you?"

The men of France, prisoners in their cities, victims of searches and of seizures without law, hostages for the safety of their masters' lives, robbed of their harvests, murdered in their prisons -- the men of France would know the answer to that question. They know now what a former victory of freedom against tyranny was worth.

The Czechs too know the answer. The Poles. The Danes. The Dutch. The Serbs. The Belgians. The Norwegians. The Greeks.

We know it now.

We know that it was, in literal truth, to make the world safe for democracy that we took up arms in 1917. It was, in simple truth and in literal fact, to make the world habitable for decent and self-respecting men that those whom we now remember gave their lives. They died to prevent then the very thing that now, a quarter century later, has happened from one end of Europe to the other.

Now that it has happened we know in full the reason why they died.

We know also what obligation and duty their sacrifice imposes upon us. They did not die to make the world safe for decency and self-respect for five years or ten or maybe twenty. They died to make it <u>safe.</u> And if, by some fault of ours who lived beyond the war, its safety has again been threatened then the obligation and the duty are ours. It is in our charge now, as it was America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it "that these dead shall not have died in vain". Sergeant York spoke thus of the cynics and doubters: "The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them".

The people of America agree with that. They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it.

This duty we owe, not to ourselves alone, but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us -- to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Address of the President
delivered in the
Amphitheatre, Arlington National
Cemetery
Armistice Day
November 11, 1941
11.06 AM
And Broadcast Over a
Nationwide Radio Hookup

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STATEMENTS FILE

HOLD FOR RELEASE HOLD FOR RELEASE HOLD FOR RELEASE

NOVEMBER 11, 1941

CAUTION: The following Armistice Day address of the President, to be delivered in the Amphitheatre, Arlington National Cemetery, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 11:06 A. M., E. S. T., November 11, 1941. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

WILLIAM D. HASSETT

You who have served, you serve today.

Among the great days of national remembrance, none is more deeply moving to Americans of our generation than the Eleventh of November, the Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918, the day sacred to the memory of those who gave their lives in the war which that day ended.

Our observance of this Anniversary has, I think, a particular significance in the year 1941.

For we are able today as we were not always able in the past to measure our indebtedness to those who died.

A few years ago, even a few months, we questioned, some of us, the sacrifice they had made. Standing near to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Sergeant York of Tennessee, on a recent day spoke to such questioners. "There are those in this country today", said Sergeant York, "who ask me and other veterans of World War Number One 'What did it get you?'"

Today we know the answer -- all of us. All who search their hearts in honesty and candor know it.

We know that these men died to save their country from a terrible danger of that day. We know, because we face that danger once again on this day.

"What did it get you?"

People who asked that question of Sergeant York and his comrades forgot the one essential fact which every man who looks can see today.

They forgot that the danger that threatened this country in 1917 was real -- and that the sacrifice of those who died averted that danger.

Because the danger was overcome they were unable to remember that the danger had been present.

Because our armies were victorious they demanded why our armies had fought.

Because our freedom was secure they took the security of our freedom for granted and asked why those who died to save it should have died at all.

"What did it get you?"

"What was there in it for you?"

If our armies of 1917 and 1918 had lost there would not have been a man or woman in America who would have wondered why the war was fought. The reasons would have faced us everywhere. We would have known why liberty is worth defending as those alone whose liberty is lost can know it. We would have known why tyranny is worth defeating as only those whom tyrants rule can know.

But because the war had been won we forgot, some of us, that the war might have been lost.

Whatever we knew or thought we knew a few years or months ago, we know now that the danger of brutality, and tyranny and slavery to freedom-loving peoples can be real and terrible.

We know why these men fought to keep our freedom -- and why the wars that save a people's liberties are wars worth fighting and worth winning -- and at any ~~price~~ cost. (applause)

"What did it get you?"

The men of France, prisoners in their cities, victims of searches and of seizures without law, hostages for the safety of their masters' lives, robbed of their harvests, murdered in their prisons -- the men of France would know the answer to that question. They know now what a former victory of freedom against tyranny was worth.

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We know it now.

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Now that it has happened we know in full the reason why they died.

We know also what obligation and duty their sacrifice imposes upon us. They did not die to make the world safe for decency and self-respect for five years or ten or maybe twenty. They died to make it safe. And if, by some fault of ours who lived beyond the war, its safety has again been threatened then the obligation and the duty are ours. It is in our charge now, as it was America's charge after the Civil War, to see to it "that these dead shall not have died in vain". Sergeant York spoke thus of the cynics and doubters: "The thing they forget is that liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those peoples who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them". (applause) You do not do that.

The people of America agree with that. They believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it.

This duty we owe, not to ourselves alone, but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us -- to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages. (applause)

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