

April 13, 1945

[Undelivered Speech - Jefferson Day]

FDR Speech File

Draft of Undelivered Radio Address That Was to Have Been  
Given by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Jefferson Day,  
April 13, 1945.

Americans are gathered together this evening in communities all over the country to pay tribute to the living memory of Thomas Jefferson — one of the greatest of all democrats; and I want to make it clear that I am spelling the word "democrats" with a small d.

I wish I had the power, just for this evening, to be present at all of these gatherings.

In this historic year, more than ever before, we do well to consider the character of Thomas Jefferson as an American citizen of the world. As Minister to France, then as our first Secretary of State and as our third President, Jefferson was instrumental in the establishment of the United States as a vital factor in international affairs. It was he who first sent our Navy into far-distant waters to defend our rights. And the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine was the logical development of Jefferson's far-seeing foreign policy.

Today this Nation which Jefferson helped so greatly to build is playing a tremendous part in the battle for the rights of man all over the world. Today we are part of the vast Allied force — a force composed of flesh and blood and steel and spirit — which is today destroying the makers of war, the breeders of hatred, in Europe and in Asia.

In Jefferson's time our Navy consisted of only a handful of frigates headed by the gallant U.S.S. Constitution — Old Ironsides — but that tiny Navy taught Nations across the Atlantic that piracy in the Mediterranean — acts of aggression against peaceful commerce and the enslavement of their crews — was one of those things which, among neighbors, simply was not done.

Today we have learned in the agony of war that great power involves great responsibility. Today we can no more escape the consequences of German and Japanese aggression than could we avoid the consequences of attacks by the Barbary Corsairs a century and a half before.

We, as Americans, do not choose to deny our responsibility. Nor do we intend to abandon our determination that, within the lives of our children's children, there will not be a third world war.

"We seek peace — enduring peace. More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars — yes, an end to this brutal, inhuman, and thoroughly impractical method of settling the differences between governments.

The once powerful, malignant Nazi state is crumbling. The Japanese war lords are receiving, in their own homeland, the retribution for which they asked when they attacked Pearl Harbor. But the mere conquest of our enemies is not enough. We must go on to do all in our power to conquer the doubts and the fears, the ignorance and the greed, which made this horror possible.

Thomas Jefferson, himself a distinguished scientist, once spoke of "the brotherly spirit of Science, which unites into one family all its votaries of whatever grade, and however widely dispersed throughout the different quarters of the globe." Today, science has brought all the different quarters of the globe so close together that it is impossible to isolate them one from another. Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships — the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace.

Let me assure you that my hand is the steadier for the work that is to be done, that I move more firmly into the task, knowing that you — millions and millions of you — are joined with me in the resolve to make this work endure.

The work, my friends, is peace. More than an end of this war — an end to the beginnings of all wars. Yes, an end, forever, to this impractical, unrealistic settlement of the differences between governments by the mass killing of peoples.

Today, as we move against the terrible scourge of war — as we go forward toward the greatest contribution that any generation of human beings can make in this world — the contribution of lasting peace, I ask you to keep up your faith. I measure the sound, solid achievement that can be made at this time by the straight edge of your own confidence and your resolve. And to you, and to all Americans who dedicate themselves with us to the making of an abiding peace, I say:

The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.

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