When displayed from an upright or horizontal mast, 
the flag is flown at half-staff, it was pointed out, 
but never with the blue field down, 
as that signifies a signal of distress…

The news caught millions headed homeward 
in the evening rush hour. 
It spread like wildfire through crowded railroad terminals, 
through Times Square, filtered into bars, theaters 
and eating places. 
Passengers left busses and trolley cars. 
They came up out of the subways to put the question. 
Wherever a shopkeeper turned his radio-speaker 
toward the street. 
“I HAVE A TERRIBLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE.”

The President had been expected to attend 
a barbecue on the grounds in the late afternoon. 
When he failed to appear, it was assumed 
that something serious must be wrong. 
In front of a fireplace 
in the Little White House 
here atop Pine Mountain 
having gone to Warm Springs 
on March 30th 
for a three-week rest. 
Come to think of it 
he hadn’t been looking well 
ever since he got back from Yalta 
He’d lost a lot of weight. 
His face was gaunt and gray. 
His hands trembled so 
that he had trouble 
putting cigarettes into his long black holder 
and lighting them.

It was a good thing, everybody thought, 
that he was going to get away 
for a rest.

A black crepe bowknot 
either with or without streamers 
is placed at the fastening point 
in a case of national mourning…
In Washington crowds assembled outside  
  the White House gates  
as the word spread through the warm April afternoon;  
in Ottawa a hushed House of Commons;  
at Independence, Missouri, people disappeared  
  from the streets.  
A man at Flatbush and Caton Avenues, Brooklyn,  
wiped his eyes with a handkerchief.  
When asked for his name he replied:  
“Just say Humanity.”

_The blue field always must be uppermost_  
_and at the observer’s left_  
_it was pointed out last night_  
_at the Navy Public Relations Office._

Twenty-five thousand furriers  
halting work at 3 p.m.  
jammed Seventh Avenue between 29th and 30th Streets.  
Profound consternation was caused  
in Santiago, Chile,  
and the national emblem will be lowered  
on all public buildings;  
“A great disaster!” said Georges Bidault,  
the French Foreign Minister;  
“Oh!” gasped the maid of Charles de Gaulle.

A silent, distressed Moscow  
this morning heard the radio announcement;  
peasant women wept and soldiers wept;  
tiny particles of podery snow were falling  
from the overcast early morning sky.

_When displayed from an upright or horizontal mast,_  
_the flag is flown at half-staff, it was pointed out,_  
_but never, but never with the blue field down,_  
as that signifies a signal of distress..._

QUESTION: What did President Roosevelt mean to you  
personally?  
Place: Times Square.

ANSWERS:  
Lew Haas, Businessman, Riverside Drive:  
“He was the guiding light of every fair-minded man.”  
Natalie Strong, U.S. Navy:
“I have an awful let-down feeling. He was a wonderful man.”
Nick Tsagarakas, Chef, The Bronx:
“We have lost the greatest man that ever lived.”
Miss Mary Calderoni, Counter Girl, 72nd Street:
“I felt that something good had passed out of my life.”
John Edward McCarroll, Merchant Marine:
”He was the saviour of an enslaved world.”

Never the blue field down.

Despite the death
despite the death of
despite the death of President Roosevelt
the United Nations Security Conference
will open in San Francisco on April 25th.

Buoyant and confident:
“We will prosecute the war on both fronts, East and West,
with all the vigor we possess to a successful conclusion.”
At 7:09 o’clock tonight
under the favorable portent of fair weather
in a ceremony lasting not more than a minute
and looking straight ahead through his large round glasses
Vice-President Truman, standing erect
two hours and thirty-four minutes after.

Never the blue field down.

While to the tone of drums, muffled drums,
the funeral procession left the Little White House
here atop Pine Mountain, a mahogany casket,
a copper-lined casket, in a black hearse;
and silently watching, their faces grave,
at each country store and village the people were out.
To the White House and Hyde Park,
on the long, last journey,
across the hushed southern countryside,
the body was borne,
the body of Franklin Roosevelt,
the body of Franklin Roosevelt.

Never the blue field down.

(Every word of this report was taken from the New York newspapers of April 13 and 14, 1945.)