

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945)

State of the Union Address

given on January 7, 1943

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Seventy-eighth Congress:

This Seventy-eighth Congress assembles in one of the great moments in the history of the Nation. The past year was perhaps the most crucial for modern civilization; the coming year will be filled with violent conflicts- yet with high promise of better things.

- 5 We must appraise the events of 1942 according to their relative importance; we must exercise a sense of proportion.

First in importance in the American scene has been the inspiring proof of the great qualities of our fighting men. They have demonstrated these qualities in adversity as well as in victory. As long as our flag flies over this Capitol, Americans will honor the soldiers, sailors, and marines who fought our first battles of this war against overwhelming odds the heroes, living and dead, of Wake and Bataan and Guadalcanal, of the Java Sea and Midway and the North
10 Atlantic convoys. Their unconquerable spirit will live forever.

By far the largest and most important developments in the whole world-wide strategic picture of 1942 were the events of the long fronts in Russia: first, the implacable defense of Stalingrad; and, second, the offensives by the Russian armies at various points that started in the latter part of November and which still roll on with great force and effectiveness.

- 15 The other major events of the year were: the series of Japanese advances in the Philippines, the East Indies, Malaya, and Burma; the stopping of that Japanese advance in the mid-Pacific, the South Pacific, and the Indian Oceans; the successful defense of the Near East by the British counterattack through Egypt and Libya; the American-British occupation of North Africa. Of continuing importance in the year 1942 were the unending and bitterly contested battles of the convoy routes, and the gradual passing of air superiority from the Axis to the United Nations.

- 20 The Axis powers knew that they must win the war in 1942 -or eventually lose everything. I do not need to tell you that our enemies did not win the war in 1942.

- In the Pacific area, our most important victory in 1942 was the air and naval battle off Midway Island. That action is historically important because it secured for our use communication lines stretching thousands of miles in every direction. In placing this emphasis on the Battle of Midway, I am not unmindful of other successful actions in the
25 Pacific, in the air and on land and afloat —especially those on the Coral Sea and New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands. But these actions were essentially defensive. They were part of the delaying strategy that characterized this phase of the war.

- During this period we inflicted steady losses upon the enemy -great losses of Japanese planes and naval vessels, transports and cargo ships. As early as one year ago, we set as a primary task in the war of the Pacific a day-by-day
30 and week-by-week and month-by-month destruction of more Japanese war materials than Japanese industry could replace. Most certainly, that task has been and is being performed by our fighting ships and planes. And a large part of this task has been accomplished by the gallant crews of our American submarines who strike on the other side of the Pacific at Japanese ships—right up at the very mouth of the harbor of Yokohama.

- We know that as each day goes by, Japanese strength in ships and planes is going down and down, and American
35 strength in ships and planes is going up and up. And so I sometimes feel that the eventual outcome can now be put on a mathematical basis. That will become evident to the Japanese people themselves when we strike at their own home islands, and bomb them constantly from the air.

- And in the attacks against Japan, we shall be joined with the heroic people of China—that great people whose ideals of peace are so closely akin to our own. Even today we are flying as much lend-lease material into China as ever
40 traversed the Burma Road, flying it over mountains 17,000 feet high, flying blind through sleet and snow. We shall overcome all the formidable obstacles, and get the battle equipment into China to shatter the power of our common enemy. From this war, China will realize the security, the prosperity and the dignity, which Japan has sought so ruthlessly to destroy.

The period of our defensive attrition in the Pacific is drawing to a close. Now our aim is to force the Japanese to fight.

45 Last year, we stopped them. This year, we intend to advance.

Turning now to the European theater of war, during this past year it was clear that our first task was to lessen the concentrated pressure on the Russian front by compelling Germany to divert part of her manpower and equipment to another theater of war. After months of secret planning and preparation in the utmost detail, an enormous amphibious expedition was embarked for French North Africa from the United States and the United Kingdom in literally
50 hundreds of ships. It reached its objectives with very small losses, and has already produced an important effect upon the whole situation of the war. It has opened to attack what Mr. Churchill well described as "the under-belly of the Axis," and it has removed the always dangerous threat of an Axis attack through West Africa against the South Atlantic Ocean and the continent of South America itself.

The well-timed and splendidly executed offensive from Egypt by the British Eighth Army was a part of the same
55 major strategy of the United Nations.

Great rains and appalling mud and very limited communications have delayed the final battles of Tunisia. The Axis is reinforcing its strong positions. But I am confident that though the fighting will be tough, when the final Allied assault is made, the last vestige of Axis power will be driven from the whole of the south shores of the Mediterranean.

Any review of the year 1942 must emphasize the magnitude and the diversity of the military activities in which this
60 Nation has become engaged. As I speak to you, approximately one and a half million of our soldiers, sailors, marines, and fliers are in service outside of our continental limits, all through the world. Our merchant seamen, in addition, are carrying supplies to them and to our allies over every sea lane.

Few Americans realize the amazing growth of our air strength, though I am sure our enemy does. Day in and day out our forces are bombing the enemy and meeting him in combat on many different fronts in every part of the world.
65 And for those who question the quality of our aircraft and the ability of our fliers, I point to the fact that, in Africa, we are shooting down two enemy planes to every one we lose, and in the Pacific and the Southwest Pacific we are shooting them down four to one.

We pay great tribute—the tribute of the United States of America—to the fighting men of Russia and China and Britain and the various members of the British Commonwealth— the millions of men who through the years of this war
70 have fought our common enemies, and have denied to them the world conquest which they sought.

We pay tribute to the soldiers and fliers and seamen of others of the United Nations whose countries have been overrun by Axis hordes.

As a result of the Allied occupation of North Africa, powerful units of the French Army and Navy are going into action. They are in action with the United Nations forces. We welcome them as allies and as friends. They join with
75 those Frenchmen who, since the dark days of June, 1940, have been fighting valiantly for the liberation of their stricken country.

We pay tribute to the fighting leaders of our allies, to Winston Churchill, to Joseph Stalin, and to the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Yes, there is a very great unanimity between the leaders of the United Nations. This unity is effective in planning and carrying out the major strategy of this war and in building up and in maintaining the lines of
80 supplies.

I cannot prophesy. I cannot tell you when or where the United Nations are going to strike next in Europe. But we are going to strike— and strike hard. I cannot tell you whether we are going to hit them in Norway, or through the Low Countries, or in France, or through Sardinia or Sicily, or through the Balkans, or through Poland— or at several points simultaneously. But I can tell you that no matter where and when we strike by land, we and the British and the
85 Russians will hit them from the air heavily and relentlessly. Day in and day out we shall heap tons upon tons of high explosives on their war factories and utilities and seaports.

Hitler and Mussolini will understand now the enormity of their miscalculations—that the Nazis would always have the advantage of superior air power as they did when they bombed Warsaw, and Rotterdam, and London and Coventry. That superiority has gone—forever.

90 Yes, the Nazis and the Fascists have asked for it—and they are going to get it.

Our forward progress in this war has depended upon our progress on the production front.

There has been criticism of the management and conduct of our war production. Much of this self-criticism has had a healthy effect. It has spurred us on. It has reflected a normal American impatience to get on with the job. We are the kind of people who are never quite satisfied with anything short of miracles.

95 But there has been some criticism based on guesswork and even on malicious falsification of fact. Such criticism creates doubts and creates fears, and weakens our total effort.

I do not wish to suggest that we should be completely satisfied with our production progress today, or next month, or ever. But I can report to you with genuine pride on what has been accomplished in 1942.

A year ago we set certain production goals for 1942 and for 1943. Some people, including some experts, thought that
100 we had pulled some big figures out of a hat just to frighten the Axis. But we had confidence in the ability of our people to establish new records. And that confidence has been justified.

Of course, we realized that some production objectives would have to be changed- some of them adjusted upward, and others downward; some items would be taken out of the program altogether, and others added. This was inevitable as we gained battle experience, and as technological improvements were made.

105 Our 1942 airplane production and tank production fell short, numerically—stress the word numerically of the goals set a year ago. Nevertheless, we have plenty of reason to be proud of our record for 1942. We produced 48,000 military planes—more than the airplane production of Germany, Italy, and Japan put together. Last month, in December, we produced 5,500 military planes and the rate is rapidly rising. Furthermore, we must remember that as each month passes by, the averages of our types weigh more, take more man-hours to make, and have more striking power.

110 In tank production, we revised our schedule- and for good and sufficient reasons. As a result of hard experience in battle, we have diverted a portion of our tank-producing capacity to a stepped-up production of new, deadly field weapons, especially self-propelled artillery.

Here are some other production figures:

In 1942, we produced 56,000 combat vehicles, such as tanks and self-propelled artillery.

115 In 1942, we produced 670,000 machine guns, six times greater than our production in 1941 and three times greater than our total production during the year and a half of our participation in the first World War.

We produced 21,000 anti-tank guns, six times greater than our 1941 production.

We produced ten and a quarter billion rounds of small-arms ammunition, five times greater than our 1941 production and three times greater than our total production in the first World War.

120 We produced 181 million rounds of artillery ammunition, twelve times greater than our 1941 production and ten times greater than our total production in the first World War.

I think the arsenal of democracy is making good.

These facts and figures that I have given will give no great aid and comfort to the enemy. On the contrary, I can imagine that they will give him considerable discomfort. I suspect that Hitler and Tojo will find it difficult to explain
125 to the German and Japanese people just why it is that "decadent, inefficient democracy" can produce such phenomenal quantities of weapons and munitions- and fighting men.

We have given the lie to certain misconceptions—which is an extremely polite word- especially the one which holds that the various blocs or groups within a free country cannot forego their political and economic differences in time of crisis and work together toward a common goal.

130 While we have been achieving this miracle of production, during the past year our armed forces have grown from a little over 2,000,000 to 7,000,000. In other words, we have withdrawn from the labor force and the farms some 5,000,000 of our younger workers. And in spite of this, our farmers have contributed their share to the common effort by producing the greatest quantity of food ever made available during a single year in all our history.

I wonder is there any person among us so simple as to believe that all this could have been done without creating
135 some dislocations in our normal national life, some inconveniences, and even some hardships?

Who can have hoped to have done this without burdensome Government regulations which are a nuisance to everyone- including those who have the thankless task of administering them?

We all know that there have been mistakes- mistakes due to the inevitable process of trial and error inherent in doing big things for the first time. We all know that there have been too many complicated forms and questionnaires. I know
140 about that. I have had to fill some of them out myself.

But we are determined to see to it that our supplies of food and other essential civilian goods are distributed on a fair and just basis—to rich and poor, management and labor, farmer and city dweller alike. We are determined to keep the cost of living at a stable level. All this has required much information. These forms and questionnaires represent an honest and sincere attempt by honest and sincere officials to obtain this information.

145 We have learned by the mistakes that we have made.

Our experience will enable us during the coming year to improve the necessary mechanisms of wartime economic controls, and to simplify administrative procedures. But we do not intend to leave things so lax that loopholes will be left for cheaters, for chiselers, or for the manipulators of the black market.

Of course, there have been disturbances and inconveniences -and even hardships. And there will be many, many more
150 before we finally win. Yes, 1943 will not be an easy year for us on the home front. We shall feel in many ways in our daily lives the sharp pinch of total war.

Fortunately, there are only a few Americans who place appetite above patriotism. The overwhelming majority realize that the food we send abroad is for essential military purposes, for our own and Allied fighting forces, and for necessary help in areas that we occupy.

155 We Americans intend to do this great job together. In our common labors we must build and fortify the very foundation of national unity- confidence in one another.

It is often amusing, and it is sometimes politically profitable, to picture the City of Washington as a madhouse, with the Congress and the Administration disrupted with confusion and indecision and general incompetence.

However—what matters most in war is results. And the one pertinent fact is that after only a few years of preparation
160 and only one year of warfare, we are able to engage, spiritually as well as physically, in the total waging of a total war.

Washington may be a madhouse- but only in the sense that it is the Capital City of a Nation which is fighting mad. And I think that Berlin and Rome and Tokyo, which had such contempt for the obsolete methods of democracy, would now gladly use all they could get of that same brand of madness.

And we must not forget that our achievements in production have been relatively no greater than those of the Russians
165 and the British and the Chinese who have developed their own war industries under the incredible difficulties of battle conditions. They have had to continue work through bombings and blackouts. And they have never quit.

We Americans are in good, brave company in this war, and we are playing our own, honorable part in the vast common effort.

As spokesmen for the United States Government, you and I take off our hats to those responsible for our American
170 production—to the owners, managers, and supervisors, to the draftsmen and the engineers, and to the workers- men and women—in factories and arsenals and shipyards and mines and mills and forests—and railroads and on highways.

We take off our hats to the farmers who have faced an unprecedented task of feeding not only a great Nation but a great part of the world.

We take off our hats to all the loyal, anonymous, untiring men and women who have worked in private employment
175 and in Government and who have endured rationing and other stringencies with good humor and good will.

Yes, we take off our hats to all Americans who have contributed so magnificently to our common cause.

I have sought to emphasize a sense of proportion in this review of the events of the war and the needs of the war.

We should never forget the things we are fighting for. But, at this critical period of the war, we should confine

ourselves to the larger objectives and not get bogged down in argument over methods and details.

180 We, and all the United Nations, want a decent peace and a durable peace. In the years between the end of the first World War and the beginning of the second World War, we were not living under a decent or a durable peace.

I have reason to know that our boys at the front are concerned with two broad aims beyond the winning of the war; and their thinking and their opinion coincide with what most Americans here back home are mulling over. They know, and we know, that it would be inconceivable—it would, indeed, be sacrilegious—if this Nation and the world
185 did not attain some real, lasting good out of all these efforts and sufferings and bloodshed and death.

The men in our armed forces want a lasting peace, and, equally, they want permanent employment for themselves, their families, and their neighbors when they are mustered out at the end of the war.

Two years ago I spoke in my Annual Message of four freedoms. The blessings of two of them- freedom of speech and freedom of religion—are an essential part of the very life of this Nation; and we hope that these blessings will be
190 granted to all men everywhere.

The people at home, and the people at the front, are wondering a little about the third freedom—freedom from want. To them it means that when they are mustered out, when war production is converted to the economy of peace, they will have the right to expect full employment—full employment for themselves and for all able-bodied men and women in America who want to work.

195 They expect the opportunity to work, to run their farms, their stores, to earn decent wages. They are eager to face the risks inherent in our system of free enterprise.

They do not want a postwar America which suffers from undernourishment or slums- or the dole. They want no get-rich-quick era of bogus "prosperity" which will end for them in selling apples on a street corner, as happened after the bursting of the boom in 1929.

200 When you talk with our young men and our young women, you will find they want to work for themselves and for their families; they consider that they have the right to work; and they know that after the last war their fathers did not gain that right.

When you talk with our young men and women, you will find that with the opportunity for employment they want assurance against the evils of all major economic hazards- assurance that will extend from the cradle to the grave. And
205 this great Government can and must provide this assurance.

I have been told that this is no time to speak of a better America after the war. I am told it is a grave error on my part.

I dissent.

And if the security of the individual citizen, or the family, should become a subject of national debate, the country knows where I stand.

210 I say this now to this Seventy-eighth Congress, because it is wholly possible that freedom from want—the right of employment, the right of assurance against life's hazards—will loom very large as a task of America during the coming two years.

I trust it will not be regarded as an issue—but rather as a task for all of us to study sympathetically, to work out with a constant regard for the attainment of the objective, with fairness to all and with injustice to none.

215 In this war of survival we must keep before our minds not only the evil things we fight against but the good things we are fighting for. We fight to retain a great past- and we fight to gain a greater future.

Let us remember, too, that economic safety for the America of the future is threatened unless a greater economic stability comes to the rest of the world. We cannot make America an island in either a military or an economic sense. Hitlerism, like any other form of crime or disease, can grow from the evil seeds of economic as well as military
220 feudalism.

Victory in this war is the first and greatest goal before us. Victory in the peace is the next. That means striving toward the enlargement of the security of man here and throughout the world—and, finally, striving for the fourth freedom-

freedom from fear.

It is of little account for any of us to talk of essential human needs, of attaining security, if we run the risk of another
225 World War in ten or twenty or fifty years. That is just plain common sense. Wars grow in size, in death and
destruction, and in the inevitability of engulfing all Nations, in inverse ratio to the shrinking size of the world as a
result of the conquest of the air. I shudder to think of what will happen to humanity, including ourselves, if this war
ends in an inconclusive peace, and another war breaks out when the babies of today have grown to fighting age.

Every normal American prays that neither he nor his sons nor his grandsons will be compelled to go through this
230 horror again.

Undoubtedly a few Americans, even now, think that this Nation can end this war comfortably and then climb back
into an American hole and pull the hole in after them.

But we have learned that we can never dig a hole so deep that it would be safe against predatory animals. We have
also learned that if we do not pull the fangs of the predatory animals of this world, they will multiply and grow in
235 strength- and they will be at our throats again once more in a short generation.

Most Americans realize more clearly than ever before that modern war equipment in the hands of aggressor Nations
can bring danger overnight to our own national existence or to that of any other Nation—or island—or continent.

It is clear to us that if Germany and Italy and Japan- or any one of them- remain armed at the end of this war, or are
permitted to rearm, they will again, and inevitably, embark upon an ambitious career of world conquest. They must be
240 disarmed and kept disarmed, and they must abandon the philosophy, and the teaching of that philosophy, which has
brought so much suffering to the world.

After the first World War we tried to achieve a formula for permanent peace, based on a magnificent idealism. We
failed. But, by our failure, we have learned that we cannot maintain peace at this stage of human development by good
intentions alone.

245 Today the United Nations are the mightiest military coalition in all history. They represent an overwhelming majority
of the population of the world. Bound together in solemn agreement that they themselves will not commit acts of
aggression or conquest against any of their neighbors, the United Nations can and must remain united for the
maintenance of peace by preventing any attempt to rearm in Germany, in Japan, in Italy, or in any other Nation which
seeks to violate the Tenth Commandment -"Thou shalt not covet."

250 There are cynics, there are skeptics who say it cannot be done. The American people and all the freedom-loving
peoples of this earth are now demanding that it must be done. And the will of these people shall prevail.

The very philosophy of the Axis powers is based on a profound contempt for the human race. If, in the formation of
our future policy, we were guided by the same cynical contempt, then we should be surrendering to the philosophy of
our enemies, and our victory would turn to defeat.

255 The issue of this war is the basic issue between those who believe in mankind and those who do not—the ancient issue
between those who put their faith in the people and those who put their faith in dictators and tyrants. There have
always been those who did not believe in the people, who attempted to block their forward movement across history,
to force them back to servility and suffering and silence.

The people have now gathered their strength. They are moving forward in their might and power—and no force, no
260 combination of forces, no trickery, deceit, or violence, can stop them now. They see before them the hope of the
world- a decent, secure, peaceful life for men everywhere.

I do not prophesy when this war will end.

But I do believe that this year of 1943 will give to the United Nations a very substantial advance along the roads that
lead to Berlin and Rome and Tokyo.

265 I tell you it is within the realm of possibility that this Seventy-eight Congress may have the historic privilege of
helping greatly to save the world from future fear.

Therefore, let us all have confidence, let us redouble our efforts.

A tremendous, costly, long-enduring task in peace as well as in war is still ahead of us.

But, as we face that continuing task, we may know that the state of this Nation is good—the heart of this Nation is
270 sound -the spirit of this Nation is strong—the faith of this Nation is eternal.
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