CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be broadcast in connection with the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights, must be held in confidence until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT LATER THAN 10:40 E.S.T., December 15, 1941. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

No date in the long history of freedom means more to liberty-loving men in all liberty-loving countries than the fiftieth day of December, 1791. On that day, one hundred and fifty years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind from one end of the world to the other.

There is not a single Republic of this Hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law the basic principles of freedom of man and freedom of mind enshrined in the American Bill of Rights.

There is not a country, large or small, on this continent which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly.

Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy and Japan, the peoples of the world — in all probability four-fifths of them — support its principles, its teachings and its glorious results.
But, in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany a political clique which did not accept the declarations of the American Bill of human rights as valid: a small clique of ambitious and unscrupulous politicians whose announced and admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument declared. Indeed the entire progress and goal of these political and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty of which our American Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson—which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans who followed him—were to those men hateful. The rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which seemed to Jefferson, and which seem to us, inalienable, were, to Hitler and his fellows, empty words which they proposed to cancel forever.

The propositions they advanced to take the place of Jefferson's inalienable rights were these:

That the individual human being has no rights whatever in himself and by virtue of his humanity;

That the individual human being has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to marry the woman he loves;

That his only duty is the duty of obedience, not to his God, and not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler; and that his only value is his value, not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi state.

To Hitler the ideal of the people, as we conceive it—the free, self-governing and responsible people—is incomprehensible. The people, to Hitler, are "the masses" and the highest human idealism is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become "a dust particle" of the order of force which is to shape the universe.

To Hitler, the government, as we conceive it, is an impossible conception. The government to him is not the servant and the instrument of the people but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act.

To Hitler the church, as we conceive it, is a monstrosity to be destroyed by every means at his command. The Nazi church is to be the "National Church", "absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine, race and nation".

To Hitler, the freedom of man to think as they please and speak as they please and worship as they please is, of all things imaginable, most hateful and most desperately to be feared.
The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism; this proposed return to tyranny; this effort to impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience, and of dictatorial rule, and of the suppression of truth, and of the oppression of conscience, which the free nations of the earth have long ago rejected.

What we face is nothing more nor less than an attempt to overthrow and to cancel out the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document; to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent, to accept again the absolute authority and despotic rule from which the courage and the resolution and the sacrifices of their ancestors liberated them many, many years ago.

It is an attempt which could succeed only if those who have inherited the gift of liberty had lost the manhood to preserve it. But we Americans know that the determination of this generation of our people to preserve liberty is as fixed and certain as the determination of that earlier generation of Americans to win it.

We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty our forefathers, framed for us in our Bill of Rights.

We hold with all the passion of our hearts and minds to those commitments of the human spirit.

We are solemnly determined that no power or combination of powers of this earth shall shake our hold upon them.

We covenant with each other before all the world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we will not lay them down before liberty is once again secure in the world we live in. For that security we pray; for that security we act — now and evermore.

[Signature]

[Date]