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THE CORE AMERICAN VALUES
OF THE *DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE*
(1776) AS REFLECTED IN FRANKLIN DELANO
ROOSEVELT'S *FIRESIDE CHATS* (1939–1944)

The *Declaration of Independence* was not only a significant document for the pioneering state system under construction and its citizens; it was an unprecedented case on a much wider scale. Never before had a nation terminated a “social agreement” between the *ruled* and the *ruler*. Throughout the years, the principles included in the document constituted a set of core tenets close to the heart of every American. Since 1776, the values of the *Declaration* – be it deliberately or not – have consequently been spread in the United States. However, the *frequency of emphasis* that certain values received in different historic circumstances differed over the span of years.

It appears a rule that the ideas of the *Declaration* become vividly manifested at the moments of peril. The ideals that were brought to the foreground speak volumes about the nature of the threats. An analysis of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's radio *Fireside Chats* provides rich food for thought in this respect. The comparison of the two sources brings conclusions that cast extra light on the events of the times as well as on what values gained most attention at the times of the ultimate challenges.

The idea of FDR's *Chats* was not a wartime invention¹. The aim was to inform the nation about the situation in the country, government's plans and President's reflections. Casual and improvised as the *Chats* may have

¹ They started on Sunday, 12 March 1933, *Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, (22 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>; cf. K. Michałek, *Na drodze ku potędze. Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1961-1945*, KiW, Warszawa 1993, p. 345.

seemed, they were carefully planned and intended to have a clear-cut impact on the listeners. The *Fireside Chats* were a sort of “litmus paper” to test the social moods; they allowed Roosevelt to sound out what America *was* and what it *was not* prepared for.

The pre-war *Chats* (1933–1939) were meant to *unite* the nation, and raise the spirits in the midst of the Great Depression. The home economic condition was dramatic in 1933, the success of the President’s attempts to improve the situation seemed debatable². Thus effective communication with the nation appeared crucial. The broadcasts were to provide Roosevelt with the needed political backup to cope with the economic and social situation³. There was little room for international politics in those pre-war *Chats*⁴.

Conversely, the wartime broadcasts (1939-1944) were bound with the international affairs, thus significantly more closely related to the values of the *Declaration*. The *Chats* became more universal in meaning, which made them compelling and meaningful not only for the Americans. Not only did the broadcasts apply to the United States or North America, but also touched upon the challenges vital for the entire world. That conclusion seems the first analogy between the *Chats* and the *Declaration*; they both augured geopolitical changes and a remodelled world order and the future balance of powers.

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The *Declaration of Independence* was rooted in the European Age of Enlightenment; therefore, not entirely was it an “American invention”. The most evident European-origin concept in the *Declaration* is that concerning the relations between the ruler and the ruled, developed by Jean Jacques Rousseau⁵. Every human being is born with a set of certain cardinal rights, such as the right to live, freedom and pursuit of happiness. These rights are inalienable since they have been granted by the God. The *Declaration*, there-

² Actually, a lot of FDR’s “New Deal” measures had not been originally Roosevelt’s (e.g. public works or reorganization of industry schemes). They were an extension or plans of the previous administration under Herbert Hoover. The others – of FDR’s authorship – are assessed by historians in various ways as for the effectiveness of theirs. Cf. K. Michałek, *Na drodze...*, pp. 310–311; J. Powell, *How FDR’s New Deal Harmed Millions of Poor People*. (7 Nov. 2011), [online] <http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=3357>; W.E. Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and His Legacy*, Columbia University Press (7 Nov 2011), [online] <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/fdryears.htm>>.

³ The full contents of the original *Chats* available at (18 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

⁴ All the *Chats* from the period 12 March 1933 – 24 June 1939 were exclusively devoted to the home matters, economy and crisis. Cf. the contents of the *Fireside Chats*, (22 Nov. 2011), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

⁵ J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. Eng. transl. G.D.H. Cole, (6 Feb. 2012), [online] <<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>>, Book 1, chapters 6, 7, 8; Book 2, chapter 12; Book 3, chapter 10.

fore, was a revolutionary act establishing a system of interpersonal relations within the new state organism.

The reminiscences of the above are observable in the *Fireside Chats*. Roosevelt frequently refers to human dignity and human rights in general⁶. It is noticeable in the fragments concerning his appeals for humanitarian help for civilians in the Nazi-Germany-occupied countries⁷. The rights to live, freedom from fear and pursuit of happiness are regularly emphasized⁸. Additionally, the President put it clearly that the mentioned rights apply to *all* nations – including the societies of the countries that were hostile to the United States⁹. Due to such an approach Roosevelt promoted inalienability of the human rights, regardless of the current situation.

The above let President Roosevelt separate two elements indispensable for the future politics of the United States with *both* the winners and the losers. The parting of the society from the ruler(s) allowed for criticizing the *systems* without damning the *people*. Regardless what the extent of social support for Hitler, Mussolini or Hirohito there was in their countries, such a strategy opened the United States a way to *defeat* but *not to humiliate* the enemy. The idea of separation is clear in the *Declaration*, too; it drew a line between the King's violations towards the Colonies and the British society (referred to as the "British Brethren"¹⁰). It needs to be understood it is not the *nations* but *states* that get involved in wars. The juxtaposition of the two categories: *nation* and *state* had been an invention of the *Declaration*; however it was successfully applied to the *Chats*, too. There, President Roosevelt skilfully used the above reasoning on the fundamentals, when he referred to the respected American values; he knew his compatriots would accept no infringement of those¹¹.

Quoting the *Declaration*, it may be said that the American war creed is to accept the "acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace

⁶ Cf. *Fireside Chat* dated 2 September 1939, 27 May 1941, 11 September 1941 to name but a few examples, (15 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

⁷ F. D. Roosevelt, *Address of the President delivered by radio from the White House, 28 July 1943*, (12 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat25.html>>.

⁸ F. D. Roosevelt, *Address of the President delivered by radio from the White House, 26 May 1940*, (28 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>>.

⁹ Cf. *Fireside Chat* dated 11 September 1941, (7 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>. It was even more so after 7 Dec. 1941 and the US accession to war. Roosevelt stuck a strict distinction between Japan, Germany and Italy as nations and their evil rulers or political propagandists. It is most significant in the *Chats: Broadcast from the Oval Room of the White House, Nationally and over a World-wide Hookup: Dec. 1941*, or in *Address of the President: 7 Sept. 1942*, [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat22.html>>.

¹⁰ Cf. the text of the *Declaration of Independence* [in:] K. Michałek, *Konstytucja oraz inne podstawowe dokumenty i symbole amerykańskiej kultury patriotycznej*, MADA, Warszawa 2005, pp. 11–13.

¹¹ *Address of the President delivered by radio from the White House, 26 May 1940*, (28 Sept. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>>.

friends”¹². Including such a statement was well thought-out. In F. D. Roosevelt’s talks the United States’ enemies were referred to as Hitler, Mussolini, the Axis, fascism, Berlin, Tokyo or “militarist gangsters”¹³. Rarely were they Germans, Italians or the Japanese¹⁴. The allies were referred to as the British, Belgians, Polish nation, United Nations, forces of democracy etc.¹⁵ The message to America and the world was self-explanatory: the United States fought the *evil state systems* and not *nations*, just like the *Declaration* had separated the two before.

Additionally, the use of plural expressions, such as *forces* or *powers*, associated with might and greatness, which drastically contrasted with singular expressions such as *the Axis* or *fascism*¹⁶, was to imply weakness and isolation of the enemy. Such an unequivocal division had also been inspired by the *Declaration* since – for the Americans – the certitude they represent the *right* values has always been crucial¹⁷. In the *Declaration*, Britain is pictured as ‘King’, ‘British Crown’, ‘he’ etc., while the Americans refer to themselves as ‘subjects’, ‘these colonies’, ‘Thirteen States’, ‘one people’, ‘we’ and so on.

The *Declaration of Independence* had emphasized the restrictions imposed on the Colonies by the Crown (such as limited citizenship, judiciary or land appropriation); they harmed virtually *every* citizen of the New World. The authors had realized that it was the *individuals* who made up the American society¹⁸. So did realize Franklin D. Roosevelt; in his *Chats* he went to great lengths to indicate how essential the *quality* attitude of each citizen was. He laid emphasis on the importance of distinctiveness: individuals were valuable for the country as a whole¹⁹. Hence, the value of “legions”

¹² K. Michałek, *Konstytucja...*, pp. 11–13.

¹³ Cf., for example, the *Chat* dated 28 July 1943, (11 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Cf. *Address of the President delivered by radio from the White House, 11 January 1944* to name but an example, [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat28.html>>; *Address of the President delivered by radio from Hyde Park, NY 24 December 1943*, (15 Oct 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat27.html>>.

¹⁶ Cf. the *Chats* dated 23 Feb. 1942, 12 Oct. 1942, 28 July 1943 or June 5 1944 (11 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

¹⁷ It is strikingly noticeable in the case of the Vietnam War and the treatment that the US veterans received at home after that war, compared with the incentives that were offered to the WWII and Korean War veterans. The society, feeling that the conflict in Vietnam was not a “good war” (an original American expression), condemned the American soldiers and refused granting them privileges that were available to the veterans of the previous conflicts.

¹⁸ Seen in the fragment on the British King’s injustice beginning from “He has refused his assent to laws...” and finishing “He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions” (20 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/text.html>>.

¹⁹ Compare the text of the *Chats* dated 28 April 1942, 12 October 1942 and 2 May 1943, (30 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

of aware, patriotic and dedicated *individuals* was incomparable to subordinated, intimidated and incapacitated *masses* ruled by the totalitarian enemy regimes. This firm belief was also a lesson Franklin D. Roosevelt drew from the *Declaration*²⁰.

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Power is yet another fundamental issue in the *Declaration*. The Lockean concept of social agreement is critical here. The authority of the *rulers* stems from their power being accepted by the *ruled*. The government is to rule in a just manner. The ruled oblige themselves to subordinate to *such* an authority; nevertheless, they have the right to object to an *unjust* power²¹.

In the propagandist sense, the above idea was crucial to Franklin D. Roosevelt. The President of a democratic state was supposed to lead his country and nation through the war posing as “the *good leader*”. He wanted to make the Americans perceive him that way and convince them to obey his authority rather than change him in the next elections. A means for Roosevelt to achieve that was to make his countrymen believe he was a just head – a most troublesome task in the then realities²² since the war conditions could spark off crises of power and acts of civil disobedience²³. The fact that Roosevelt was authoritarian and commanding did not facilitate the job. Still, he skilfully got over his vices to accomplish his high-priority aims – unprecedentedly, he remained in the office for three terms.

The *Chats* clearly demonstrate the President’s attempts to win his compatriots’ favour. He evoked the duties and responsibilities of the rulers and the ruled alike. It seems – much like the *Declaration of Independence* – a manifestation of the necessary dialogue between the society and authority²⁴. The *Declaration* provided foundations for creation of a peculiar nation: free,

²⁰ It is clear from, e.g. the Declaration paragraph beginning: “Nor have we been wanting in attention...”, *Declaration of Independence*, (7 Dec. 2011), [online] <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/text.html>>.

²¹ Cf. the second and third paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence* [in:] K. Michałek, *Konstytucja...*, pp. 11–13.

²² It needs to be borne in mind that the opposition against any American involvement in the rough politics of the European powers was significant in the US. FDR had to struggle against a powerful anti-war lobby in the Congress as well as with the social and political movements of significant influence such as *America First Committee*.

²³ That was a common phenomenon in neighbouring Canada where the Mackenzie King’s Cabinet struggled all the war with social unrest, political and social crises over conscription (1942, 1944) and the economic and foreign affairs challenges of the wartime. Cf. W.A.B. Douglas, B. Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War*, OUP, Toronto – Oxford – New York 1977.

²⁴ Cf. the *Chat* on the declaration of war on Japan, 9 December 1941, (23 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>. On the other hand, it needs to be remembered that the value that FDR put above all in politics was effectiveness. Since power and coercion was the quickest and ultimate way to achieve political goals, he was used to applying coercion in his politics.

independent and daring; yet, above all, cherishing the rule of law. The nation was aware of both: its duties and its rights. As Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to remain in the lead, he had no choice but to act accordingly to what the people *could* accept and avoiding what they *could not*.

Concurrently, the President pointedly manifested his alleged reluctance to coercion²⁵ – one of the fundamentals of the British foreign policymaking in the eighteenth century, which led – as used in an unskilful manner – to the emancipation of the thirteen colonies and the conclusion of the United States. The society, according to the President, should be appealed to and convinced; thus, the government should picture the situation in a frank way²⁶. It is, on the other hand, the duty of the citizens to remember that:

[...] governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed...²⁷.

The government's duty is *to inform*; still, it is a civil duty to *be informed*. That was how the President put it in his *Chats*. The same approach can be noticed in the *Declaration*. In his broadcasts, Roosevelt put himself in the position of a “manager” of the country. He wanted to be perceived as a patriot and civil servant of the nation. The social perception of his understanding of a leader's duties and his place in the society were pictured as identical to how the Founding Fathers had seen those years before²⁸.

The *Declaration* as well as quite a proportion of the *Fireside Chats* were created in the face of war. They were aimed to mentally prepare the society for a conflict that a large share of Americans did not fully comprehend – in either case. For that reason, the tactics of the authors in both cases were identical:

- a) listing faults, restrictions and violations of the enemies of the Americans;
- b) appealing for understanding the authorities and preventing any defiance of the government's decisions;
- c) outlining the enemy actions taken against America, which left no alternative but active countermeasures²⁹.

²⁵ Among others, clearly seen manifestation in the *Chat* dated 28 July 1943, (13 Oct. 2010) [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

²⁶ Seen in, for example, the fragment on conclusion of the Axis Pact: “on September 27th, 1940, this year, by an agreement signed in Berlin, three powerful nations, two in Europe and one in Asia, joined themselves together in the threat that if the United States of America interfered with or blocked the expansion program of these three nations – a program aimed at world control – they would unite in ultimate action against the United States,” 29 December 1940; (22 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat16.html>>.

²⁷ *Declaration of Independence*, [in:] K. Michałek, *Konstytucja...*, pp. 11–15.

²⁸ Cf. parts on government nature in *Address of President delivered by radio from the White House*, 26 May, 1940, (18 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>>.

²⁹ The strategy is clearly seen in e.g. the *Chat* from 9 December 1941, (12 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat18.html>>.

It was necessary to do everything possible to make the Americans understand *why* and *in what circumstances* their government was sending them to war³⁰. The American decision-makers treated the society as intelligent, conscious and well-informed individuals. Consequently, they could not have been ordered to fight without absolute clarity as for the reasons³¹. Since in that respect the *Declaration* seemed effective, Roosevelt used an analogous tactic.

In his *Fireside Chats*, the President paid attention to the matter of the authorization of the government. He was – as the society had chosen so – the country's leader made by the circumstances to act in a warlike way³². It is easy to trace in the *Fireside Chats* the echo of the *Declaration of Independence* concept of combating the totalitarian systems as the *evil powers*. What is more, the combat was carried out in concord with a democratic society condemning coercion³³.

The Declaration had mainly focused on the United States, its system and interests. That had been the perspective from which the rest of the world had been perceived back then. The views of Franklin D. Roosevelt were similar, although the international situation and the position of the country dramatically evolved. By then, the United States had become a solid and well-organized political organism incomparably more influential in international relations.

The dangers and alliances had also changed since the times of the *Declaration*. Therefore, the President spoke proportionately more on the world matters in his *Fireside Chats*. Obviously, he did that from the perspective of the American interests³⁴. Between September 1939 and December 1941 the United States was formally neutral and strongly isolationist towards the European matters. Through the *Chats* of the period, the society received a comprehensible message *why* certain steps had to be made³⁵ and what consequences/benefits the initiatives were going to bring.

³⁰ Roosevelt expands on that – among others in *Addresses of President* delivered by radio from the White House dated 26 May 1940 and 29 December 1940, (10 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>>.

³¹ It had been a delicate matter from the moment Gerald Nye's Committee revealed the US business and bankers' hidden agenda behind entering WWI.

³² "In other words, the Axis not merely admits but the Axis proclaims that there can be no ultimate peace between their philosophy of government and our philosophy of government. In view of the nature of this undeniable threat, it can be asserted, properly and categorically, that the United States has no right or reason to encourage talk of peace, until the day shall come when there is a clear intention on the part of the aggressor nations to abandon all thought of dominating or conquering the world". The *Chat* dated 29 December 1940, (9 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat16.html>>.

³³ It is clearly reflected in the *Chats* dated 26 May 1940 and 29 December 1940, (9 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>>.

³⁴ Virtually every wartime *Chat* is a proof of the thesis, (19 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat16.html>>.

³⁵ The speech on *The Arsenal of Democracy* serves an excellent example here. *Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt From Washington, December 29, 1940*, (7 Nov. 2011), [online] <<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm>>.

The unwavering belief in victory is another striking feature of the *Fireside Chats* – again making them so similar to the *Declaration of Independence*. It had also “glowed” with the conviction of success – so much an American value³⁶. Nevertheless, President Roosevelt was not providing a rosy picture: the victory was resented as remote and requiring sacrifice. Neither did the President provide delusion of quick solutions nor unproblematic successes³⁷. It was to reinforce the President’s credibility, and so it did since the isolationist moods were dying fast, especially after Pearl Harbor.

To provide the Americans with the certainty that the administration were “the right people in the right seats”, the *Fireside Chats*, yet again, similarly to the *Declaration of Independence*, used a most comprehensible language. In both cases it was plain and straightforward; frequent use of modals and single clauses emphasized emotions and spoke to the moods. At places, colloquialisms can be found in both cases; no political mumbling or specialist jargon; just vivid comparisons and right-on-the-mark metaphors³⁸. The care for being understood well and received properly is clearly noticeable. Such carefulness for the linguistic aspect of the broadcasts translated into their huge popularity³⁹.

This popularity was the eventual evidence of social acceptance. It was yet another lesson of American values learned by Roosevelt from the reading of the *Declaration*: not only the *content*, but also the *form* of the message turned out essential. The citizens able to understand their leaders felt respected and appreciated. Understanding bears trust; it leads to acceptance and social liking. And Roosevelt, through his *Fireside Chats*, managed to achieve those⁴⁰.

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Another idea found in the *Declaration of Independence*, vital to the United States policymakers between 1939 and 1945, were the concepts of an independent state and national security. Non-militarist in their tone as the

³⁶ The example might be the Declaration’s section beginning: “We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress...”, *Declaration of Independence*, [online] <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/text.html>>.

³⁷ See, for example, the text of the *Chat* dated 11 January 1944. (9 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat16.html>>.

³⁸ D. Mankowski, J. Raissa, *Flashback: The 70th Anniversary of Fireside Chats*, (12 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.museum.tv/exhibitionssection.php?page=79>>.

³⁹ “The *Fireside Chats* were considered enormously successful and attracted more listeners than the most popular radio shows during the Golden Age of Radio” and “Eighty per cent of the words FDR chose were among the 1000 most commonly used words in the English vocabulary” as the author the book on *Fireside Chats* pointed out (13 Oct. 2010), [online] <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5887631.FDR_s_Fireside_Chats>. See: D. Mankowski, J. Raissa, *Flashback...*

⁴⁰ By 1939, over 80% of the households in the US had had a radio set, not mentioning pubs, restaurants, offices etc. Therefore, the choice of the mass medium for popularizing the President’s words was excellent.

Fireside Chats may have seemed, they manifested American full readiness for warfare if necessary. It is another analogy between the *Chats* and the *Declaration*. The broadcasts emanate with determination in defence of the country; they declare decisiveness in the struggle for maintaining independence – a crucial issue in many *Chats*:

We are planning our own defense with the utmost urgency, and in its vast scale we must integrate the war needs of Britain and the other free nations which are resisting aggression. This is not a matter of sentiment or of controversial personal opinion. It is a matter of realistic, practical military policy, based on the advice of our military experts who are in close touch with existing warfare. These military and naval experts and the members of the Congress and the Administration have a single-minded purpose – the defense of the United States⁴¹.

In the then circumstances, independence became an issue. The sovereignty of the United States had been won hardly about 165 years before World War II. Thus, the significant fear of losing the American values after such a short time seemed a reasonable political argument. The Roosevelt administration spared itself no pains to make the society aware that supporting the allies and, later on, fighting against the totalitarian regimes was a moral and civic duty.

As for the defence of the country, the *Fireside Chats* were – in a sense – an upgrade of the directions drawn in the *Declaration*. The broadcasts emphasized the question of international trade and connections with the rest of the world; they also pointed out the hindrance in these respects caused by the occurrence of war⁴². Following those concepts, President Roosevelt was constantly indicating and explaining the necessity to pay attention to the foreign affairs for they directly affected national security.

Roosevelt reported the imminence to prepare the United States to defend the whole North America if the United States defence was to be effective. In his opinion, it was unworkable to efficiently protect the Republic against any enemy invasion by mere defending the country's soil. The President postulated to support and cover Canada and – if necessary – Mexico⁴³. That was how Roosevelt understood the defence of the United

⁴¹ The *Chat* dated 29 December 1940, (7 Nov. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat16.html>>.

⁴² It is reflected in the *Address on National Economic Policy, 28 April 1942*, (22 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat21.html>>.

⁴³ That view was openly contained in the address dated 26 May 1940, (22 Oct. 2011), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat21.html>>. However, FDR had presented such an approach to defence matters in his pre-war speeches; in *Chautauqua* (1936) and *Kingston* (1938) openly stating that he was determined to defend the neighbours and the continent in the case of any peril to the US. *Chautauqua Speech*, (7 Dec. 2011), [online] <<http://manyeyes.alpha-works.ibm.com/manyeyes/datasets/address-delivered-by-president-roose/versions/1/>>; *Kingston Speech* [in:] R.F. Swanson (ed.), *Canadian-American Summit Diplomacy 1923–1973: Selected Speeches and Documents*, McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto 1975, p. 53.

States of America in the *micro* scale. The *macro* scale objectives were to fend the danger off the country. And – in the *Fireside Chats* – the nation was regularly informed about all those ideas. The President kept appealing, explaining and referring to the issues present in the *Declaration of Independence*.

By 1939, in Roosevelt's opinion, an international conflict had turned out imminent, much like – years before – the *War of Independence* had. Therefore, with every *Chat* between September 1939 and December 1941, the President was – methodically and purposefully – getting his countrymen closer to the conflict⁴⁴. Later on, he led his country through the war in that same gradual and consequent way. A similar effect had been achieved by the authors of the *Declaration*: the document highlighted acute problems and pointed to the imminence of firm and ultimate solutions:

[...] the Representatives of the United States of America, [...] in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, [...] declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do⁴⁵.

The *Declaration* also determined the American understanding of war; its definition is still valid. The refusal to obey the British King was a historic inevitability, and the *War of Independence* turned out its logical and natural consequence. In no way can war be a *means* to gain profits. Franklin D. Roosevelt saw to the fact his fellow countrymen were convinced the United States *did not* go to war for financial takings, territorial gains or spreading the American spheres of influence. On the contrary, the American involvement in war was pictured as stemming from the most noble motives: help to the invaded and the weaker, fighting against dictatorships and freeing the enslaved. Those were the purposes of war as presented in the *Declaration* and in Roosevelt's *Fireside Chats*.

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A prominent value that glows from almost every paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence* is *unity*. Understood as an indispensable ingredient to survive any crisis, it is the cement of a society. The joint effort and understanding limitations were a must to guarantee the survival of the country in

⁴⁴ That approach can be traced through the analysis of the contents of the addresses from the period 3 September 1939 – 9 December 1941.

⁴⁵ *The Declaration of Independence* [in:] K. Michałek, *Konstytucja...*, pp. 11–15.

the face of an ultimate challenge⁴⁶. Obviously, one cannot ask for a complete conformity; nonetheless, the Congress passed a bill which formally named the *Declaration* “The **Unanimous** [bold – M.B.] Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America” – to *give the impression* of full consensus, which was an element of skilful social engineering. It was a unity-binder of far-reaching psychological consequences.

Unity as a precious value was clearly present in all the wartime *Fireside Chats*. They always started with an appeal, reference or comparison aimed at providing the listeners with a sense of community⁴⁷. Although the President addressed his monologues to the Americans in the first place, they concerned the allies world over as well. Frequent and deliberate references to the supporters of the United States were supposed to create a feeling of a worldwide, pro-American community⁴⁸.

The authors of the *Declaration of Independence* as well as Franklin D. Roosevelt were perfectly aware of how important the social morale was; thus they were actively boosting it. The *Fireside Chats* were as much filled with the belief in success as the *Declaration* had been. They both promoted the optimistic approach to problems. By no means was that a naïve or thoughtless sort of optimism, though. The President spoke openly about the difficulties⁴⁹. Still, he saw the obstacles as challenges to overcome rather than a fate, or doom. Manifesting the spirit of hope and belief in own abilities was yet another analogy between the *Declaration* and the *Chats*. The challenges are to be accepted: the effort and sacrifice on the way are supposed to, spiritually and morally, enrich the nation. Obstacles should not discourage in the pursuit of happiness. On the other hand, patience and persistence were necessary; only such a balanced and careful approach could provide success.

Additionally, references to the Providence and the care of the Almighty prove the *Declaration* to be Roosevelt’s inspiration. Such steps were meant to intensify the feeling of unity and provide the society with a stronger sense of security. That was all too similar the approach presented in the *Declaration*.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Chats: On National Defense*, 26 May 1940; *On National Security*, 29 September 1940; *Announcing Unlimited National Emergency*, 27 May 1941, (18 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

⁴⁷ D. Mankowski, J. Raissa, *Flashback...*

⁴⁸ The best examples of that are *Chats On Progress of War and Plans for Peace*, 28 July 1943; *Opening Third War Loan Drive*, 8 September 1943; *On Teheran and Cairo Conferences*, 24 December 1943, (14 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Chats: Announcing Unlimited National Emergency*, 27 May 1941; *On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas*, 11 September 1941, (30 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

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The *Declaration of Independence* is a document of fundamental meaning to the United States⁵⁰. It happens to be interpreted as a revolutionary record that initiated a new socio-political quality. Inspired by the European Age of Enlightenment as it was, the *Declaration* did introduce a number of original, “made in America” social concepts which inspired documents and doctrines vital in the United States’ history, such as the *Articles of Confederation*, *Constitution*, *Bill of Rights* or *Manifest Destiny*.

The matter that must not be overlooked analysing the *Chats* is the fact that they were all broadcast by the radio. Apart from the broad readership, it needs to be understood that Roosevelt’s message to his people was meant to be oral. *Listening to the Fireside Chats*⁵¹, it is impossible to resist the feeling that the significance of the mission was comparable to that of the *Declaration*. The *Chats* prove the Franklin D. Roosevelt’s awareness that momentous events were happening right then. There was even room for the questions of irreversible or irrevocable nature, e.g. the political changes in North America, creation of the United Nations or eradicating totalitarian systems from Europe⁵². Both the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Fireside Chats* emphasized the fundamental, indisputable American principles equally valid in the eighteenth as well as twentieth centuries.

Perhaps the overriding significance of the *Declaration of Independence*, so commonly referred to in the Rooseveltian *Fireside Chats*, was the fact that – at the beginning of the new state – an active and dynamic document was conceived. Not only did the *Declaration* avoid describing or legalizing the situation; it shaped the American and, somehow, global reality; the *Fireside Chats* seem to prove that President Roosevelt treated the past in the same way: he did not brood over it.

Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to prepare America and his compatriots for the challenges that the future would hold⁵³. Such an attitude of the leader(s) had been born while drafting the *Declaration of Independence*. The dynamism and universalism seem to prove the on-going relevance and meaning of the *Declaration* for the United States as a state and the Americans as a society.

The document provided President Roosevelt with a wealth of ideas, references and guidance tips as to how to win his compatriots’ trust. The *Fireside*

⁵⁰ K. Michałek, *Konstytucja...*, p. 11.

⁵¹ It is important to listen to the way the *Chats* were performed by the President. As they were prepared as live speeches, or monologues, the radio performance contributes to understanding FDR’s intentions.

⁵² Cf. the *Chats On Teheran and Cairo Conferences*, 24 December 1943; *State of the Union Message to Congress*, 11 January 1944; *On the Fall of Rome*, 5 June 1944; *Opening Fifth War Loan Drive*, 12 June 1944, (12 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

⁵³ Cf. the *Chats* from 3 September 1939 to 11 September 1941, (11 Oct. 2010), [online] <<http://www.mhric.org/fdr/fdr.html>>.

de Chats concerned all the aspects of the wartime reality; they touched upon difficult topics too⁵⁴. *The Declaration of Independence* made it possible for a loose association of colonies to turn into a country and a nation. A thorough and careful analysis of the document helped an inquisitive and intuitive politician, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to turn the United States from just a continentally influential country into a superpower.

⁵⁴ Examples might be the analysis of Pearl Harbor, the perspectives of the war ending, war effort or necessity to assist the allies.