

CONFIDENTIAL

Press Conference #751,

Held in the President's Study at Hyde Park, N. Y.,

June 27, 1941 -- 11.40 A.M., E.D.T.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's all there is. (Next Monday's story on the dedication of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library) We are not having any broadcasting because it is so short and simple.

Q How long will it last, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: About fifteen minutes.

Q That's the whole program, rather than your speech?

THE PRESIDENT: About five minutes. (meaning speech) Little less. Mine will probably be less. I don't think I know anything at all.

Q Do you think you will be in Washington on the Fourth?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got the faintest idea. Somebody said it was supposed to be unusual. Hasn't anybody been in Washington on the Fourth?

Q Not if they can help it, Mr. President. (laughter)

Q Mr. President ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What is that famous fellow -- you ought to know. He is quite a saint to all the Italians, who fire off fireworks all the time. This is off the record.

Q Rocco.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. When I was Governor of this State -- (laughter) -- there was -- he had a -- he had a birthday two or three times a year. (laughter) Perfectly incorrigible. Right close to the executive Mansion, and every time that Rocco came along, each church -- there were one or two churches quite near -- got up a special celebration for him, and they were firing off these great big bombs in the park --

which is about a block from the Executive Mansion -- keeping us awake till three o'clock in the morning -- and the poor old bishop of the diocese he had no effect, because financially the churches were in a hole all the time; they had to be helped out by the diocese -- they were shooting off all their money in fireworks. (laughter)

This is all off the record, but I think on the Fourth of July it isn't a patch on this old fellow Rocco. (he laughs)

MR. HASSETT: You know, we came up on the other side, one day last summer -- one evening, and it was on the river bank down here. It was --

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Yes, yes. Great display. It was on St. Peter's. That's on St. Peter's.

MR. HASSETT: Sure enough the papers were full of it next day. It was Saint Rocco's again.

THE PRESIDENT: Just see to it that we don't pass Poughkeepsie on St. Rocco's Day. (laughter)

Q Some governments are spending incomes about the same way, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, some columnist says that the five-billion-dollar lend-lease bill is coming through into Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know about it.

Q Is the new ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) I suppose if he lives long enough it will be true.

Q Isn't the figure about right?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got the faintest idea. I haven't had anything from the Budget yet.

Q About how long would he have to live?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q About how long would he have to live?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got the faintest idea on that.

Q Mr. President, you had a visit the other day from some Irish legislators, who said they came down to see you about the Irish food situation. We questioned them about the possibility of sending arms which the Irish government has asked for, we understood. Is there anything that you can tell us about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. That is not the -- you know -- you remember, as I said before, we didn't have any arms available. There just plain weren't any. I said, however, I would look into the question of rifles, but that I didn't think there was any ammunition to go with it, because we are way behind on ammunition. Cartridges. So I am having the thing looked into. Now, of course, coming to the other question, the -- some fairly definite assurance that they will defend themselves against any German attack.

Q Have you received any such assurances, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No.

Q Mr. President, have we taken up officially with the Irish the question of bases?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Never.

Q There has been a lot written about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I am quite sure that there has been nothing said by the British about a seizure of bases in Ireland.

Q Mr. President, how about -- aren't the Irish hedging around again?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Aren't the Irish changing their views a bit, in view of what is happening

in other parts of Europe?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. How should I know? (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, the original ships which you offered to them, they haven't actually cleared from this country have they?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not yet.

Q Have they been loaded, do you know?

THE PRESIDENT: I couldn't tell you. As I understand it they leased two and bought one.

Q I understood it was to loan one, and the other two were chartered or leased.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I don't know what has happened to them.

Q Mr. President, anything new on this price-control legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: Not a thing.

Q Have you heard, sir, from Mr. Sumner Welles, on the background of his conference yesterday with Mr. Oumansky? (Constantine A. Oumansky, Ambassador from the U. S. S. R.)

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't talked to him yet. I just got down here. (meaning to the Study)

Q Do you expect to talk to him on the subject today?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I will probably talk to him.

Q How about Mr. Hull?

THE PRESIDENT: He is down at White Sulphur Springs. No, I will probably talk to Sumner around quarter to one, just before lunch.

Q Mr. President, the communist press in New York says that your policy on aid to Russia is half-hearted. Welles was asked for comment yesterday, and he referred all questions to you. Is there anything you want to say on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I refer them all to you. (laughter) Now you are completely answered. (he laughs)

Q Mr. President, Congress still seems to be kicking this May labor 'cooling-off' bill around. Have you any new ideas?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't heard a word about it since -- in weeks.

Q Mr. President, to come back to this Irish matter, you said you were looking into the question of sending rifles. Is it possible there might be some put in these ships that are now ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) No, oh no.

Q Not as soon as that?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No. The only reason I said rifles was that -- my reason was that the actual processing of rifles is getting on pretty well. Now, whether we are up to the point where we have any reserve or not, I don't know, but I am reasonably certain that we are way behind on ammunition. We haven't got enough for ourselves.

Q How does that happen, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Why is it, in that particular field, that we are way behind?

THE PRESIDENT: Because we had to build new ammunition plants. That was not the case with rifles. Very few.

Q The Irish group, sir, wanted arms considerably in excess of just plain rifles though, didn't they, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I haven't anything. When was it that the Minister and Mr. Aiken came in? A long time ago.

Q A month ago.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they wanted all kinds of things, and of course we haven't got them ourselves.

Q Have you made any decision, sir, as to whether the aid that we can give to Russia will come under the lend-lease program, or what it will be?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got any more ideas than I had the other day.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Mr. President, there are two local situations that suggest themselves -- er -- particularly with reference to materials and so forth.

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) How, by the way, is the new consolidation working out?

MR. J. EMSLEY: It's swell, so far.

THE PRESIDENT: Grand, grand. They keep most of the staff on?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Yes, sir, they do.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine, fine.

MR. J. EMSLEY: There was definite assurance of security in that connection.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. How is the plant of the new building coming on?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Very nicely, it should be started very shortly now, and it is a nice building, of course, as you know.

THE PRESIDENT: Awfully nice. Mr. Cook sent me a picture of it -- Speidel sent me a picture.

MR. J. EMSLEY: We are pleased to see that it conforms with the architecture.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, you know, I came back with another suggestion, that was that they should take up with the city fathers the building of a decent city hall.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Oh.

THE PRESIDENT: Right across on the west side of the same plaza.

MR. J. EMSLEY: And that probably ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) What?

MR. J. EMSLEY: May I use that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I have been at it for twenty years. I hope I live long enough to get a decent city hall in Poughkeepsie.

MR. J. EMSLEY: In that connection, sir, the old post office -- (the President laughs) -- what do you suppose we could do with that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I couldn't tell you, offhand. I haven't heard about it for six months. The city wanted it about quarter-price and under the law they could only get it at half-price, something like that.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Uh huh.

(the President laughs)

MR. J. EMSLEY: It is probable that some eventual use will be found for it. There was one suggestion at one time for a county -- for a Federal court set up there, but apparently the Department of the Interior which had the matter in hand, I believe, hadn't found any definite plan for it.

THE PRESIDENT: There wasn't enough Federal court business -- wasn't enough to justify it.

MR. J. EMSLEY: No. There was one suggestion that they merge Federal offices in this area.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Of course, I would assume that there will be some use found for it.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, it's a good substantial building, it isn't awfully good architecturally, but it will last a good many years more.

MR. J. EMSLEY: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: It will be used, all right.

MR. J. EMSLEY: May I indulge for one moment on this cannon factory below

Poughkeepsie. Of course, they are going ahead. They have reconditioned the old plant, and that is small, of course, and they are going ahead with the foundation structure of the new big plant. Of course they are short of steel, and they have had best priority, but Louis Swenson, the contractor, says that they would like some help on getting that steel. (the President laughs) I suppose there is nothing you can ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) Which plant is it, which old plant?

MR. J. EMSLEY: The old Delapenha plant. (the R. U. Delapenha & Co. plant, South Road)

THE PRESIDENT: The old Delapenha plant?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Yes. It is the place they have reconditioned, and they are going ahead, probably after July first. But in the meantime, they are building that huge plant which is one hundred thousand square feet of space, and that plant of course will need a lot of it. Of course, I suppose it is like everything else, they have to wait for steel like everybody else.

THE PRESIDENT: They haven't done anything with the old Moline (Moline Flew Company) plant. They have gone ahead with the plans for the sewage disposal. Did they publish my letter?

MR. J. EMSLEY: I didn't see it. You mean the recent one?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, to the city engineer.

MR. J. EMSLEY: No.

THE PRESIDENT: Get it! (laughter) It's hot! (more laughter)

MR. J. EMSLEY: Is that right? (the President laughs, then they all laugh)

Q Are we getting as much national news out of this conference as we are local?

THE PRESIDENT: (he laughs)

Q Have you heard anything about a new Japanese attitude?

THE PRESIDENT: Not a thing.

No, really, on this sewage disposal thing, the -- I think you and the other fellows will be interested in this. About twenty -- what is this? -- 21 -- 21 -- about thirty years ago -- I guess when I was up in the State senate -- I called attention to the fact that the city of Poughkeepsie -- which is a bit smaller than it is now, 35,000 people even then -- was dumping raw sewage into the Hudson river, which is a tide river. In other words, it flows both ways up and down, and then up and then down, four times a day, to a point about a mile from the intake of the water supply of the community.

And I suggested a sewage disposal plant. And nothing was done, and we had a succession of city administrations and mayors of both parties, etc. They did a lot of things, but they still continued, and still continue -- you people at the Nelson House, you are still drinking water out of the Hudson river, just one mile from the place that raw sewage goes into the same river. (laughter)

MR. J. EMSLEY: We are taking steps ---

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) This is rough stuff on my own county town.

Am I right?

MR. J. EMSLEY: Right.

THE PRESIDENT: But it's true. Oh, I suppose it is safe from the point of view of health, because the water is about one-quarter chlorine to three-quarters water. (he laughs) And that's what you all live on when you are in Poughkeepsie. (laughter) Perhaps that statement -- (loud laughter breaks off his sentence, and he slaps his hand on the desk) Therein lies an excuse. What about it? (he laughs) Everybody

looks at everybody else. (he laughs again)

Q Perfect alibi now!

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. Well, as you know, since the period from 1933 on, to about a year ago, when any community was a very useful project of that county, you could get not only W.P.A. Federal funds but also P.W.A. Federal funds on a forty-sixty matching basis, and I pleaded with Poughkeepsie to take advantage of it and put in a sewage disposal plant. Well, the time was up. The last we had was a year ago last January, had they been started by that time. And they did nothing about it.

At this particular time, when as you know we are trying to avoid, on account of the defense program, and infinitely greater employment all over the country -- we are trying to avoid all over the country building public works that can be deferred, put those public works that can be deferred into -- it might be called a 'kitty' -- a pool from which we can draw when this defense program is over, so that it won't be a tremendous let-down, under which we can transfer people who stop being employed on defense things, and put them on certain very essential but deferred public works.

Well, it just so happened at that particular time, the dear city of Poughkeepsie decided to go ahead and do the sewage disposal, after nearly thirty years discussion of it.

And I wrote to the city fathers in Poughkeepsie and told them that, in view of the thirty years delay, I thought they might wait another year or two, and if it was something that was -- that was brand new, it might be very essential, but people got along drinking this stuff for thirty years. (laughter) And er -- er -- I thought they

might go another year or two. So that's the story on the city of Poughkeepsie. (laughter)

Q Quite a chlorine shortage.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q You have got quite a chlorine shortage now. It is important in defense, they say.

THE PRESIDENT: Shortage in chlorine? Well, where are you fellows going to move to? (he laughs)

MR. J. EMSLEY: I thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: You brought it on yourself. (laughter)

Q Mr. President, do you still hope to get up to Quonset Point sometime this summer, to look over the bases?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't got any idea. I would like to get off where it is a little cooler than around this neck of the woods. I haven't got any plans.

Q Mr. President, on all these requests for aid from various countries, they all run into this situation that the production yet -- hasn't yet reached its peak. How long do you think it is going to take, sir, before we are really turning out things in tremendous volume?

THE PRESIDENT: You will have to ask somebody that has got the agreement and wants to show you that. You can't use a glittering generalization on a program of that kind. Some things are at peak, some things are coming to peak, some things will come along to peak, and six or eight of those things won't come to peak for another year. You can't answer those questions only in a general way. It depends on the particular article.

Q As a general proposition, Mr. President, are you satisfied with the

management of the defense effort?

THE PRESIDENT: That is another glittering generality. Some things -- yes;
some things -- no.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine.

MR. DURNO: Back to one quarter chlorine and three quarters water!

THE PRESIDENT: Thank God at last I have given you all an alibi.

Q Do we need it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

VOICE: Good-bye, Mr. President.

VOICE: Thank you.