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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 3: “The Four Freedoms” and FDR in World War II**

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**File No. 1404**

**1941 December 15**

**Radio Address on 150th Anniversary  
of Bill of Rights**

RADIO SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT

BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

DECEMBER 15, 1941

#1404

*Firs Amelicans:*

No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fifteenth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

*and in this world*  
There is not a country, large or small, on <sup>this continent,</sup> <sub>in</sub> which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity  
of the American Bill of Rights was accepted at least in principle.  
*everywhere —*

Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the  
peoples of the world -- in all probability four-fifths of them --  
support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.

But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany a  
political clique which did not accept the declarations of the  
American Bill of human rights as valid: a small clique of ambitious  
and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and admitted platform  
was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument  
declared. Indeed the entire program and goal of these political  
and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout  
the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty of which our  
American Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson --  
which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans  
who followed him -- were to these men hateful.

The rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which  
~~the Founders of the Republic~~  
seemed to ~~Jefferson~~, and which seem to us, inalienable, were,  
to Hitler and his fellows, empty words which they proposed to  
cancel forever.

The propositions they advanced to take the place of  
Jefferson's inalienable rights were these:

That the individual human being has no rights whatever  
in himself and by virtue of his humanity;

that the individual human being has no right to a  
soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own,  
or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to  
marry the woman he loves;

that his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to  
his God, and not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and  
that his only value is his value, not as a man, but as a unit  
of the Nazi state.

To Hitler the ideal of the people, as we conceive it -- the free, self-governing and responsible people -- is incomprehensible. The people, to Hitler, are "the masses" and the highest human idealism is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become "a dust particle" of the order "of force" which is to shape the universe.

To Hitler, the government, as we conceive it -- is an impossible conception. The government to him is not the servant and the instrument of the people but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act.

To Hitler the church, as we conceive it, is a monstrosity to be destroyed by every means at his command. The Nazi church is to be the "National Church", "absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine, race and nation".  
- Aryan Church -

To Hitler, the freedom of men to think as they please and speak as they please and worship as they please is, of all things imaginable, most hateful and most desperately to be feared.

The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism; this proposed return to tyranny; this effort to impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience, and of dictatorial rule, and of the suppression of truth, and of the oppression of conscience, which the free nations of the earth have long ago rejected.

What we face is nothing more nor less than an attempt to overthrow and to cancel out the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document: to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent, to accept again the absolute authority and despotic rule from which the courage and the resolution and the sacrifices of their ancestors liberated them many, many years ago.

It is an attempt which could succeed only if those who have inherited the gift of liberty had lost the manhood to preserve it. But we Americans know that the determination of this generation of our people to preserve liberty is as fixed and certain as the determination of that earlier generation of Americans to win it.

We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty our forefathers framed for us in our Bill of Rights.

We hold with all the passion of our hearts and minds to those commitments of the human spirit.

We are solemnly determined that no power or combination of powers of this earth shall shake our hold upon them.

We covenant with each other before all the world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we will not lay them down before liberty is once again secure in the world we live in.

For that security we pray; for that security we act -- now and evermore.

*Orig. Reading copy*

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* *transcribed by J. W. S.*

Bill of Rights Speech.

Second draft

Amend

Grace: please forgive  
the looks of this. I have  
had to do it myself  
myself. May I have a  
clean copy when it is  
typed again?

Caroline

Freedom has, for us Americans, a long and noble history with many dates worth marking. The General Fundamentals of Plymouth of 1636 asserted for the colonists of Massachusetts Bay the free liberties of the freeborn people of England. The Declaration of Independence of 1776

These Truths held ~~this proposition~~ to be self-evident - "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain <sup>U</sup>inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness". The Constitution, drafted in 1787, created a Union to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity".

But no date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men than the fifteenth day of December,

1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, there was adopted, by the newly united states of America, a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of mankind from one end of this earth to the other, and not in the Americas alone but in the nations of Asia and of Europe and of Africa as well.

There is not a single republic of this hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

There is not a country of any continent which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly, over the century and a half now past.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, there was hardly a country of the earth in which the validity of the declaration

of the American Bill of Rights was not, in principle at least,  
accepted.

## THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

Washington, D. C.

December 13, 1941

Dear Grace:

Three things.

1. Here's the second draft of the speech on the Bill of Rights for Monday evening. I have discarded the first draft entirely and have rewritten as the President directed. The length may be something over the six minutes the President wanted, but I hope very much the President won't mind too much. For one thing, it is hard to compress so tremendously important a subject beyond a certain point. For another, elaborate preparations have been made from one coast to the other to have people assembled in schools, churches, meeting houses, to listen to the President's speech and I am sure they would like to have as much as he felt like giving them. The original plan, as you recall, was for a twelve minute speech. However, I don't think this will run over seven or eight minutes at the most. If anything needs to be done to it, please call me at any hour of the day or night, except from three-thirty to four-thirty Monday, when the Attorney General and I are speaking at a meeting here in the Library.

2. I gather there will be an announcement about Pearl Harbor following Frank Knox's return. I suggested to Bob Sherwood, before the speech last Tuesday, a form of announcement which he liked but which reached him too late for consideration in that connection. The suggestion was this: That we should say that the story on Parl Harbor is now in hand; that the essential fact which stands out is that the Japanese purpose was to knock us out of the war before we got into it. This purpose is made apparent by the elaborate deceptions practiced, by the enormous preparations made for the attack, by the huge risks run by the attackers, by the synchronization of the attacks on Pearl Harbor and attacks elsewhere, etc. etc. All this adds up to the fact that the real purpose was to knock us out of the war altogether and entirely by one audacious blow. That purpose failed. [With this as start, we can then go on to tell what happened in so far as we plan to tell it.]

3. I am enclosing herewith a personal letter to the President which I should very much like him to have as soon as you think he might have a free moment to read it.

Thank you for everything.

Yours,

Miss Grace Tully  
Secretary to the President  
The White House

*R. M.*

Enclosures (2)

*Final Draft*

RADIO SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
BILL OF RIGHTS DAY  
DECEMBER 15, 1941

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No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fifteenth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

There is not a country, large or small, on this continent which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the peoples of the world -- in all probability four-fifths of them -- support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.

But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany  
a political clique which did not accept the declarations of  
the American Bill of human rights as valid: a small clique of  
ambitious and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and  
admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights  
that instrument declared. Indeed the entire program of these  
<sup>A</sup>  
political and moral ~~gangsters~~<sup>tigers</sup><sub>and goal</sub> was nothing more than the over-  
throw, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human  
liberty of which our American Bill of Rights is the mother  
charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson -  
which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans  
who followed him - were to these men hateful. The rights to

life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which seemed to

Jefferson, and which seem to us, inalienable, were, to Hitler

Empty words which they proposed to cancel,  
and his fellows, empty words to alienate and destroy.

To take the place of Jefferson's inalienable rights  
The propositions they advanced were these:

That the individual human being has no rights in <sup>whatever</sup>

himself and by virtue of his humanity;

(the individual human being)  
that <sup>he</sup> has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind

of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even

to live where he pleases or to marry the woman he loves;

that his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to

his God, and not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and his

only value is his value not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi

state.

To Hitler the ideal of the people, as we conceive ~~it~~ it

~~people~~ - the free, self-governing and responsible people - is

INCOMPREHENSIBLE.)

~~masses~~ The people, to Hitler, are "the masses" and the

highest human idealism is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become "a dust particle" of the order "of force" which is to shape the universe.

To Hitler, the government, as we conceive the government, is an impossible conception. The government is not the servant and the instrument of the people but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act.

To Hitler the church, as we conceive the church, is a monstrosity to be destroyed by every means at his command. The Nazi church is the "National Church", "absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine, race and nation".

To Hitler, the freedom of men to think as they please and speak as they please and worship as they please is, of all things imaginable, most hateful and most desperately to be feared.

The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which

we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism; this proposed return to tyranny; this effort to impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience, and of dictatorial rule, and of the suppression of truth, and of the oppression of conscience, which we, in this country, rejected six generations long ago rejected.

~~the free nations of the earth have  
age and which the nations of the world have one after the other  
rejected over the last century and a half.~~

What we face is nothing more nor less than an attempt to overthrow and ~~destroy~~ the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document, and to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent, to ~~abandon themselves to the imposition~~ accept again ~~the~~ ~~absolute authority and despotic rule~~ ~~of the human spirit and the compilation of all human life~~

from which the courage and the resolution and the sacrifices  
of their ancestors liberated them many, many years ago.

It is an attempt which could succeed only if those  
who have inherited the ~~preserving~~ gift of liberty had lost the  
manhood to preserve it. But we Americans know that the deter-  
mination of this generation of our people to preserve ~~the~~  
liberty ~~is~~ is as fixed and certain as the determination of that  
~~earlier generation which won them.~~  
~~of AMERICANS TO WIN IT!~~  
earlier generation <sup>which won them.</sup> We will not, under any  
threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees  
of liberty our forefathers framed for us in ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> Bill of Rights.

We hold with all the passion of our hearts and minds to those  
commitments of the human spirit. We are solemnly determined  
that no power or combination of powers of this earth shall shake  
our hold upon them. We covenant with each other before all the  
world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we

~~the world is safe for democracy~~

~~so help us God~~ — Liberty is once  
again secure in the world we  
live in. For that security we pray;  
for that security we act — and  
and ~~more~~ ~~more~~.

#1404

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
BROADCAST IN CONNECTION WITH  
THE CELEBRATION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE ADOPTION OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS  
DECEMBER 15, 1941

FREE AMERICANS:

No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fifteenth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

There is not a country, large or small, on this continent and in this world which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted everywhere at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the peoples of the whole world -- in all probability four-fifths of them -- support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.

But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany a political clique which did not accept the declarations of the American Bill of human rights as valid: a small clique of ambitious and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument declared. Indeed the entire program and goal of

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.

CONFIDENTIAL NOTE

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to lose his wife, wife and family -viveday important tools and it

these political and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty of which our American Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson -- which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans who followed him -- were to these men hateful. The rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which seemed (to Jefferson) to the Founders of the Republic, and which seem to us, inalienable, were, to Hitler and his fellows, empty words which they proposed to cancel forever.

The propositions they advanced to take the place of Jefferson's inalienable rights were these:

That the individual human being has no rights (whatever) whatsoever in himself and by virtue of his humanity;

That the individual human being has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to marry the woman he loves;

That his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to his God, (and) not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and that his only value is his value, not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi state.

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We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger,

surrender the guarantees of liberty our forefathers framed for us in our Bill of Rights.

We hold with all the passion of our hearts and minds to those commitments of the human spirit.

We are solemnly determined that no power or combination of powers of this earth shall shake our hold upon them.

We covenant with each other before all the world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we will not lay them down before liberty is once again secure in the world we live in. For that security we pray; for that security we act -- now and evermore.

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6-1281+1

P. E. B.  
P.F.

1941

File

Suggestions for the draft of a Proclamation designating the 15th  
day of December as Bill of Rights Day

*Re*  
Whereas a Joint Resolution of Congress, approved August 21,  
1941, authorizes and requests the President of the United States  
"to issue a proclamation designating December 15, 1941 as Bill of  
Rights Day, calling upon officials of the Government to display the  
flag of the United States on all Government buildings on that day,  
and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day with  
appropriate ceremonies and prayer"

Now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the  
United States of America, ~~do hereby and by virtue of the authority~~  
~~conferred upon me by the said Joint Resolution~~ do hereby designate  
December 15, 1941 as Bill of Rights Day, ~~and call upon~~ <sup>the</sup> officials  
of the Government, and upon the people of the United States, to  
observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public

buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate.

The first ten amendments, the great American charter of personal liberty and human dignity, became a part of the Constitution of the United States on the 15th day of December 1791. It is fitting that the anniversary of its adoption should be remembered by the nation which, for one hundred and fifty years, has enjoyed the immeasurable privileges which that charter guaranteed: the privileges of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the free right to petition the government for redress of grievances. It is especially fitting that this anniversary should be remembered and observed by those institutions of a democratic people which owe their very existence to the guarantees of the Bill of Rights: the free schools, the free churches, the labor unions, the religious and educational and civic organizations.

tions of all kinds which, without the guarantee of the Bill of Rights, could never have existed; which sicken and disappear whenever, in any country, these rights are curtailed or withdrawn.

The 15th day of December, 1941, is therefore set apart as a day of mobilization for freedom and for human rights, a day ~~of remembrance~~  
~~the commemoration~~ of the democratic and peaceful action by which these rights were gained, ~~and for the~~ reassessment of their present meaning and their living worth. Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them. They come in time to take these rights for granted and to ~~assume~~  
~~think~~ their protection <sup>is</sup> assured. We, however, who have seen ~~these~~ ~~other~~ ~~now~~ ~~some~~ privileges lost in other continents and countries ~~now some~~ appreciate ~~those~~ <sup>1</sup> ~~the~~ conception of their meaning to ~~the~~ people who enjoyed them once and now no longer can. We understand in some measure what their loss can mean. And by that ~~understanding~~ we have come to a clearer conception ~~realization~~

of their worth to us, and to a stronger and more unalterable  
*here in our land*  
determination that they shall not ~~ever~~ be lost or weakened or  
curtailed.

It is to give public expression and outward form to that  
understanding and that determination that we are about to  
~~December is set apart for the commemoration~~ the adoption of  
the Bill of Rights and ~~and~~ rededicate ~~to~~ its principles  
*1789*  
and practice.  
A

BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the civil rights and liberties guaranteed by our Constitution are the lifeblood of American democracy; and

WHEREAS the guarantee of such rights and liberties was firmly welded into our charter of government by the adoption of the Bill of Rights on December 15, 1791; and

WHEREAS experience has proved once again that liberty must be guarded with unswerving vigilance, and when challenged must be defended with unyielding courage and determination; and

WHEREAS we realize now more clearly than ever that freedom and liberty imply not only privileges but also responsibilities; and

WHEREAS our country is taking decisive measures to safeguard our heritage of freedom and liberty; and

WHEREAS the joint resolution of Congress, approved August 21, 1941, entitled "To provide for the proper observance of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights", provides:

"That the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation designating December 15, 1941, as Bill of Rights Day, calling upon officials of the Government to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on that day, and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and prayer."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate December 15, 1941, as Bill of Rights Day.

And I call upon the officials of the Government to have

the flag of the United States displayed on all Government buildings on that day; and I invite and urge the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and prayer at their homes, in schools, and in places of congregation and of worship.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this        day of                  ,  
in the year of our  
Lord nineteen  
hundred and  
forty-one, and  
of the Indepen-  
dence of the  
United States of  
America the one hun-  
dred and sixty-sixth.

By the President:

Secretary of State.



Office of the Attorney General  
Washington, D.C.

November 25, 1941.

Through Division of the Federal Register.

The President,

The White House.

My dear Mr. President:

I am herewith transmitting a revised draft of a proposed proclamation entitled "Bill of Rights Day", together with a form of warrant authorizing and directing the Secretary of State to cause the seal of the United States to be affixed to the proclamation.

The proposed proclamation, presented by the Secretary of State and forwarded for my consideration by the Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget under date of November 24, 1941, has been considerably revised as to language, particularly the language of the preamble, but no change has been made in the general purpose or intent. As revised, the proposed proclamation has my approval as to form and legality.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive ink, appearing to read "Francis E. Kelly".

Attorney General.

NOV 24 1941

My dear Mr. Attorney General:

Herewith is a proposed Executive Proclamation, presented by the Secretary of State, designating December 15, 1941 as Bill of Rights Day.

The proposed proclamation is to be issued pursuant to the Joint Resolution approved on August 21, 1941, "To provide for the proper observance of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights".

This proclamation has my approval.

Very truly yours,

{Signed} John B. Bradford, Jr.,

Assistant Director.

The Honorable,

The Attorney General.

Enclosures.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

In reply refer to  
RP

November 18, 1941

My dear Mr. Smith:

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Order No. 7298 approved February 18, 1936 I enclose for your consideration a draft of a proposed proclamation regarding the observance of December 15, 1941 as Bill of Rights Day. If the draft proclamation meets with your approval, it is requested that it be referred to the Attorney General for his consideration and, if he approves it, transmitted to the Director of the Division of the Federal Register, The National Archives, for appropriate action.

I also enclose the warrant to be signed by the President authorizing and directing me to cause the seal of the United States to be affixed to the proclamation regarding Bill of Rights Day.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosures:

1. Draft of proclamation  
(original and 6 copies).
2. Warrant.

The Honorable  
Harold D. Smith,  
Director, Bureau of the Budget.

RECEIVED

Nov 19 10 07 AM '41

BUREAU OF THE BUDGET

Suggestions for the draft of a Proclamation designating the 15th  
day of December as Bill of Rights Day

Whereas a Joint Resolution of Congress, approved August 21, 1941, authorizes and requests the President of the United States "to issue a proclamation designating December 15, 1941 as Bill of Rights Day, calling upon officials of the Government to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on that day, and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and prayer"

Now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, acting under and by virtue of the authority conferred upon me by the said Joint Resolution do hereby designate December 15, 1941 as Bill of Rights Day and do call upon officials of the Government, and upon the people of the United States, to observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public

buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate.

The first ten amendments, the great American charter of personal liberty and human dignity, became a part of the Constitution of the United States on the 15th day of December 1791. It is fitting that the anniversary of its adoption should be remembered by the nation which, for one hundred and fifty years, has enjoyed the immeasurable privileges which that charter guaranteed: the privileges of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the free right to petition the government for redress of grievances. It is especially fitting that this anniversary should be remembered and observed by those institutions of a democratic people which owe their very existence to the guarantees of the Bill of Rights: the free schools, the free churches, the labor unions, the religious and educational and civic organiza-

tions of all kinds which, without the guarantee of the Bill of Rights, could never have existed; which sicken and disappear whenever, in any country, these rights are curtailed or withdrawn.

The 15th day of December, 1941, is therefore set apart as a day of mobilization for freedom and for human rights, a day for the commemoration of the democratic and peaceful action by which these rights were gained and for the reassessment of their present meaning and their living worth. Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them. They come in time to take these rights for granted and to think of their protection as assured. We, however, who have seen such privileges lost in other continents and countries have some conception of their meaning to the people who enjoyed them once and now no longer can. We understand in some measure what their loss can mean. And by that understanding we have come to a clearer conception

of their worth to us, and to a stronger and more unalterable determination that they shall not here be lost or weakened or curtailed.

It is to give public expression and outward form to that understanding and that determination that the fifteenth day of December is set apart for the commemoration of the adoption of the Bill of Rights and a national rededication to its principles and practice.

*Final Carbon Copy*

RADIO SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT

BILL OF RIGHTS DAY

DECEMBER 15, 1941

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No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fifteenth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

There is not a country, large or small, on this continent, which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the peoples of the world -- in all probability four-fifths of them -- support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.

But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany a political clique which did not accept the declarations of the American Bill of human rights as valid: a small clique of ambitious and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument declared. Indeed the entire program and goal of these political and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty of which our American Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson -- which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans who followed him -- were to these men hateful.

The rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which seemed to Jefferson, and which seem to us, inalienable, were, to Hitler and his fellows, empty words which they proposed to cancel forever.

The propositions they advanced to take the place of Jefferson's inalienable rights were these:

That the individual human being has no rights whatever in himself and by virtue of his humanity;

that the individual human being has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to marry the ~~woman~~ loves;

that his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to his God, and not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and that his only value is his value, not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi state.

To Hitler the ideal of the people, as we conceive it -- the free, self-governing and responsible people -- is incomprehensible. The people, to Hitler, are "the masses" and the highest human idealism is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become "a dust particle" of the order "of force" which is to shape the universe.

To Hitler, the government, as we conceive it -- is an impossible conception. The government to him is not the servant and the instrument of the people but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act.

To Hitler the church, as we conceive it, is a monstrosity to be destroyed by every means at his command. The Nazi church is to be the "National Church", "absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine, race and nation".

To Hitler, the freedom of men to think as they please and speak as they please and worship as they please is, of all things imaginable, most hateful and most desperately to be feared.

The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism; this proposed return to tyranny; this effort to impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience, and of dictatorial rule, and of the suppression of truth, and of the oppression of conscience, which the free nations of the earth have long ago rejected.

What we face is nothing more nor less than an attempt to overthrow and to cancel out the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document: to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent, to accept again the absolute authority and despotic rule from which the courage and the resolution and the sacrifices of their ancestors liberated them many, many years ago.

It is an attempt which could succeed only if those who have inherited the gift of liberty had lost the manhood to preserve it. But we Americans know that the determination of this generation of our people to preserve liberty is as fixed and certain as the determination of that earlier generation of Americans to win it.

We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty our forefathers framed for us in our Bill of Rights.

We hold with all the passion of our hearts and minds to those commitments of the human spirit.

We are solemnly determined that no power or combination of powers of this earth shall shake our hold upon them.

We covenant with each other before all the world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we will not lay down before liberty is once again secure in the world we live in. For that security we pray; for that security we act -- now and evermore.

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STATEMENTS FILE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

DECEMBER 15, 1941

CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be broadcast in connection with the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights, must be held in confidence until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 10:40 E.S.T., December 15, 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.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

*Free Americans:*

No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fifteenth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

*and in this world*  
There is not a country, large or small, on this continent which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1935, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the peoples of the world - in all probability four-fifths of them - support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.

*everywhere*

*whole*

But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany a political clique which did not accept the declarations of the American Bill of human rights as valid; a small clique of ambitious and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument declared. Indeed the entire program and goal of these political and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty of which our American Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson - which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans who followed him - were to these men hateful. The rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which ~~recommends~~ to Jefferson, and which seem to us, inalienable, were, to Hitler and his fellows, ugly words which they proposed to cancel forever.

The propositions they advanced to take the place of Jefferson's inalienable rights were these:

That the individual human being has no rights <sup>whatsoever</sup> in himself and by virtue of his humanity;

That the individual human being has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to marry the woman he loves;

That his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to his God, <sup>(and)</sup> not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and that his only value is his value, not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi state,

To Hitler the ideal of the people, as we conceive it - the free, self-governing and responsible people - is incomprehensible. The people, to Hitler, are "the masses" and the highest human idealism is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become "a dust particle" of the order "of force" which is to shape <sup>the</sup> universe.

To Hitler, the government, as we conceive it, is an impossible conception. The government to him is not the servant and the instrument of the people but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act.

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The issue of our time, the issue in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism; this proposed return to tyranny; this effort to impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience, (and) of dictatorial rule, (and) of the suppression of truth, (and) of the oppression of conscience, which the free nations of the earth have long ago rejected.

That we face is nothing more nor less than an attempt to overthrow and to cancel out the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document; to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent, to accept again the absolute authority and despotic rule from which the courage and the resolution and the sacrifices of their ancestors liberated them many, many years ago.

*an attempt*

It is an attempt, which could succeed only if those who have inherited the gift of liberty had lost the manhood to preserve it. But we Americans know that the determination of this generation of our people to preserve liberty is as fixed and certain as the determination of that earlier generation of Americans to win it.

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HOLD FOR RELEASE

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