February 19, 1943 FDR and Madame Chiang at Press Conference 1452

FDR Speech File

FOR THE PRESS IMMEDIATE RELEASE FEBRUARY 19, 1943

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT IN PRESENTING THE NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENTS TO MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK

May I take this opportunity, not to introduce Madame Chiang to you, but to present all of you to her.

Madame Chiang, this is nearly our one-thousandth Press Conference in ten years, and the fact that the press and I are not only on speaking terms after all those years is perhaps a very good sign. We still talk to each other. I think we rather like each other.

You have got a very representative group here. There is no country in the world, I think, that has more newspapers on a population basis -- and magazines -- than we have. They are very live wires. But I can tell the press something besides that, and that is that I wish we -- the press and myself -- knew half as much about China as Madame Chiang knows about us, as a special envoy. That is very different from most special envoys who come to this country. Her visit to us is going to be of real help in the days to come, not only because -- I suppose the people of China and the people of the United States for a very great number of years -- well over a century -- have been, in thought and in objective, closer to us Americans than almost any other peoples in the world. That is because we have the same great ideals.

China, in the last -- less than half a century -- has become one of the great Democracies of the world and we must remember always that her civilization is thousands of years older than ours. And that is why I feel that we in this country have a great deal more to learn about China than China has to learn about us.

Madame Chiang knows this country, and I am going to ask her, therefore, as an old friend just to say a few words. And afterwards, remember always, please, that this Conference is not quotable for either of us -- in other words, treat it just as if it were any regular Conference of mine -- you will receive her, and perhaps she will be willing to answer a few questions of the "non-catch" type.

And so I present to you the American press.

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INFORMAL REMARKS OF MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK

Mr. President, Mrs. Roosevelt, ladies and gentlemen of the Press: I haven't made any preparations for a speech. I don't know what I am supposed to say to you today, but I confess that I have often heard that the pen is mightier than the sword. And when I saw all those pencils flashing across the pages as the President spoke, I must confess that whereas I have been to all the fronts in China and have never felt any fear so far as Japanese swords are concerned, I do not know whether I felt fear or not when I saw all your pencils flashing across the pages.

However, I don't think I do, because I see flashes of smiles coming from your faces, so I feel that I am amongst friends, and that I have nothing to fear from the Press, although I understand that there are such questions as "catch" questions. I don't think you are going to heckle me with them. I am sure you won't.

I want to say one thing to you, and that is that we in China have always had social democracy through these thousands of years, and that we are now depending on our Press, now and in the future, so that in time we shall really realize not only social democracy but political democracy as well; because, as I said, the pen is mightier than the sword, and from what I have seen of your American Press, I am sure that our hopes for the Chinese Press will also be realized.

I am particularly referring to the President's trip to Casablanca. I am sure that all of you knew about it, and yet there was not a single word in the Press about it. And I think that shows beautiful cooperation between the Administration and the Press. And it is particularly necessary, during these war days, that there should be such cooperation. I want to congratulate you on your tact and on your integrity.

Thank you.

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STATEMENTS FILE

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You have got a very representative group here. There is no country in the world, I think, that has more newspapers on a population basis -- and magazines -- than we have. They are very live wires. But I can tell the press something besides that, and that is that I wish we -- the press and myself -- knew half as much about China as Madame Chiang knows about us, as a special envoy. That is very different from most special envoys who come to this country. Her visit to us is going to be of real help in the days to come, not only because -- I suppose the people of China and the people of the United States for a very great number of years -- well over a century -- have been, in thought and in objective, closer to us Americans than almost any other peoples in the world, because we have the same great ideals.

China, in the last -- less than half a century -- has become one of the great Democracies of the world, and we must remember always that her civilization is thousands of years older than ours. And that is why I feel that we in this country have a great deal more to learn about China than China has to learn about us. Madame Chiang knows this country, and I am going to ask her, therefore, as an old friend just to say a few words. And afterwards, remember always, that this Conference is not

quotable for either of us -- in other words, treat it just as if it were any regular Conference of mine -- you will receive her, and perhaps she will be willing to answer a few questions of the "non-catch" type. (laughter)

And so I present to you the American press.

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Informal remarks by
Madame Chiang Kai-Shek:

MADAME CHIANG: Mr. President, Mrs. Roosevelt, ladies and gentlemen of the Press: I haven't made any preparations for a speech. I don't know what I am supposed to say to you today, but I confess that I have often heard that the pen is mightier than the sword. And when I saw all those pencils flashing across the pages as the President spoke, I must confess that whereas I have been to all the fronts in China and have never felt any fear so far as Japanese swords are concerned, I do not know whether I felt fear or not when I saw all your pencils flashing across the pages. (laughter)

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