

FOUR FREEDOMS (excerpted)

Delivered by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the U.S. Congress, on January 6, 1941
(the speech can be found in its entirety at <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=70>)

Franklin D. Roosevelt Annual Message to Congress, January 6, 1941; Records of the United States Senate; SEN 77A-H1; Record Group 46; National Archives.

Mr. Speaker, members of the 77th Congress:

I address you, the members of this new Congress, at a moment unprecedented in the history of this nation. I use the word "unprecedented" because American security has never been as seriously threatened from without as it is today. Since the Constitution for our government was written in 1789, most of the problems in our history have involved domestic issues. And, fortunately, only one of these --the four-year war between the States --ever threatened our national unity.

Even when the World War broke out in 1941 it seemed to contain only small threat of danger to our own American future. But as time went on the American people began to see what the downfall of democratic nations might mean to our own democracy.

Every realist knows that at this moment the democratic way of life is being directly assailed in every part of the world. Those who seek to destroy the unity of peaceful nations are assailing democracy either by arms or by secret spreading of poisonous propaganda. Since the war began, democratic life has been destroyed in an appalling number of independent nations. And the assailants are still on the march, threatening other nations, great and small.

...

Let us say to the democracies: "We Americans are vitally concerned in your defense of freedom. We are putting forth our energies, our resources and our organizing powers to give you the strength to regain and maintain a free world. We shall send you ships, planes, tanks, and guns. That is our purpose and our pledge." We will not be intimidated by the threats of dictators who say that our aid to democratic nations is an act of war.

The happiness of future generations of Americans may well depend on how effective and how immediate we can make our aid felt.

All of us must prepare to make the sacrifices that the emergency --almost as serious as war itself-- demands. Whatever stands in the way of speed and efficiency in defense preparations must give way to the national need.

...

I have called for personal sacrifice, and I am assured of the willingness of almost all Americans to respond to that call.

In the future days our principles and sacrifices will bring us a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression--everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way--everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want meaning economic well being for every nation--everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear meaning a world-wide reduction of armaments so that no nation will be in a position to attack any neighbor--anywhere in the world.

This world is the very opposite of the world of tyranny which the dictators seek to create. We seek a world order of cooperation of free and democratic countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.

This nation has placed its destiny in the hands, heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women, and its faith in freedom. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

To that high concept there can be no end save victory.