
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. 1529

1944 August 23

**Remarks to Dumbarton Oaks Conference
Delegates**

Informal Remarks of the President
To the Dumbarton Oaks Conference Delegates
Executive Office of the President
August 23, 1944 -- 12.45 p.m., e.w.t.

Well, gentlemen, this is a very informal occasion. I haven't prepared any speech for this occasion. It is merely a feeling on my part that I would like to shake hands with you. I would like very much to be able to go out to that place out there with the fancy name -- what do you call it? -- Dumbarton Oaks, something like that, because they have some lovely things there collected from all over the world. I would like to be able to take a part in your discussions.

It always reminds me, a conference of this kind, of an old saying of a gentleman called Alfred E. Smith, who used to be Governor of New York. He was very, very successful in settling any problem between capital and labor, or anything that had to do with the State government in which there was a controversy.

He said if you can get 'em into one room with a big table and make them take their coats off and put their feet up on the table, and give each one of them a good cigar and a scotch and soda, you can always make 'em agree. (laughter)

Well, there was something in it -- in the spirit of taking one's coat off, which we do in this country with great frequency. They don't do it so much in England, and I don't think they do it as much in Russia. But put your feet on the table -- that also is an American habit. And a scotch and

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Well, gentlemen, this is a very important occasion. I haven't prepared any speech for this occasion. It is really a feeling on my part that I would like to share hands with you. I would like very much to be able to do that since the there with the tempo same -- what do you call it -- something like that, something like that, because they have some feelings there collected from all over the world. I would like to be able to take a part in your discussions. It always reminds me, a conference of this kind, of an old saying of a gentleman called Alfred D. White, who used to be Governor of New York. He was very, very successful in settling any problem between social and labor, or anything that had to do with the Government in which there was a controversy. He said if you can get an idea one hour with a big table and make them take their seats off and put their feet up on the table, and give each one of them a good cigar and a good and good, you can always make an agree. (laughter) Well, there was something in it -- in the spirit of taking one's seat off, which we do in this country with great frequency. They don't do it so much in England, and I don't think they do it so much in Russia. But put your feet on the table -- that also is an American habit. And a second and

soda, or its equivalent, is, I think, a universal habit. (laughter) So I hope that they are entertaining you out at Dumbarton Oaks along those lines.

You have a great responsibility. In a way, it's a preliminary responsibility. But, after all, we learn from experience, and what I hope is that in planning for the peace that is to come we will arrive at the same good cooperation and unity of action as we have in the carrying on of the war. And that is a very remarkable fact, that we have carried on this war with such great unanimity.

I often think that it comes down so much to personalities. When, back in 1940, at the time -- 1941 -- of the Atlantic Charter, just for example, I didn't know Mr. Churchill at all. Well, I had met him once or twice very informally during the first World War. I didn't know Mr. Eden. But up there in the North Atlantic, three or four days together, two ships lying alongside of each other, we got awfully fond of each other. I got to know him, and he got to know me. In other words, I met the fellow, and you can't hate a man that you know -- have a chance to know well.

Later on, at Teheran -- before -- before Teheran, Mr. Molotov came up and we had a grand time together. And then during the following year, up at Teheran, the Marshal and I got to know each other. We got on beautifully. We cracked the ice -- if there ever was any ice -- and since then there has been no ice. And that's the spirit in which I know you are going about your work.

The -- I was just talking with the -- with the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, who is a great deal older than any of us -- he is nearly 77, and he has had a very, very long experience in the Government -- and he was saying that one of the tasks we face is making this conference of ours -- and the successor conferences -- something that will last, last a long time, because he says -- he says, unfortunately in Germany the young people, the young Nazis got an idea which will be a dangerous idea to the peace of the world just as long as they have anything to say about it.

The prisoners of 17, 18, 20, that we are capturing now -- both the French front and the Soviet front -- these German prisoners of that age are even worse in their Naziism than the prisoners of 40 or 45. And, therefore, as long as they have anything to say about it -- these young men -- the peril of Naziism will always be before us. The same thing is true of Japan, under certain circumstances, although that is not a serious problem.

And we have got to make, not merely a peace but a peace that will last, and a peace in which the -- the larger nations will work absolutely in unison in preventing war by force. We have all had to come to it. It may have gone -- gone against the grain for many of us to admit a thing like that. We didn't believe it ten years ago -- twenty years ago. But the four of us must meet together -- and I said the four, because we hope that in time the Chinese Republic will be in with us, representing a fairly large sector of the population of the world --

over four hundred million people. And these four people have got to be friends, conferring all the time -- the basis of getting to know each other -- putting their feet up on the table.

And so I am very hopeful that it can be done, because of the spirit that has been shown in the past in getting together for the winning of the war. Well, we think now that that is in sight. It isn't even around the corner. We can't tell. We don't -- if we are wise -- we don't set dates on the winning of the war, or for the capture of a city, or anything else. Too many people do that.

But there is the spirit, though, that we have learned so well in the last few years -- we have acquired. It is something new, this intimate relationship between the British Empire and the United States. It's new. This great friendship between the Russian people and the American people -- that's new. Well, let's hang on to both of them, and by spreading that spirit around the world, we may have a peaceful period for our grandchildren to grow up in.

And so all I can do is to wish you every possible success in this great task that you have undertaken. It won't be a final task, you know that, but at least it gives us something to build on, so that we can accomplish the one thing that humanity has been looking forward to for a great many hundreds of years.

It's good to see you. Good luck.

(this transcript was edited personally by the President, and then given out to the press as per attached copy)

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To The Delegates To The Dumbarton Oaks Conference

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I ~~often~~ ^{often} think that it comes down ~~so much~~ ^{at the time of} to personalities. When, back in ~~1940~~ ^{at the time of} 1941 ~~the~~ ^{not} of the Atlantic Charter, just for example, I didn't know Mr. Churchill at all ~~well~~. ~~Now~~, I had met him once or twice very informally during the first World War. I didn't ^{not} know Mr. Eden. But up there in the North Atlantic, three or four days together, ^{without} two ships lying ~~alongside~~ ^{close} to each other, we got awfully fond of each other. I got to know him, and he got to know me. In other words, ~~I got to know~~ ^{we met} ~~him~~, and you can't ^{not} hate a man that you ~~know~~ ^{have a chance to} know well.

Later on, at ~~Teheran~~ ^{here} -- before -- before Teheran, Mr. Molotov came ~~up~~ and we had a grand time together. ~~And then~~ during the following year, ~~at~~ at Teheran, the Marshal and I got to know each other. We got on beautifully. We cracked the ice, if there ever was any ice; and since then there has been no ice. And that's the spirit in which I know you are going about your work.

~~But~~ I was just talking with the -- with the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, ~~who is a great deal older than any of us~~ he is nearly 77, and he has had a very, very long experience in the Government, ~~and~~ and he was saying that one of the tasks we

face is making this conference of ours -- and the successor conferences -- something that will last, ^{He said that} last a long time, ~~because~~ ^{he says} ~~because~~, unfortunately in Germany the young people, the young Nazis ~~have~~ ^{have} an idea which will be ~~dangerous~~ ^{dangerous} to the peace of the world just as long as they have anything to say about it.

The prisoners of 17, 18, 20, that we are capturing now -- both the French front and the Soviet front -- these German prisoners of that age are even worse in their Naziism than the prisoners of 40 or 45. And, therefore, as long as ^{these young men} they have anything to say about it, ~~the peril of Naziism~~ ^{the peril of Naziism} will always be before us. ~~The same thing is true of Japan, under certain circumstances, although that is not a serious problem.~~

And we have got to make, not merely a peace but a peace that will last, and a peace in which ~~the~~ the larger nations will work absolutely in unison in preventing war by force. ~~We have all had to come to it. It may have gone on for years against the grain for many of us to admit a thing like that. We didn't believe it ten years ago -- twenty years ago.~~ But the four of us must meet together -- and I said the four, because we hope that in time the Chinese Republic will be in with us, representing a fairly large sector of the population of the world -- over four hundred million people. And these four people have ~~to be~~ ^{the basis of} friends, conferring all the time ~~and~~ getting to know each other -- "putting their feet up on the table."

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8/24/44

MSF

MEMO FOR THE FILES

This is only a draft. The
President spoke extemporaneously.

*Dumbarton Oaks
file*

General Watson

*Will you give this to
me when the Dumbarton
Oaks Conference people
come in to see me on Wed.
or Thursday of next week?*

PROPOSED MESSAGE TO BE SENT
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WASHINGTON CONVERSATIONS
ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The United Nations are now on the road to a victory which, though uncertain as to date, is clearly inevitable.

Even as the struggle goes on, and in anticipation of the day of the surrender of our enemies, we must begin to move to ensure the peace with the same intelligence, intensity and devotion which have ensured victory.

We -- the United Nations -- have already gone far on the long road to international cooperation and permanent peace by the way we have continuously worked together in fighting this war. Combined and unified action has made victory possible. In this unity there will also be found the strength which will make possible a lasting peace.

We have acquired cooperative experience and mutual confidence in each other as we have consulted and agreed on lend-lease and reverse lend-lease, on the problems of food and agriculture, relief and rehabilitation, on monetary and financial questions, on education and on oil. These are typical of other economic and social problems on which we shall have to find agreement. The important thing is that we have learned how to do it.

Many fundamental principles have already been agreed upon, and embodied in the Atlantic Charter, in the Declaration of the

United Nations at Washington, in the Declarations at Casablanca, and Moscow, and Cairo, and Teheran. They have been approved by the public opinion of the civilized world.

You -- the representatives of three of the United Nations -- are gathered here to take the next step toward eliminating war -- to devise and put together the actual peace machinery, the general international organization for the maintenance of the security of all. Much thought and many years of painstaking and unpublicized effort have already gone into planning this structure.

You now have the task of bringing to fruition the planning and thinking which have gone before, by beginning to blueprint a design to withstand the stresses and strains which might otherwise lead to war.

Great and small peace-loving nations alike, must all play their part in securing indivisible and total peace; and therefore, the international organization which you are planning should in some effective way include all of them -- regardless of size.

Total peace must be founded on justice and morality. The same rules of law and equity must apply to the weak nations as to the strong. Pacific and civilized means of resolving disputes between nations must be found and effectively used. Machinery must be set up for consultation, mediation, arbitration, and judicial determination for adjusting future differences between nations --

instead of war.

It will not be enough to renounce aggressive warfare as an instrument of national policy. We must make it clear to all possible aggressors that disaster will come to those who seek to practice aggression. We must make it so clear that none of them will make the attempt again. Not only must the public opinion of the world outlaw aggression; but arrangements must be made for the swift use of armed force itself to prevent or stop aggressive warfare.

In this economically interdependent world, it is equally essential that nations work together to create and maintain conditions of stability and well-being. To safeguard the peace, there must be machinery for international cooperation in the common interest to maintain full employment and improve living standards. Peace cannot be secure in a world half employed.

To achieve our ends, it is not necessary to create a super state, or to divest any member nation of self-government or of the armed force necessary for its own defense.

In this war we have demonstrated time and again that combined and unified action against a common enemy can be agreed upon and taken as equals by independent nations -- and taken effectively. By joint action, to which each nation has contributed men and weapons and materials of war according to its resources, geography, and abilities, we have made victory certain -- without setting up a

super state and without surrendering the essential sovereignty of any nation.

We have done it for war. Now let us do it for peace.

But in peace, as in war, no organization or machinery can work unless there is a deep-felt urge of a people to make it work. No organization or machinery to keep the peace can be successful, unless the peace-loving peoples of the world are willing to work and fight for peace in much the same way that they were willing to sacrifice and fight for military victory.

It is only by uniting the full strength of each nation with the full strength of the other free peoples of the world that we have been able to hasten the day of victory. By maintaining our present unity and by applying the same energy, patriotism and devotion, we can assure a world where mankind can live, work and worship in peace, freedom and security.

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AS GIVEN OUT TO THE PRESS

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 23, 1944

Informal remarks by the President on receiving the Delegates to the Dumbarton Oaks Conference:

"Gentlemen, this is an informal occasion. I have not prepared any speech. This is merely a feeling on my part that I would like to shake hands with you. I should like to be able to go out to Dumbarton Oaks, to take a part in your discussions.

"A conference of this kind always reminds me of an old saying of a gentleman called Alfred E. Smith, who used to be Governor of New York. He was very, very successful in settling any problem between capital and labor, or anything that had to do with the State government in which there was a controversy.

"He said if you can get the parties into one room with a big table and make them take their coats off and put their feet up on the table, and give each one of them a good cigar, you can always make them agree. Well, there was something in the idea.

"You have a great responsibility. In a way, it is a preliminary responsibility. But after all we learn from experience, and what I hope is that in planning for the peace that is to come we will arrive at the same good cooperation and unity of action as we have in the carrying on of the war. It is a very remarkable fact, that we have carried on this war with such great unanimity.

"I think that often it comes down to personalities. When, back in 1941, at the time of the Atlantic Charter, just for example, I did not know Mr. Churchill at all well. I had met him once or twice very informally during the first World War. I did not know Mr. Eden. But up there in the North Atlantic - three or four days together, with our two ships lying close together - we got awfully fond of each other. I got to know him, and he got to know me. In other words, we met, and you cannot hate a man that you know well.

"Later on Mr. Molotov came here and we had a grand time together. Then during the following year, at Teheran, the Marshal and I got to know each other. We got on beautifully. We cracked the ice, if there ever was any ice; and since then there has been no ice. And that's the spirit in which I know you are going about your work.

"I was just talking with the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson. He was saying that one of the tasks we face is making this conference of ours - and the successor conferences - something that will last, last a long time. He said that unfortunately in Germany the young people, the young Nazis ~~fact~~, an idea which will be dangerous to the peace of the world just as long as they have anything to say about it.

"The prisoners of 17, 18, 20, that we are capturing now -- both the French front and the Soviet front -- these German prisoners of that age are even worse in their Nazism than the prisoners of 40 or 45. And, therefore, as long as these young men have anything to say about it, the peril of Nazism will always be before us.

"And we have got to make, not merely a peace but a peace that will last, and a peace in which the larger nations will work absolutely in unison in preventing war by force. But the four of us have to be friends, conferring all the time -- the basis of getting to know each other -- 'putting their feet up on the table.'

OVER

"And so I am very hopeful that it can be done because of the spirit that has been shown in the past in getting together for the winning of the war. But that is the spirit that we have learned so well in the last few years. It is something new, this close relationship between the British Empire and the United States. This great friendship between the Russian people and the American people -- that is new. Let's hang on to both friendships, and by spreading that spirit around the world, we may have a peaceful period for our grandchildren to grow up in.

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"It is good to see you. Good luck."

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STATEMENTS FILE

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Well, there was something in it -- in the spirit of taking one's coat off, which we do in this country with great frequency. They don't do it so much in England, and I don't think they do it as much in Russia. But put your feet on the table -- that also is an American habit. And a scotch and soda, or its equivalent, is, I think, a universal habit. (laughter) So I

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Later on, at Teheran -- before -- before Teheran, Mr. Molotov came up and we had a grand time together. And then during the following year, up at Teheran, the Marshal and I got to know each other. We got on beautifully. We cracked the ice, if there ever was any ice; and since then there has been no ice. And that's the spirit in which I know you are going about your work.

The -- I was just talking with the -- with the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, who is a great deal older than any of us -- he is nearly 77, and he has had a very, very long experience in the Government -- and he was saying that one of the tasks we

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And we have got to make, not merely a peace but a peace that will last, and a peace in which the -- the larger nations will work absolutely in unison in preventing war by force. We have all had to come to it. It may have gone -- gone ~~maraxx~~ against the grain for many of us to admit a thing like that. We didn't believe it ten years ago -- twenty years ago. But the four of us must meet together -- and I said the four, because we hope that in time the Chinese Republic will be in with us, representing a fairly large sector of the population of the world -- over four hundred million people. And these four people have got to be friends, conferring all the time ~~and~~ ^{-- the basis of} getting to know each other -- putting their feet up on the table.

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And we have got to make, not merely a peace but a peace that will last, and a peace in which the -- the larger nations will work absolutely in unison in preventing war by force. We have all had to come to it. It may have gone -- gone ~~xxxxxx~~ against the grain for many of us to admit a thing like that. We didn't believe it ten years ago -- twenty years ago. But the four of us must meet together -- and I said the four, because we hope that in time the Chinese Republic will be in with us, representing a fairly large sector of the population of the world -- over four hundred million people. And these four people have got to be friends, conferring all the time ~~and~~ ^{-- the basis of} getting to know each other -- putting their feet up on the table.

And so I am very hopeful that it can be done because of the spirit that has been shown in the past in getting together for the winning of the war. Well, we think now that that is in

sight. It isn't even around the corner. We can't tell. We don't -- if we are wise -- we don't set dates on the winning of the war, or for the capture of a city, or anything else. Too many people do that.

But there is the spirit, though, that we have learned so well in the last few years -- we have acquired. It is something new, this intimate relationship between the British Empire and the United States. It's new. This great friendship between the Russian people and the American people -- that's new. Well, let's hang on to both of them, and by spreading that spirit around the world, we may have a peaceful period for our grandchildren to grow up in.

And so all I can do is to wish you every possible success in this great task that you have undertaken. It won't be a final task, you know that, but at least it gives something to build on, so that we can accomplish the one thing that humanity has been looking forward to for a great many hundreds of years.

It's good to see you. Good luck.

-STATEMENTS FILE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 23, 1944

Informal remarks by the President on receiving the Delegates to the Dumbarton Oaks Conference:

"Gentlemen, this is an informal occasion. I have not prepared any speech. This is merely a feeling on my part that I would like to shake hands with you. I should like to be able to go out to Dumbarton Oaks, to take a part in your discussions.

"A conference of this kind always reminds me of an old saying of a gentleman called Alfred E. Smith, who used to be Governor of New York. He was very, very successful in settling any problem between capital and labor, or anything that had to do with the State government in which there was a controversy.

"He said if you can get the parties into one room with a big table and make them take their coats off and put their feet up on the table, and give each one of them a good cigar, you can always make them agree. Well, there was something in the idea.

"You have a great responsibility. In a way, it is a preliminary responsibility. But after all we learn from experience, and what I hope is that in planning for the peace that is to come we will arrive at the same good cooperation and unity of action as we have in the carrying on of the war. It is a very remarkable fact, that we have carried on this war with such great unanimity.

"I think that often it comes down to personalities. When, back in 1941, at the time of the Atlantic Charter, just for example, I did not know Mr. Churchill at all well. I had met him once or twice very informally during the first World War. I did not know Mr. Eden. But up there in the North Atlantic - three or four days together, with our two ships lying close together - we got awfully fond of each other. I got to know him, and he got to know me. In other words, we met, and you cannot hate a man that you know well.

"Later on Mr. Molotov came here and we had a grand time together. Then during the following year, at Teheran, the Marshal and I got to know each other. We got on beautifully. We cracked the ice, if there ever was any ice; and since then there has been no ice. And that's the spirit in which I know you are going about your work.

"I was just talking with the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson. He was saying that one of the tasks we face is making this conference of ours - and the successor conferences - something that will last, last a long time. He said that unfortunately in Germany the young people, the young Nazis ~~favor~~^{have} an ideal which will be dangerous to the peace of the world just as long as they have anything to say about it.

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