
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945
Series 3: “The Four Freedoms” and FDR in World War II

File No. 1504

1944 January 19

**Toast of the President to President Angerita of
Venezuela**

T O A S T Of The President
At The State Dinner For
President Isaias Medina Angarita of Venezuela
January 19, 1944
(With President Medina's Reply)

THE PRESIDENT:

Let me go back to my early days. I want to tell you of two episodes of my college days. I don't think this first one has been written down, and I don't think even the Secretary of State knows it.

In 1893, I think it was, Great Britain attempted to take, in effect by force of arms, Venezuelan Guiana, in spite of a rather well-established boundary going back for many generations. Hence there came along a thing called the Venezuelan episode. And in a letter that was written, I think by Secretary of State Olney, but actually written and signed in its original by President Cleveland, it was translated from the State Department to our Ambassador in London, Thomas F. Bayard.

The Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs at that time in England was Lord Salisbury. My older half-brother was the Counselor of the Embassy in London. And this letter came over the wires, I suppose in code, and he put it into English with his hair rising as he translated it. It was President Cleveland's Venezuelan message, which in effect told Great Britain that she couldn't have any more territory on the American continent.

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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.

T. G. A. G. T. OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
January 17, 1914

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When the translation was done, he took it into

Ambassador Bayard, and said, "I have something pretty important, Mr. Ambassador, with the direction that you take it to Lord Salisbury at once."

Ambassador Bayard read it, and he said, "That means war between the United States and Great Britain. I will not deliver it."

And my brother said, "Mr. Ambassador, you have got to deliver it, it's from the President and the Secretary of State. You have got to deliver it."

The Ambassador said, "I won't deliver it. I will not be responsible for a war between Great Britain and the United States."

And my brother said to him, "If you will not deliver it, I will have to telegraph back for instructions to the Secretary of State. What am I going to do?"

Well, after lunch, the Ambassador sent for my brother and said, "All right. I will deliver it. But I am going to leave for Scotland this afternoon. I am going to get out of the way."

So sure enough, Mr. Bayard went around to see Lord Salisbury after lunch -- my brother was standing back -- and he walked into Lord Salisbury's room at the Foreign Office and said, "Mr. Minister, there it is. I hope you can do something that will stop short of war, but it is terribly serious. I don't want to go to war, and neither do you. What about Venezuela? But the President means that you can't have any more land on the American continent. Goodbye." And he left

for Scotland that afternoon. Well, that was my first connection with Venezuela.

The other episode is perhaps not as historically important. When I was in college, in my senior year, I went down with my room-mate on one of those I am sorry to say German cruises down through the West Indies. And we got down to Caracas and stopped there. And my room-mate and I went up to the clerk of the hotel and said, "What's doing tonight? We want to go to a cafe, some place where they have dancing." I don't know what they would call it today, but probably a different name.

And the clerk said, "Oh, you can't do that. You have got to go to the opera."

My room-mate and I said, "We didn't come to Caracas to go to the opera."

He said, "But you must. Everybody is going to the opera, they are giving Pagliacci." Well, I had been to the opera with my mother several times. I said, "I have never heard of Pagliacci."

"But," he said, "the great artist is singing."

I said, "I don't care."

"But," he said, "it's Caruso."

I said, "I never heard of him."

In New York nobody had ever heard of him, and yet at that time Caruso was considered the greatest tenor in all the world, he had sung at Caracas before, in Buenos Aires, in Rio and in Lima, I think. He was one of the great singers known

to all South America.

So because there was nowhere else to go, we went to the opera. And he was perfectly marvelous.

After we got back to New York, I talked to some of my musical friends about Caruso and Pagliacci, but they had never heard of him. Years later, Caruso was taken on by the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York, and of course became the greatest tenor of all time. But I have always said that my room-mate and I discovered Caruso. (laughter)

So at least I can say that I have seen Venezuela; and President Medina has been in the United States, I think it was four years ago, and at that time he saw the beginning -- before we got into the war -- of what we were preparing against. I think that if he will multiply by ten times the production that he saw four years ago, he will have a very good idea of what we are doing now.

And yet out of what we are doing now in this country in the way of production, it is still literally impossible for us to take a part of that production to fill the well-merited, great essential plans which Venezuela has for the development of the future. We haven't got to that time yet, but we are going to do it just as soon as our own production gets up a little beyond our actual needs for the war. May that time come very soon.

I have always been interested in our sister Republics, for one reason especially, from an historic point again, the fact that there were two great liberators -- essentially two

-- on the whole of the hemisphere: our own George Washington, and the Venezuelan Bolivar, who after all was responsible not merely for setting up one Republic but of many -- Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Bolivar is taking his place in our school books, and his proper place in history. And I wish much that I could go down there and see the wonderful shrine that has been erected over Bolivar there, because it doesn't belong just to Venezuela it belongs to all the Americas. Some day people are going to go there to his home town, or his actual homestead, just as much as they come here to Washington or Mount Vernon.

I can say this, that in all these years, even from the early days when a thing called the Miranda expedition was fitted out in New York, when we were completely un-neutral, when we were trying to help Venezuela to obtain its own independence against Spain, all through these years, nearly a century and a half now, we have had an association, a relationship with Venezuela -- and in a good many tight places, too -- where the spirit, the purpose, the objectives between our two nations have been identical.

And I hope much -- I believe -- that that relationship is going to go on through all the years, because the objectives are identical.

It is a very great honor, and a very great pleasure, to have President Medina here with us tonight. He knows the United States. I wish I knew Venezuela as well. Venezuela has a great future. It is a country not only of magnificent

resources, but a nation which has done so magnificently in so many ways during its very long history of independence that Venezuela, in the future of the Americas, is going to lead a very paramount role with the United States.

And so I think we might well drink the health, the prosperity and better knowledge of a future day, to President Medina.

(the Toast was drunk)

PRESIDENT MEDINA: (translation)

Although I have no anecdote to relate, I appreciate the friendly and informal language of President Roosevelt.

On behalf of Venezuela, a very difficult moment in the history of which country President Roosevelt recalled, I come to express a sincere and sure friendship for the United States. Our friendship is sure, for we do not offer what we cannot fulfill.

I was particularly interested in the President's recollection of the role played by his brother in the defense of our just cause at the time of our difficulties with the British. I did not know of this episode, and I am glad to have this opportunity of applauding the memory of the President's brother.

Venezuela is a young country, rich in possibilities, and with a noble tradition. It has constantly distinguished itself in the defense of just causes, and in the love and affection which it has for the United States.

The resources of my country have been placed at the disposal of the United Nations. Following Pearl Harbor, I was the first President to state the attitude of my country, and to place Venezuela at the side of the United States.

President Roosevelt has eloquently set forth his willingness to help us to develop Venezuela. I wish to assure him that Venezuela is a country of stable institutions, ready to accept and to welcome foreign capital.

When peace comes, Venezuela is ready to contribute to the formation of a new world, where nations great and small will live and cooperate together in a spirit of equality and justice. We do not fear the great power of the United States, because we confide in your ideals of justice and democracy.

(President Medina then drank to the
health of President Roosevelt)

STATEMENTS FILE

Rough Copy

TOAST OF THE PRESIDENT, AT THE STATE DINNER
FOR PRESIDENT MEDINA OF VENEZUELA...1-19-44

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PRESIDENT MEDINA'S REMARKS IN
REPLY TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT
ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 19, 1944
AT THE WHITE HOUSE

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(PRESIDENT ISAIAS MEDINA ANGARITA)

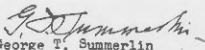


DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 21, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROMAGNA

Referring to your memorandum of January 20,
I enclose a translation of President Medina's
remarks in response to President Roosevelt's toast
on the evening of January 19 at the White House.


George T. Summerlin
Chief of Protocol

Enclosure:
Translation of President
Medina's remarks.



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