

FOR RELEASE
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Statement by Attorney General Francis Biddle

On this day, December 15, 1942, America, in her fight for freedom, passes a milepost of deepest meaning to the Nation and to the life of every one of its people. The anniversary of our Bill of Rights--151st since that priceless documentation of our liberties was made into law--is marked this year by action. We are observing it with the roar of guns and bombs aimed at our enemy, and in the hum of machines at home, unceasingly making more guns, more planes and ships.

Yet, without ceremony, this is the most important "Bill of Rights Day" we have ever observed. For us, another year-long test of the fabric of our American Liberties--and this time the severest test to which they have ever been put--is brought to a close. Our courts are open, our elections unchanged, our speech still free. Such controls as war has made advisable we have imposed upon ourselves. Our Democracy has stood the tensions of total war. Its quality is not strained. America is still the land of the free.

Looking back on the over-all picture, from Pearl Harbor up to now, our people find new courage in the progress we have made, all up-hill, after the terrific impact of Japan's treacherous stab. But other changes have taken place too; and of them all, perhaps the most striking is the change in the attitude of those who lead our enemies. A year ago, those Axis leaders were supremely confident. They took us on with but little show of concern; and I believe they felt no more troubled about us, inwardly, than they showed

to their people. They had America figured out. Months, even years before, they had pointed out that America was weak, debilitated with what they regarded as the inherent faults of democracy; her hands tied in the opposing pulls of factions still free to express themselves, in words and in votes; susceptible to an inner chaos which could not possibly see her through the supreme test of war. In America, the freedom of the citizen would prove to be the shackling of the Nation.

So these Axis leaders reasoned. They went a step further. America, burdened by her historical role as the world's greatest democracy, must either lose the war or drop the role. But if the latter, they reasoned, then fascist philosophy, the fascist way of life, taking over at the controls of our Nation, would soon play into the hands of the Axis powers. They are no longer complacent, no longer unconcerned. To their own peoples, they have changed their tune. And the key is now in the minor. Adolf Hitler--without being asked--is telling his people he will not run away. Mussolini is promising his people nothing. The Japanese begin to admit that the United States fleet has not, after all, been annihilated.

What these leaders of totalitarianism did not take into account was the factor of toughness--toughness of the people, toughness of the fiber of our liberty. We have gone through the first year and we have neither lost the war nor sacrificed that liberty. We are now on the offensive abroad, and freedom--for all peoples--is still our objective.

In our treatment of the alien population of this country we are giving our enemies a practical demonstration. During the year we have built up morale and furthered the national unity, a unity which embraces even the

group technically classified as "alien enemies." The 600,000 Italians who were included in that category a year ago are no longer "alien enemies." They have been released from that stigma, en masse. No Axis nation has dared to match that record.

One year ago today I said, in an observance of this anniversary, "This war will test whether the free democracies can endure and whether their people can remain free." Today our free democracy has gathered its mighty power and has set its face to the ultimate victory.