

September 11, 1941

[Greer Incident - Selected Documents]

1381A

FOR SPEECH FILE

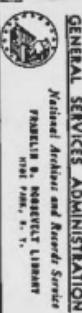
SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT

INSERT A

Five days ago a Navy ship on patrol picked up three survivors of an American owned ship operating under the flag of our sister Republic of Panama. She had been torpedoed near Greenland on August 17th. It is feared that the other members of her crew have been drowned. In view of the established presence of German submarines in this vicinity, there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identity of the attacker.

Two days later, another U.S. Merchant ship, the "Steel Seafarer" was sunk in the Red Sea two hundred and twenty miles south of Suez by a German aircraft. She was bound for an Egyptian port.

Four of the vessels sunk or attacked flew the American Flag and were, in other words, clearly identifiable. Two of these ships were warships of the American Navy. In the fifth case, the vessel sunk clearly carried the flag of Panama.



From the Bureau of
Samuel I. Rosenman

To revert for a moment to the episode of the U.S.S.

Greer, I am informed that an American organization, widely applauded and encouraged in the government controlled press of Germany and Italy made a statement which would have American citizens believe that Hitler's Government does not wish to attack American ships or American shipping -- and that, therefore, the Hitler Government assertion that the U.S.S. Greer fired first must be believed. It is more than a matter of interest -- it is a matter which Americans should always remember -- that the responsible leaders of this organization are deliberately telling their fellow citizens that the reports made by the officers of the U.S.S. Greer to the Navy Department are false and of no account.

It should be noted also that the dictators of Nazi propaganda have already called attention, with glee, to the fact that certain Americans prefer to believe the word of Hitler and to discard the word of their own government and their own President. (check this)

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Printed Pursuant to
Samuel I. Rosenman

All of this is a mere continuation of the German and Italian attempt, through daily praise, to encourage and magnify those Americans whose names have become household words on the other side as aiders and abettors of the Nazi and Fascist systems. You Americans do not have to be told their names.



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

INSERT B

NEW DRAFT

It should be explained again and again to people who think of the U. S. Navy as an invincible protection that this is only true if the British Navy survives. Everyone should remember that if the world outside the Americas is dominated by the Axis powers, their shipbuilding facilities in all of Europe, in the British Isles and in the Far East would be greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of the Americas -- not slightly greater -- but three or four or even five times greater. Even if the United States put all its resources in such a situation into doubling or redoubling the size of our Navy, Axis powers in control of the rest of the world would have the population and the resources to outbuild us several times over.



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INSERT C

NEW DRAFT

Under the Constitution of the United States, I am required as President and as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy to defend America. The Constitution does not say that this obligation is to be carried out only if our own continental soil is invaded. The second President of the United States, John Adams, ordered the Navy to clean out European privateers and European ships of war which were infesting the Caribbean and destroying American commerce. The third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, ordered the Navy to end the attacks on American ships by the CORSAIRS and by the nations of North Africa on their way to and from the Mediterranean. My constitutional obligation is clear; it is inescapable.



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INSERT D

NEW DRAFT

I am not going to talk again at this time about the inherent wickedness of the German leadership. I am not going to use invective against German leaders. I am not greatly worried or concerned when each day that passes I read the rather hysterical names which they give to me personally and to the United States as a whole in their daily press, and I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of Nazism by the use of long-range invective.



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

FOR S.I.R.

It is time for all Americans of all the Americas
to accept disillusionment of the romantic notion that the
Americas can live happily and peacefully for generations to
come in a Nazi-dominated world.



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

*National Archives and Records Service
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
West Park, N.Y.*

*State Dept. b-7d
Not urgent*

September 6, 1941

*Secret X
Top Secret
110A C*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

Since the present World War broke out, I have periodically reported to the people of the United States the outstanding facts as they arose. I have also endeavored to make clear their implications.

Unhappily, events compel me to report a new development in the situation.

The Navy Department reports that on the morning of September fourth the United States destroyer Greer was proceeding in full daylight towards Iceland. She was carrying American mail, and was flying the American flag. A German submarine attacked her by firing a number of torpedoes which missed their mark.

Several months ago the rising danger to the safety of this Hemisphere compelled the United States and the other American nations to extend the outposts of Hemispheric defense far into the Atlantic. This action was dictated by the considerations of the clear right of each nation to protect itself against every threat of danger. The Greer was proceeding through a portion of the Atlantic Ocean included in the recognized area of self-defense on legitimate mission in connection with the defense of the Western Hemisphere.

Under

Under the circumstances, if the Greer was visible to the submarine when it attempted to torpedo her, the attack must have been a deliberate attempt by a foreign naval vessel to sink an American warship. If the submarine was beneath the surface, and launched its torpedoes in the direction of the sound of the propellers of the American destroyer, and without knowledge as to the kind or nationality of the vessel thus attacked, it is terribly plain that the attack was an act of unrestricted violence launched indiscriminately against vessels, belligerent or non-belligerent.

The Navy likewise reports that the steamer Seassa, of American ownership proceeding to Iceland carrying civilian supplies, has been sunk within the past few days. So far, only three of her crew are known to have survived.

Under the circumstances it is incontrovertible that we are faced, either with a deliberate act of intimidation against the United States, or with the beginning of a general reign of unrestricted terrorism on the high seas like the general policy of frightfulness which has already become only too familiar on land. It will be recalled that only a few months ago an American ship, the Robin Moor, was actually sunk by a German war vessel under lawless and inhuman circumstances.

Many



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Many of us remember that a very similar attack in the previous World War was soon followed by a general and murderous attack on all non-belligerent vessels sailing the high seas in the belief on the part of its authors that frightfulness at sea would intimidate the United States into terminating her intercourse with friendly countries.

We have long known, and I have previously reported to you, that the program and purpose of Hitler was to conquer all land areas possible, and having done so, to reach and secure control of the high seas. I have pointed out that if this plan were ever carried into execution, no ship of the United States could sail the seas, save by the grace of a foreign and unfriendly power. Upon the execution of the plan, the Atlantic Ocean, which has been and should be a fair and free and friendly highway, would become an area filled with deadly peril to the commerce, the coasts, and the cities of the United States.

We know that an integral part of that plan was designed to be a conquest of the Atlantic basin. For more than a year we and the other American republics

have



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FEBRUARY 8, 1945

From the People of
Samuel I. Rosenman

have been ceaselessly observing and combating intrigues and plots on this side of the ocean which were designed to give to Hitler's forces bridgeheads in the New World for use whenever he should have gained control of the Atlantic Ocean. These have included tangible preparations such as the setting up of secret air landing fields and widespread attempts through corruption, threats and crime to intimidate or subvert certain American governments. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy; every resource of cajolery, or money, or planting of fear has been employed. All of these have been steps to acquire terminals in the New World against the time when they could be connected with the reservoir of Hitler's power through control of the seas. To execute this design nothing remained but to begin the campaign to control the seas, commencing with the Atlantic.

We are now faced with evidence that that beginning is being made. The policy of world conquest by force, which has already devastated an entire continent, is now being extended in the Atlantic Ocean, this time definitely striking at us.

Hitler could not possibly have given clearer notice by overt acts of his paramount intent to dominate, not only



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From the Purpose of
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only the continents adjacent to Europe, but also the high seas of the earth. I have previously told you that we were convinced that his policy was not merely to conquer Europe but to conquer the world. Today I am compelled to bring to your attention new proof.

With this new evidence, with these warnings, and with the indications now given through overt acts of the German Navy, it would be the height of folly for nations and peoples not yet brought under the heel of this would-be conqueror, to fail to take full notice. The only course left open for free peoples, of which we are one, is to prepare in every way to defend themselves whenever they travel the high seas, or in those areas where Hitler is in control or seeks to acquire control. Any journey on water or on land beyond this Hemisphere must now become a journey protected by arms.

We are further aware that the policy of acquiring control by force and domination by terror at sea and frightfulness on land is no longer a movement merely in aid of localized military operations, is not merely an attempt to acquire military advantage over an opposing foe, but is an attempt to create a permanent world

system



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system based on force by terror, by murder or by massacre; by threat or by fact of piracy. Hitler has demonstrated himself to be the foremost enemy of the human race. He is not merely a military enemy. His government has boasted that it is also the enemy of law, the enemy of religion, the enemy of morality, the enemy of liberty, the would-be conqueror of all other peoples. By methods of brutality and inhumanity without parallel in civilized history, the Nazi régime has proposed to destroy everything worthwhile in the fabric of organized society throughout the world. This is Hitler's own boast, ceaselessly repeated by his satellites and abundantly proved by his deeds.

The time has passed for discussion as to whether interests of the United States are involved in this business. It has ceased to be even rational to consider seriously the casual statements of Nazi propagandists, sometimes repeated by well-meaning dupes in this country, that Hitler has no designs on the United States. The danger has ceased to be merely possible, or even probable. It is here.

Other nations have met disaster because they abandoned,



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abandoned, under intimidation, their lines of outer defense. Unless we are gradually but certainly to turn over the high seas to those who seek to conquer through processes of terrorism like that of the Nazi submarine on the Greer, and like the sinking of the Sesha, it becomes necessary for every country promptly to perfect defenses for its people on the highways of the world, and especially in the Atlantic.

It necessarily follows that every American vessel must have increased means and improved methods of defense against the increased dangers and threats of danger which have been pointed out. There is no other safe course.

Hull



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THE WHITE HOUSE

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(31)

9/11/61

First Draft - preparatory original - 11 pages - S.I.R. corrections throughout. Several whole pages of handwriting.

Second Draft - original preparatory - 10 pages - S.I.R. corrections profuse throughout.

Second Draft - 20 pages - S.I.R. corrections.

(Another Second Draft - preparatory carbon - not identical - uncorrected).

Third Draft - carbon - 17 pages - S.I.R. corrections on p. 15.

3 State Dept. Drafts - 1 corrected by S.I.R. (Hopkins copy)

Other memos.

Inserts uncorrected.



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Six First Draft

The Navy Department of the United States has reported to me that ^{at - o'clock} on the morning of September 4th the United States

destroyer GREER was proceeding in full daylight towards ^{Lat 61° N} ~~Lat 61° N~~ ^{Long 20° W} Iceland, She was carrying American mail. She was flying the American flag.

flying the American flag. Her identity as an American

ship was unmistakable.

How and there
She was attacked by a German submarine. *A German submarine deliberately fired a number of torpedoes which*
missed their mark. In spite of what Hitler's Propaganda Bureau has invented, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired upon this American destroyer without warning and with deliberate design to sink her.

This destroyer was not in foreign waters. It was in waters which the people of the United States have declared to be waters of self-defense—outposts of American defense in the Atlantic.

Made at their mouths
The people of the United States determined months ago that Hitler's designs on the Western Hemisphere could be successfully repulsed only if the United States extended ^{her} first line of defense far ^{out} into the Atlantic ^{to meet} his attack before it reached our shores. One



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P One of these outposts ^{which we attacked} was Iceland and the waters surrounding Iceland. This determination by the American people was ~~based on its desire~~ ^{based on its desire} ~~made on the clear basis that every nation has~~ right to protect itself from any threat of attack.



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WORLD WAR II

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The United States destroyer, when it was attacked, was proceeding on a legitimate mission through those ^{friendly} ~~international~~ waters which had been included in the area of American self-defense.

If the American ship was visible to the submarine when the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to sink an American warship. On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface and fired, ~~so it could~~ ^{by} through its hearing



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Samuel I. Rosenman
Former Secretary of
Labor

devices in the direction of the sound ~~of the propellers~~
of the American destroyer without taking the trouble to
~~learn~~
~~find out~~ its identity, then the attack was even more out-
rageous for it indicated a policy of indiscriminate
violence against any vessel sailing the seas - belligerent
or non-belligerent.

This act of piracy is not the first which the Nazi
Government has committed against the American flag. A
few months ago an American merchant ship, the ROBIN MOOR,
was sunk by a Nazi submarine under circumstances violating
international law and every principle of humanity.

And the United States Navy reports that within the
past few days another merchant ship, the SESSA, was sunk. She
also carried the flag of a neutral - our sister Republic of Panama.
The SESSA was carrying civilian supplies to Iceland. So

far only three of her crew are known to have survived.

(A) *The important truth is that these*
~~some~~ acts of international lawlessness are a
manifestation of a design which has ~~been~~ made clear to the
American people for a long time. It is a Nazi
design to abolish the
freedom of the seas, and acquire control and domination of
the seas for themselves. For with control of the seas in their
hands,



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TELEGRAM

RV-C

The White House

Washington

TEMPORARY WHITE HOUSE,

HYDE PARK, N.Y., SEP^T. 7, 1941

DRAFT:

MR. HOPKINS - (ATTENTION MR. EARLY)

THE PRESIDENT'S RADIO ADDRESS.

WHAT I AM GOING TO SAY TO YOU TONIGHT WILL NOT BE REGARDED
BY ANY AMERICAN CITIZEN AS A DELICIOUS OR AGGRESSIVE STATEMENT.

WHAT I AM SAYING DOES NOT RELATE JUST TO THE ~~SINGLE EPISODE OF~~
~~ONE CLEARLY ESTABLISHED ATTACK BY A GERMAN SUBMARINE A FEW DAYS~~
~~AGO ON THE U.S. DESTROYER "GREER"~~

-BECAUSE WE AMERICANS ARE KEEPING OUR FEET ON THE GROUND,
AND BECAUSE IN OUR TYPE OF DEMOCRATIC CIVILIZATION ~~WE~~ ^{WE}
OUTGROWN THE THOUGHT OF DECLARING WAR ON SOME OTHER NATION.
BY REASON OF A SINGLE PIRATICAL ATTACK ON ONE OF OUR SHIPS,
WE ARE MOST DECIDEDLY NOT BECOMING HYSTERICAL OR LOSING OUR
SENSE OF PROPORTION.

INSTEAD, WE ARE TAKING ^a LONG-RANGE POINT OF VIEW IN
REGARD TO CERTAIN FUNDAMENTALS AND TO A SERIES OF EVENTS ^{on hand}
^{and in the} WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED AS A WHOLE, IN RELATION TO THE
GENERAL POLICIES OF THIS NATION FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED
AND FIFTY YEARS.

(MORE)

Second
the way is clear for the next step — domination by force
of the Western Hemisphere, ~~and~~ the United States. ~~With~~ Under
Nazi control of the seas, ~~in~~ ~~nowhere~~ no merchant ship of
the United States would be free to carry on peaceful com-
merce except by the grace of this foreign and unfriendly
power. The Atlantic ocean which has been, and ~~must~~, be, a
free and friendly highway would become a deadly menace to
the commerce of the United States, to the coasts of the
United States, and to the cities of the United States.

This attempt to seize control of the oceans is but
now being
a counterpart of the Nazi plots carried ~~out~~ throughout
the Western Hemisphere, designed toward the same end of
domination and control. For Hitler's advance guards,
not only his avowed agents but his dupes among us, have
sought to make ready *in the New World* footholds and
bridgeheads for him, as soon as he has gained control
of the two oceans surrounding us.

His intrigues, his plots, his activities, his
machinations in this New World are all known to ~~the~~ the
~~Government of the United States. By~~
~~its agents,~~ ~~through~~ widespread attempts at corruption,



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From the Papers of
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by threats, and actual crimes tried to intimidate or subvert some of the American Governments. ^{of the Western Hemisphere.} Secret air landing fields have been attempted to be set up. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy. Every resource of cajolery, money, threat, intimidation has been employed.

To be successful with any of this, it is necessary for Hitler to control the seas. For so long as he firmly may of Best Britain and our own naval patrol stand in the A It is now clear ~~from~~ that Hitler's campaign to

(B) control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity has begun. Nothing could be a clearer statement of this threat than the Nazi attack upon our ships. His intention has been made clear. The American people can have no further

P illusions about it. No silly whisperings of appeasers

that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere, no lullabies that we have a wide ocean to protect us -

can have any effect on ^{the} hard-headed, ^{far sighted,} ^{American} people,

(C) P ^{from him} This is no localized military operation in the ~~sphere~~ ^{area} ^{over} ^{the} Atlantic.

This is no mere episode in a struggle between two nations.

determined

This is a step towards creating a permanent world system



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(A) way, the Nazi plans for world domination cannot be carried out



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TELEGRAM

The White House
Washington

PAGE 2 - DRAFT

From the People of
Samuel I. Rosenman

(B)

P.
~~FRIENDLY, HONEST, CIVILIZED~~ GENERATION AFTER GENERATION, America
WE HAVE STOOD FOR THE GENERAL ~~HONEST~~ POLICY OF THE FREEDOM
OF THE SEAS—LEARNING BY THAT THAT NO NATION HAS THE RIGHT, EVEN
IN PEACE AND AT LONG DISTANCES FROM THE THEATRE OF LAND WAR,
TO MAKE THE BROAD OCEANS UNSAFE FOR COMMERCE. THAT WAS TRUE IN
THE FRENCH WAR IN 1793, IN THE ¹⁸⁴⁵ ~~WARS~~ WARS IN 1803, ~~IN~~ IN THE
WAR OF 1812, AND IN ALL OUR LATER HISTORY. UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE
WARFARE CONSTITUTED A DEFIAENCE—AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST OUR
HISTORIC AMERICAN POLICY TODAY, ~~HE~~, JUST AS ~~GERMANY~~ ^{did} THE
GERMAN POLICY OF UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE ~~REMOVED~~ ^{REMOVED} IN JANUARY 1917.

OUR POLICY HAS APPLIED FROM TIME IMMENORIAL, NOT MERELY TO
THE ATLANTIC WATERS BUT TO THE WATERS OF THE PACIFIC AS WELL.

TODAY, THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED NO FORMAL DECLARA-
TION OF UNLIMITED ACTS OF AGGRESSION, BUT ^{THE} SERIES OF EVENTS ~~must~~
LEADS ANY REASONABLE PERSON TO CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A POLICY HAS
BEEN ADOPTED BY THEM, EVEN THOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY
ANNOUNCED.

ON OUR PART, FOR OVER TWO YEARS, WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT
IT IS THE AMERICAN POLICY TO OPPOSE WHAT AMOUNTS TO PIRACY ON
THE HIGH SEAS AND ESPECIALLY TO PREVENT WARS IN EUROPE, OR IN

and still applies



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TELEGRAM

PAGE 4 - DRAFT

The White House
Washington

THERE COULD HAVE BEEN NO MISTAKE ON THE PART OF THE SUBMARINE AS TO THE NATIONALITY OF THE VESSEL ATTACKED IF THE SUBMARINE HAD HER PERISCOPE ABOVE WATER AT ANY TIME. IF THE PERISCOPE WAS NOT ABOVE WATER AND IF THE TORPEDOES WERE FIRED BY SOUND METHODS RATHER THAN VISUAL METHODS, THE ATTACKS WERE EQUALLY REPREHENSIBLE IN THAT THEY WERE MADE AGAINST A VESSEL WHOSE NATIONALITY HAD NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED.

IN EITHER CASE, THE ATTACKS CAN WELL BE LABELED PIRATICAL FROM THE STANDPOINT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS.

BECAUSE OF THESE EPISODES, BECAUSE OF THE AGGRESSIVE
MOVEMENTS AND OPERATIONS OF GERMAN WARSHIPS, AND BECAUSE
OF THE UNPRECEDENTED SHOCKS OF SICKNESS AND DEATH WHICH
THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY HAS NO RESPECT FOR TREATIES, FOR
INTERNATIONAL LAW OR THE DECENT TREATMENT OF NEUTRAL NATIONS OR
HUMAN LIFE, WE AMERICANS ARE FACED NOT WITH THEORIES BUT WITH
IRRADIATING FACTS.

based on force, terror and murder. This is piracy on the part of the foremost enemy of the human race - not merely a military enemy but an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion.

The danger to our western world has long ceased to be a possibility or even a probability. The danger is now here. D, E,

One peaceful nation after another has met disaster because they ^{each} refused to look the danger squarely in the eye until it actually had them by the throat. The United States will not repeat that mistake. No act of violence or intimidation will keep us from maintaining intact our lines of outer defense far in the Atlantic. We will not turn over the high seas to a barbarous domination. No matter what it takes, no matter what the cost, the line of legitimate American commerce will be kept open.

F, G



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Sammie T. Thompson

D

As I have stated ~~before~~ ^{on this occasion}, an attack under the modern lightning system of warfare takes place long before the bombs ~~are~~ ^{begin} to fall. From tragic experience to the rest of the world the United States ^{learned} decided long ago that it ^{must} not ~~be~~ wait for the attack to hit our shores, but to repulse it as soon as any base is occupied from which the security of the Western Hemisphere can be assailed.



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

G

As Commander-in-Chief of the Navy I have instructed our fleet to destroy any Axis submarine or raider that is discovered prowling in our defensive waters. We mean to protect the merchant shipping in these waters from ~~the~~ sea-going bandits.

~~will no longer~~ American Naval vessels ~~must~~ wait until a German submarine ~~is~~ lurking under the water, strike ~~the~~ their deadly blow. These vipers ~~do~~

E

will be struck down wherever they show their heads in our protective waters. The normal practice of diplomacy would have indicated that this Government should protest to the offending Nation. We even might have asked for an apology. But these international bandits that sink our ships and kill our ~~do not wish to do~~ citizens ~~must~~ be treated as ~~representatives of~~ ^{certified} sovereign states. I have taken the action which our defense requires and which Hitler well understands; namely, the use of over-powering force to keep our waters safe for all merchant ships.

Hitler brazenly attempts the wanton attack on our naval ship which was about its lawful business in waters within our protective influence. He has the effrontery to state that



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Let me

From the Papers of

J. V. Roosevelt

- 2 -

our destroyer attacked the sub-marine first. This is entirely contrary to the facts and I am sure that Hitler knows that it is contrary to the facts. I now serve notice on the Axis powers to keep their raiding pirates out of waters of the Atlantic which are essential to the defense of the Western Hemisphere. We mean to keep these seas free — free from the aggressor nations of the world. It might be said that British ships find their ways into these areas, but every child knows that they come with no menacing or aggressive attempt.

We want no war with Hitler, but neither do we want peace so bad that we will pay for it by permitting his marauding sub-marines and raiders to ~~wantonly~~ attack our naval and merchant ships while about their proper business. When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, do you wait until he has hit his victim before you crush him? These submarines and disguised raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are ~~the~~ menace to the pathways of freedom of the high seas. They challenge our sovereignty; they offend our most precious ~~rights~~ ^{rights of the} ~~sensibilities~~ when they attack ~~the~~ American flag ~~symbol~~ which are the symbols of our safety, our freedom, our very life. Tonight the freedom of the seas, which is one of the keystones of the foreign policy of this Nation has been threatened —

2nd part

- 1 -

The Navy Department of the United States has reported to us that on the morning of September 4 at _____ o'clock the United States destroyer GREENE, proceeding in full daylight towards Iceland, had reached _____ latitude and _____ longitude, 200 miles southwest of Iceland. She was carrying American mail to Iceland. She was flying the American flag. Her identity as an American ship was unmistakable.

She was then and there attacked by a submarine. Germany now finally admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine deliberately fired a number of torpedoes, all of which missed their mark. In spite of what Hitler's Propaganda Bureau has invented, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired upon this American destroyer without warning and with deliberate design to sink her.

Our destroyer was not in foreign waters. She was in waters which the government of the United States has declared to be waters of self-defense — outposts of American defense in the Atlantic.

The people of the United States made up their minds many months ago that Hitler's obvious threat against the United States, against the Western Hemisphere, and against the entire world could be



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successfully met if we had the far-sightedness and courage to do two things. The first was to send to the nations resisting Hitler, every plane and every ship and every gun which we could. The second was to acquire and maintain outposts of defense far out in the Atlantic from which to meet his attack before it reached our shores.

The government of the United States is now carrying out both of these determinations of the American people.

One of these outposts which we have established is Iceland and that part of the Atlantic Ocean surrounding Iceland. Through these waters there pass endless line of ships, bearing the material of war, for which the people of the United States are spending billions of dollars and which, by formal Congressional action, they have declared to be essential for the defense of their own land, their own homes, their own lives.

The United States destroyer, when it was attacked, was proceeding on a legitimate mission through those very waters. There are many other American ships and planes patrolling those same waters -- protecting legitimate shipping in the interest of the defense of the United States.



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If the destroyer was visible to the submarine when the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship. On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface and, with the aid of its hearing devices, fired in the direction of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the trouble to learn its identity — as the official German communique would indicate — then the attack was even more outrageous, for it indicates a policy of indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas — belligerent or non-belligerent.

This act of piracy is not the first which the Nazi Government has committed against the American flag. A few months ago an American merchant ship, the ROBIN LOCH, was sunk by a Nazi submarine under circumstances violating long-established international law and every principle of humanity.

And the United States Navy reports to me that within the past few days another merchant ship, the SS SA, was sunk. She also carried the flag of a neutral — the flag of our sister Republic of Panama. The SS SA was carrying civilian supplies to Iceland through these very same waters, when she was attacked. So far only three of her crew are known to have survived.



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We Americans are keeping our feet on the ground. Our

type of democratic civilization has so grown the thought of feeling compelled to fight some other nation by reason of any single piratical attack on one of our ships. We are most decidedly not becoming hysterical or losing our sense of proportion. Therefore, what I am thinking and saying does not relate only to these isolated episodes in the Atlantic Ocean.

Instead, we Americans are taking a long-range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events on land and on sea which must be considered as a whole -- as a part of a world pattern.

The important truth is that these acts of international lawlessness are a manifestation of a design which has been made clear to the American people for a long time. It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas for themselves.

For with control of the seas in their own hands, the way can become clear for their next step -- domination of the United States and the Western Hemisphere by force. Under Nazi control of the seas, no merchant ship of the United States or of any other



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American Republic would be free to carry on any peaceful commerce except by the grudging grace of this foreign and unfriendly and tyrannical power. The Atlantic Ocean which has been, and which should always be, a free and friendly highway for us would then become a deadly menace to the commerce of the United States, to the coasts of the United States, and to the inland cities of the United States.

This Nazi attempt to seize control of the oceans is but a counterpart of the Nazi plots now being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere — all designed toward the same end of dominion and control. For Hitler's advance guards — not only his avowed agents but also his spies among us — have sought to make ready for him footholds and bridgeheads in the New World to be used as soon as he has gained control of the two oceans surrounding us.

His intrigues, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the government of the United States. Widespread attempts at corruption, threats, and actual crimes have been committed by his agents to intimidate or subvert



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some of the Governments of the Western Hemisphere. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy. Every resource of cajolery, money, threat, intimidation has been employed.



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To be ultimately successful at any of this, Hitler must get control of the seas. He must first destroy the bridge of ships which we are building across the Atlantic over which we shall continue to roll the implements of war eventually to destroy him and all his fantastic nightmares. He must silence the British Navy. He must destroy our patrol on sea and in the air. So long as the friendly navy of Great Britain and our own ocean patrol stand in the way — protecting these ships in our defensive waters — Nazi plans for world domination cannot prevail.

Generation after generation, America has battled for the general policy of the freedom of the seas. That policy is a very simple one — but a basic, fundamental one. It means that no nation has the right, even in wartime and even at great distances from the actual theatre of land war, to make the broad oceans of the world unsafe for commerce.

That was our policy in the French War in 1799; in the Barbary wars in 1805; in the War of 1812 — and in all our later history.

Unrestricted submarine warfare in 1941 constitutes a defiance -- an act of aggression -- against that historic American policy today, just as German unrestricted submarine warfare did in January 1917.

That policy of freedom of the seas is the basis of our present system of patrol by our ships and by our planes over the vast expanse of the Atlantic, protecting ships of all nations in peaceful commerce in our protective waters.

Our policy has applied from time immemorial -- and still applies -- not merely to the Atlantic but to the Pacific as well.

It is now clear that Hitler's campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity has begun. The Nazi Government has not yet publicly issued any formal declaration of unlimited acts of aggression. But this series of events must lead any reasonable person to conclude that such a policy has been adopted by them, even though it has not been officially announced.

Hitler's intention has been made clear. The American people can have no further illusions about it.

No tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not



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interested in the Western Hemisphere, no soporific lullabies that we have a wide ocean to protect us from him -- can have any effect on the hard-headed, far-sighted and realistic American people.

Because of these episodes, because of the movements and operations of German warships, and because of the clear, repeated proof that the present Government of Germany has no respect for treaties or for international law, that it has no decent attitude toward neutral nations or human life -- we Americans are now face to face not with abstract theories but with cruel, relentless facts.

This attack on the Greer was no localized military operation in the North Atlantic. This was no mere episode in a struggle between two nations. This was one determined step towards creating a permanent world system based on force, terror and murder. This was piracy on the part of the foremost enemy of the human race -- not merely a military enemy but an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion.

And I am sure that even now the Nazis are waiting to see whether the United States will take it lying down -- whether we will give them the green light to go ahead on this path of destruction.

The Nazi danger to our western world has long ceased to



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be a possibility or even a probability. The danger is now here.

As I have stated on other occasions, an attack under the modern lightning system of warfare takes place long before the bombs actually begin to fall or the torpedoes to be shot. From the tragic experience of the rest of the civilized world, the United States learned months ago that it must not wait for the attack to hit our shores, but that it must be ready to meet it as soon as any base is occupied or any course of action is taken which assails the security of the Western Hemisphere.

The normal practice of diplomacy perhaps would have been for this Government to protest to the offending Nation. We even might have asked for an apology. But these international bandits who sink our ships and kill our citizens do not act, nor can they be treated, as representatives of civilized states.

One peaceful nation after another has met disaster because they each refused to look the Nazi danger squarely in the eye until it actually had them by the throat.

The United States will not make that fatal mistake.

No act of violence or intimidation will keep us from main-



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taining intact our two bulwarks of defense; our line of supply of material to the enemies of Hitler, and our ring of outposts out in the Atlantic Ocean.

We will not turn over the high seas to barbarous domination. No matter what it takes, no matter what it costs, we will keep open the line of legitimate commerce in these defensive waters. That is what our American air and naval patrol has been doing. That is what it will continue to do.

We want no shooting war with Hitler. But neither do we want peace so much, that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our naval and merchant ships while they are on our legitimate business. We are determined to protect our merchant shipping in these waters from these sea-going bandits.

When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has hit before you crush him.

These Nazi submarines and disguised raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag -- symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very



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life.

In these defensive waters, American naval vessels and American patrol planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow -- first.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Navy, I have instructed our fleet and our planes to destroy any such Axis submarine or raider that is discovered prowling in those waters. We know now that the very presence of these Axis ships in these waters is sufficient provocation for attacking them at once as a measure of self-defense. Those are the orders in the hands of the commanders of our ships and planes, as they patrol the North Atlantic tonight.

That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the clear right of this sovereign nation. That is the only step possible, if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have not taken it hurriedly or lightly. It is the result of months and months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer.

The American people have faced other grave crises in their



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to

history -- with American courage and American resolution. They will do no less today.

They know the actualities of the aggression being committed upon them. They know the necessities of a bold defense against this aggression. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts.

And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty and of the rightousness of what they do, they will -- with Divine help and guidance -- stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.



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TELEGRAM

RV-C

The White House
Washington

Tapped down
from Hyde
Park

TEMPORARY WHITE HOUSE,

HYDE PARK, N.Y., SEP'T. 7, 1941.

had
died

DRAFT:

MR. HOPKINS - (ATTENTION MR. EARLY)
THE PRESIDENT'S RADIO ADDRESS.

WHAT I AM GOING TO SAY TO YOU TONIGHT WILL NOT BE REGARDED
BY ANY AMERICAN CITIZEN AS A BELLIQUE OR AGGRESSIVE STATEMENT.
WHAT I AM SAYING DOES NOT RELATE JUST TO THE SINGLE EPISODE OF
A CLEARLY ESTABLISHED ATTACK BY A GERMAN SUBMARINE A FEW DAYS
AGO ON THE U.S. DESTROYER "GREER."

BECAUSE WE AMERICANS ARE KEEPING OUR FEET ON THE GROUND,
AND BECAUSE WE, IN OUR TYPE OF DEMOCRATIC CIVILIZATION HAVE
OUTGROWN THE THOUGHT OF DECLARING WAR ON SOME OTHER NATION
BY REASON OF A SINGLE PIRATICAL ATTACK ON ONE OF OUR SHIPS,
WE ARE MOST DECIDEDLY NOT BECOMING HYSTERICAL OR LOSING OUR
SENSE OF PROPORTION.

INSTEAD, WE ARE TAKING THE LONG-RANGE POINT OF VIEW IN
REGARD TO CERTAIN FUNDAMENTALS AND TO A SERIES OF EVENTS
WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED AS A WHOLE IN RELATION TO THE
GENERAL POLICIES OF THIS NATION FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED
AND FIFTY YEARS.

(MORE)



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TELEGRAM

The White House

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Washington



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FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS CLEAR, GENERATION AFTER GENERATION, WE HAVE STOOD FOR THE GENERAL AMERICAN POLICY OF THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS--MEANING BY THAT THAT NO NATION HAS THE RIGHT, EVEN IN WARTIME AND AT LONG DISTANCES FROM THE THEATRE OF LAND WAR, TO MAKE THE BROAD OCEANS UNSAFE FOR COMMERCE. THAT WAS TRUE IN THE FRENCH WAR IN 1799, IN THE ^{after} BOHEMIAN WAR IN 1865, AND IN THE WAR OF 1812, AND IN ALL OUR LATER HISTORY. UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE CONSTITUTES A DEFIAENCE--AN ACT OF AGGRESSION--AGAINST OUR HISTORIC AMERICAN POLICY TODAY, IN 1941, JUST AS MUCH AS WAS THE GERMAN POLICY OF UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD IN JANUARY 1917.

OUR POLICY HAS APPLIED FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL, NOT MERELY TO ^{all other waters} THE ATLANTIC WATERS BUT TO THE WATERS OF THE PACIFIC AS WELL.

TODAY, THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED NO FORMAL DECLARATION OF UNLIMITED ACTS OF AGGRESSION, BUT A SERIES OF EVENTS LEADS ANY REASONABLE PERSON TO CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A POLICY HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY THEM, EVEN THOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED. ^{formally stated}

ON OUR PART, FOR OVER TWO YEARS, WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT IS THE AMERICAN POLICY TO OPPOSE WHAT AMOUNTS TO PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS AND ESPECIALLY TO PREVENT WARS IN EUROPE, OR IN

TELEGRAM

The White House
Washington

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From the Papers of
SIR HENRY T. Roseman

Africa, or in Asia, from extending to the Western Hemisphere or to the waters which have definite relationship to the safety of the Western Hemisphere.

During the past six months, an attack on the safety policy has followed attacks. An American flag merchant ship was sunk by a German submarine in the middle of the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean. The passengers and the crew were forced into open boats hundreds of miles from land. Providentially, and with the odds against them, they were rescued after many days of severe hardships. No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparations has come from the German government.

In July, an American battleship, in North American waters, was followed by a submarine which for some time sought to maneuver into a position of attack. The periscope of the submarine was clearly seen. No British or American submarines were within many hundreds of miles of the spot at the time.

Last week, an American destroyer on her way to Iceland, and not far from Greenland, was attacked in daylight several times by a submarine. By great good fortune, the torpedoes fired at her made no hits. In view of the repetition of attacks,

TELEGRAM

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Samuel I. Rosenman

THERE COULD HAVE BEEN NO MISTAKE ON THE PART OF THE SUBMARINE AS TO THE NATIONALITY OF THE VESSEL ATTACKED IF THE SUBMARINE HAD HER PERISCOPE ABOVE WATER AT ANY TIME. IF THE PERISCOPE WAS NOT ABOVE WATER AND IF THE TORPEDOES WERE FIRED BY SOUND METHODS RATHER THAN ~~VISUAL~~ ^{sight} METHODS, THE ATTACKS WERE Equally REPREHENSIBLE IN THAT THEY WERE MADE AGAINST A VESSEL WHOSE NATIONALITY HAD NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED.

IN EITHER CASE, THE ATTACKS CAN WELL BE LABELED PIRATICAL FROM THE STANDPOINT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS.

BECAUSE OF THESE EPISODES, BECAUSE OF THE ACTIONS, THE MOVEMENTS, AND ~~THE~~ OPERATIONS OF GERMAN WARSHIPS, AND BECAUSE OF THE UNFORTUNATE CONCLUSION BASED ON SCORES OF EPISODES THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY HAS NO RESPECT FOR TREATIES, FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW, OR THE DECENT TREATMENT OF NEUTRAL NATIONS OR HUMAN LIFE, WE AMERICANS ARE FACED NOT WITH THEORIES BUT WITH UNPLEASANT FACTS.

because of

(TOMORROW)

UNITED STATES MARITIME COMMISSION

Washington

September 8, 1941

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

The following is the latest information from the Navy on the Panamanian-flag vessel SESCA (ex-Danish) and the American-flag vessel STEEL SEAFARER:

SESCA torpedoed on August 17 - Latitude 61° 05 minutes, Longitude 34° 50 minutes, approximately 300 miles off Neikiavik to which port vessel was bound. Three male survivors picked up by USS Destroyer LANSDALE out of a crew of 53.

STEEL SEAFARER sunk by aerial bombing during night September 5 and 6, just below entrance of the Gulf of Suez; 24 of the crew landed on Island of Shadwan, remainder of the crew picked up. All reported safe.

SESCA loaded and en route to Iceland.

STEEL SEAFARER loaded (Lend-Lease cargo) and en route to Suez.

Jerry Land
E. S. Land
Chairman



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SAC Security Bureau

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The Navy Department of the United States has reported

to me that on the morning of September 4 at ____ o'clock
the United States destroyer GREER, proceeding in full day-
light towards Iceland, had reached ____ latitude and ____
longitude, 200 miles southwest of Iceland. She was carrying
belongings.
American mail. She was flying the American flag. Her
identity as an American ship was unmistakable.

She was then and there attacked by a submarine. Germany
actually
now admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine
deliberately fired a number of torpedoes, all of which
missed their mark. In spite of what Hitler's Propaganda
Bureau has invented, I tell you the blunt fact that the
German submarine fired upon this American destroyer with-
out warning and with deliberate design to sink her.

This destroyer was not in foreign waters. *She* was in
territorial waters which the people of the United States ~~have~~ declared
to be waters of self-defense -- outposts of American
defense in the Atlantic.

The people of the United States made up their minds ~~many~~
~~against~~
months ago that Hitler's obvious designs on the United
~~against~~ ~~against~~
States, the Western Hemisphere, and the entire world



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could be successfully repulsed if we had the far-sightedness and courage to do two things: ~~first~~
~~second~~ ^{met} ~~He first was to~~
send to the nations resisting Hitler every plane and every
ship and gun — all the materials and necessities of
~~war~~ ^{any} which we could; second, ^{The} ~~was to acquire and~~
maintain ~~our~~ ^{an} ~~front~~
outposts of defense far out in the Atlantic, to meet his
attack before it reached our shores. ^P The government of
the United States, ^{now} ~~with the approval of the vast majority~~
of the American people is carrying out both of these
determinations of the American people.

One of these outposts which we have established is ^{far back in the Atlantic Ocean}
~~in~~ Iceland and ~~surrounding~~ surrounding Iceland. Through
these waters there pass the endless ^{line of ships} ~~convoys~~ bearing the
material of war, for which the people of the United States
are spending billions of dollars and which, ^{they have by} ~~the law~~
formal Congressional action declared to be essential for
the defense of their own land, their own homes, their
own lives.

The United States destroyer, when it was attacked,
was proceeding on a legitimate mission through those very
waters, ~~which had been included as an outpost in the area~~



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Samuel I. Rosenman

protecting legitimate
shipping

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If the American ship was visible to the submarine when the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship. On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface and, with the aid of its hearing devices, fired in the direction of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the trouble to learn its identity, then the attack was even more outrageous, for it indicates a policy of indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas -- belligerent or non-belligerent.

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few months ago an American merchant ship, the ROBIN MOOR,
was sunk by a Nazi submarine under circumstances violating ~~law~~
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past few days another merchant ship, the SESSA, was sunk.
She also carried the flag of a neutral ^{the flag of} our sister
Republic of Panama. The SESSA was carrying civilian supplies
to Iceland. ^{through these very same waters, when she was} So far only three of her crew are known to
have survived.

However, what I am saying does not relate ^{entirely} to these isolated
episodes in the ~~in the~~ Atlantic Ocean.

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of ~~allowing~~ ^{allowing} ~~any~~ ^{any} scalawag ~~on~~ ^{on} some other nation by reason of ~~a~~ ^{any} single
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Samuel I. Newland

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His intrigues, his plots, his ~~activities~~ ^{two subplots} machinations in this New World are all known to the government of the United States. By widespread attempts at corruption, by threats, and by actual crimes his agents have tried to intimidate or subvert some of the Governments of the Western Hemisphere. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy. Every resource of cajolery, money, threat, intimidation has been employed.

To be successful with any of this, it is necessary for Hitler to control the seas. It is necessary for him to destroy the bridge of ships which are building across the Atlantic over which to roll ~~across the seas~~ the implements of war which will eventually destroy him and all his fantastic nightmares. So long as the friendly navy of Great Britain and our own ocean patrol stand in the way, the Nazi plans for world domination cannot be carried out.

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From the Papers of
Franklin D. Roosevelt

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Following the
lines

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wartime and even at great distances from the actual
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unsafe for commerce. ^P That was our policy in the French
War in 1793; in the Barbary wars in 1805; in the War of
1912 -- and in all our later history. Unrestricted sub-
marine warfare in 1941 constitutes a defiance -- an act
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The danger to our western world has long ceased to be a possibility or even a probability. The danger is now here. As I have stated on other occasions, an attack

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Franklin D. Roosevelt

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under the modern lightning system of warfare takes
actually place long before the bombs begin actually to fall. From
the tragic experience to the rest of the world, the United
States learned ~~long~~ ago that it must not wait for the
attack to hit our shores, but to repel it as soon as
any ~~hostile~~ ^{hostile} force which ~~assails~~
any base is occupied ~~from~~ ⁱⁿ the security of the Western
Hemisphere, can be assailed.

The normal practice of diplomacy would have ~~dictated~~ been
entered ^{for} that this Government should protest to the offending
Nation. We even might have asked for an apology. But
these international bandits ^{that} sink our ships and kill
our citizens do not ~~deserve~~ ^{merit} act, or ~~be~~ ^{can} be treated as repre-
sentatives of civilized states.

One peaceful nation after another has met disaster
because they each refused to look the danger squarely in
the eye until it actually had them by the throat. P
United States will not ~~repeat~~ make that fatal mistake. No
act of violence or intimidation will keep us from main-
taining intact our ~~line~~ ^{rule to exterminate out} outer defense in the At-
lantic. We will not turn over the high seas to ~~a~~ barbarous
domination. No matter what it takes, no matter what ~~them~~ +

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We will keep open

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costing the line of legitimate commerce ~~within~~ ^{with} be
~~kept open~~ in these defensive waters. (A)

We want no shooting war with Hitler. But neither do
we want peace so much, that we will pay for it by permitting his
marauding submarines and raiders to attack our
naval and merchant ships while ~~on their~~ ^{they are on} legitimate
business.

When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, do you wait
until he has hit ~~his~~ ^{you} before you crush him? These
submarines and disguised raiders are the rattlesnakes of
the Atlantic. They are a menace to the pathways of
freedom ⁱⁿ of the high seas. They challenge our sovereignty.
They offend our most precious rights when they attack
ships of the American flag which ~~are~~ ^{are} the symbols of our
safety, our freedom, our very life.

We mean to protect our merchant shipping in these
waters from sea-going bandits. ^{In these days of the neutrals} American Naval vessels and American
patrol planes

will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under
the water, strike their deadly blow ~~first~~.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, I have instructed
our ~~and our~~ ^{our} ~~and~~ fleet to destroy any Axis submarine or raider that is
discovered prowling in our ~~defensive~~ ^{these} waters ~~and to fire first~~.

(A)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

That is what our American
air and naval fleet has
been doing. That is what it
~~they~~ will continue to do.

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That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the clear right of this sovereign nation. That is the only step possible if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step.

I have not taken it lightly. It has been the result of months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer.

The American people have faced other crises in their history -- with American courage and American determination.

They will do no less today. They know the necessities of the aggression being committed upon them. They know the necessities of bold defense against this aggression.

They know that the times call for clear heads and hearts. And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty and of the righteousness of what they do, they will -- with Divine help and guidance -- stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their freedom, their sovereignty, and

SECOND DRAFT

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

The Navy Department of the United States has reported to me that on the morning of September 4 at _____ o'clock the United States destroyer GREER, proceeding in full daylight towards Iceland, had reached _____ latitude and _____ longitude, about 200 miles southwest of Iceland. She was carrying American mail to Iceland. She was flying the American flag. Her identity as an American ship was unmistakable.

She was then and there attacked by a submarine.

Germany now finally admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine deliberately fired a [number of torpedoes, all of which missed their mark.] In spite of what Hitler's propaganda Bureau has invented, and in spite of what some American organizations may prefer to believe, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired upon this American destroyer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.

[Our destroyer was not in foreign waters.] She was in waters which the government of the United States has declared to be waters of self-defense -- outposts of American protection in the Atlantic.



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SECOND DRAFT

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My duty has been to hold the line
One of these outposts which we have established by us
Iceland. Through these waters there pass endless lines of
ships, bearing the material of war, for which the people of
the United States are spending billions of dollars, and which,
by formal Congressional action, they have declared to be
essential for the defense of their own land, their own homes,
their own lives.

The United States destroyer, when it was attacked,
was proceeding on a legitimate mission through those very
waters. Many other American ships and planes are now patrolling
those same waters -- protecting legitimate shipping there in
the interest of the defense of the United States.

If the destroyer was visible to the submarine when
the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt
by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship.
On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface
and, with the aid of its ^{fearing} hearing devices, fired in the direction
of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the
trouble to learn its identity -- as the official German

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by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship.
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and, with the aid of its *listening* devices, fired in the direction
of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the
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Samuel I. Rosenberg
Executive Director
Records of the Executive Branch

communique would indicate -- then the attack was even more outrageous. For it indicates a policy of indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas -- belligerent or non-belligerent.

This ~~act~~^{W.H.A.} of piracy is not the first or the last

which the Nazi Government has committed against the American flag.

Attack has followed attack. A few months ago an

American merchant ship, the ROGHIN LOCH, was sunk by a Nazi

submarine under circumstances violating long-established

international law and every principle of humanity. The

passengers and the crew were forced into open boats hundreds

of miles from land. [Providentially, and with the odds against

them, they were rescued after many days of severe hardships.]

No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparations

has come from the Nazi Government.

In July, 1941, an American battleship in North

American waters was followed by a submarine which for hour

after hour sought to maneuver itself into a position of attack.

The periscope of the submarine was clearly seen. No British



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SECOND DRAFT

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or American submarines were any place within hundreds of miles of this spot at the time, so the nationality of the submarine is clear.

Five days ago a United States Navy ship on patrol picked up three survivors of an American-owned ship operating under the flag of our sister Republic of Panama, the U.S.A. SESDA. She had been torpedoed near Greenland on August seventeenth, while carrying civilian supplies to Iceland. It is feared that the other members of her crew have been drowned. In view of the established presence of German submarines in this vicinity, there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identity of the attacker.

Five days ago, another United States merchant ship, the "Steel Seafarer" was sunk in the Red Sea two hundred and twenty miles south of Suez by a German aircraft. She was bound for an Egyptian port.

Four of the vessels sunk or attacked flew the American flag and were, [in other words], clearly identifiable. Two of these ships were warships of the American Navy. In the



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fifth case, the vessel sunk clearly carried the flag of Panama.

In the face of all this, we Americans are keeping our feet on the ground. Our type of democratic civilization has outgrown the thought of seeing compelled to fight some other nation by reason of any single piratical attack on one of our ships. We are most decidedly not becoming hysterical or losing our sense of proportion. Therefore, what I am thinking and saying does not relate only to these apparently isolated episodes in the Atlantic Ocean.

Instead, we Americans are taking a long-range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events on land and on sea which must be considered as a whole -- as a part of a world pattern.

The important truth is that these acts of international lawlessness are a manifestation of a design which has been made clear to the American people for a long time. It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas



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SECOND DRAFT

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for themselves.

For with control of the seas in their own hands, the way can become clear for their next step -- domination of the United States and the Western Hemisphere by force. Under Nazi control of the seas, no merchant ship of the United States or of any other American Republic would be free to carry on any peaceful commerce, except by the grudging grace of this foreign and ~~unfriendly and tyrannical~~ power. The Atlantic Ocean which has been, and which should always be, a free and friendly highway for us would then become a deadly menace to the commerce of the United States, to the coasts of the United States, and to the inland cities of the United States.

This Nazi attempt to seize control of the oceans is but a counterpart of the Nazi plots now being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere -- all designed toward the seas end of domination and control. For Hitler's advance guards -- not only his avowed agents but also his dupes among us -- have sought to make ready for him footholds and bridgeheads in the New World, to be used



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SECOND DRAFT

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as soon as he has gained control of the two oceans surrounding us.



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His intrigue, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the Government of the United States. Widespread attempts at corruption, threats, and actual crimes have been committed by his agents to intimidate or subvert some of the Governments of the Western Hemisphere. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy.

Last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was foiled by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that Government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently, an endeavor was made to subvert the Government of Bolivia.

[] and from that instant to reach oceans to the sea through [] Ecuador. Within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air landing fields in Colombia, within range of the Panama Canal. We could multiply instances.

These conspiracies were plainly carried on [in
conjunction] with [a] design through [intimidation or otherwise]
to clear the sea for Nazi lines of communication and conquest.
On land, every resource of cajolery, or money, or planting
of fear has been employed to acquire the New World terminals.
At sea, the campaign to control through piracy, commencing
in the Atlantic, has now ~~been~~ ^{file} opened.

To be ultimately successful [at any of this], Hitler
must get control of the seas. He must first destroy the
bridge of ships which we are building across the Atlantic,
over which we shall continue to roll the implements of war
[and] eventually to destroy him and all his [fantastic nightmares].
He must silence the British Navy. He must destroy our patrol
on sea and in the air. So long as the friendly navy of
Great Britain and our own ocean patrol stand in the way --
protecting these ships in our defensive waters -- Nazi plans
for world domination cannot prevail.

It must be explained again and again to people who
like to think of the United States Navy as an invincible



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protection, that this can be true only if the British Navy
This is jungle warfare
survives. Everyone should remember that if the world outside

the Americas falls under the domination of the Axis powers, the shipbuilding facilities which they would then own in all of Europe, in the British Isles, and in the Far East would be greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of the Americas -- not only greater, but three or four or even five times greater. Even if the United States threw all its resources into such a situation for doubling and redoubling the size of our Navy, the Axis powers, in control of the rest of the world, would have the man-power and the physical resources to outbuild us several times over.

It is time for all Americans of all the Americas to accept disillusionment of the romantic notion that the Americas can live happily and peacefully for generations to come in a Nazi-dominated world.



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SECOND DRAFT

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Generation after generation, America has battled for the general policy of the freedom of the seas. That policy is a very simple one -- but a basic, fundamental one. It means that no nation has the right, even in wartime and even at great distances from the actual theatre of land war, to make the broad oceans of the world unsafe for commerce.

That was our policy in the French War in 1799; in the Barbary wars in 1805; in the War of 1812 -- and in all our later history.

Unrestricted submarine warfare in 1941 constitutes a defiance -- an act of aggression -- against that historic American policy today, just as German unrestricted submarine warfare did in January 1917.

Our policy has applied from time immemorial -- and still applies -- not merely to the Atlantic but to the Pacific and to all other oceans as well.

for long term
It is now clear that Hitler's campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity has begun. The Nazi Government has not yet publicly issued any formal declaration of unlimited acts of aggression. But recent events must lead any reasonable person to conclude that such a policy has been adopted by them, even though it has not been officially announced.

Hitler's intention has been made clear. The American people can have no further illusions about it.

No tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere, no soporific lullabies that we have a wide ocean to protect us from him -- can have any effect on the hard-headed, far-sighted and realistic American people.



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Because of these episodes, because of the movements and operations of German warships, and because of the clear, repeated proof that the present Government of Germany has no respect for treaties or for international law, that it has no decent attitude toward neutral nations or human life -- we Americans are now face to face not with abstract theories but with cruel, relentless facts.

This attack on the Greer was no localized military operation in the North Atlantic. This was no mere episode in a struggle between two nations. This was one determined step towards creating a permanent world system based on force, terror and murder. This was piracy on the part of the foremost enemy of the human race -- not merely a military enemy but an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion.

And I am sure that even now the Nazis are waiting to see whether the United States will take it lying down -- whether we will give them the green light to go ahead on this path of destruction.



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SUMMARY REPORT

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FOR THE PAPERS OF JOHNSON

The Nazi danger to our western world has long ceased to be a probability. The danger is now [actually here].

A Navy youngster, serving off-shore on the patrol, put it this way in a letter home the other day. "I am afraid some people in civilian life back home just plain don't realize how big and vital the stakes are in the protection of America's future. We and the other nations opposing Hitlerism are trying to safeguard a world system in which free and equal opportunities will be afforded to all nations. This whole principle is merely the world extension of our South American good neighbor policy. As opposed to this, we have Hitler's scheme of a world feudalism dominated and controlled by Nazi Germany and operated solely for their own benefit. We see this already in Europe where all but the Germans are starving and where the Nazis have installed the tyranny by which their system is maintained.

We are living in, and experiencing, a changing order of things, but we of the younger generation are old enough to have known the old, and young enough to live alertly and look forward to an active part in the formation of the new.



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1945

From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

But the new order -- as we Americans see it -- must be based on very old and tried fundamentals -- on equal opportunity for all individuals and nations and on the finer and simpler teachings of Christianity".

Youngsters like that, and oldsters too, are not 60% or 80% against war. They are 100% against war, just as you and I and all of us are.

But there has come a time when you and I must yield to the cold inexorable necessity of saying to inhuman, unrestrained seekers of world conquest and permanent world domination by the sword -- "You seek to throw our children and our children's children into your form of terrorism and slavery. You have now attacked our own safety. You shall go no further".

The normal practice of diplomacy perhaps would have been for this Government to protest to the offending Nation. We even might have asked for an apology. But these international bandits who sink our ships and kill our citizens do not act, nor can they be treated, as representatives of civilized states.



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One peaceful nation after another has met disaster because they each refused to look the Nazi danger squarely in the eye until it actually had them by the throat.

The United States will not make that fatal mistake.

No act of violence or intimidation will keep us from maintaining intact our two bulwarks of defense: first, our line of supply of material to the enemies of Hitler, and second, our shipping on the high seas.

We will not turn them over to barbarous domination. No matter what it takes, no matter what it costs, we will keep open the line of legitimate commerce in these defensive waters. That is what our American air and naval patrol has been doing. That is what it will continue to do.

We want no shooting war with Hitler. But neither do we want peace so much that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our naval and merchant ships while they are on legitimate business. I am not going to talk again at this time about the inherent wickedness of the German leadership. I am not going to use invective against German leaders. I am not greatly concerned when each day



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that passes I read the rather hysterical names which they call me personally and the United States as a whole, in their daily press; and I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned either by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of Nazism by the use of long-range invective.

But when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has hit before you crush him.

These Nazi submarines and disguised raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag -- symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.

It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended. This is for the clear reason that a continuation of attacks in our own waters or in waters which could be used for further and greater attacks on us will inevitably weaken



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American ability to repel Hitlerism.

Do not let us split hairs. Do not ask yourselves whether the Americas should begin to defend themselves after the fifth attack, or the tenth attack, or the twentieth attack.

Active defense must start now.

Do not let us split hairs. Do not let us say -- "We will only defend ourselves if the torpedo succeeds in getting home or the crew and the passengers are drowned".

This is the time for prevention, not to wait merely for retaliation.

If submarines or raiders attack in distant waters, they can attack equally well within sight of our very shores. Their very presence in any waters which America deems vital to its defense constitutes an attack.

In the waters which we deem necessary for our defense, American naval vessels and American patrol planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow -- first.



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Under the Constitution of the United States, I am responsible as President and as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy for the adequate defense of America. The Constitution does not require that this obligation be carried out only if our own continental soil is invaded. For example, the second President of the United States, John Adams, ordered the United States Navy to clean out European privateers and European ships of war which were infesting the Caribbean Sea, and destroying American commerce. The third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, ordered the United States Navy to end the attacks being made upon American ships on their way to and from the Mediterranean by the CORSAIRS and by the nations of North Africa. My constitutional obligation is clear; it is inescapable.

It is no act of war on our part when we decide to protect the seas which are vital to American defense. The aggression is not ours. Ours is solely defense. If German or Italian vessels of war enter the waters, the protection of which is necessary for American defense, they do so at their own peril from now on.



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From [unclear]
Samuel I. Rosenman
to [unclear]

The orders which I have given as Commander-in-chief to the United States Navy and Army are to carry out that policy.

The sole responsibility rests upon Germany. There will be no shooting unless Germany asks for it.

That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the clear right of this sovereign nation. That is the only step possible, if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have not taken it hurriedly or lightly. It is the result of months and months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer. In the protection of your nation and mine it cannot be avoided.

The American people have faced other grave crises in their history -- with American courage and American resolution. They will do no less today.

They know the actualities of the aggression being committed upon them. They know the necessities of a bold



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SECOND DRAFT

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defense against this aggression. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts.

And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty and of the righteousness of what they do, they will -- with Divine help and guidance -- stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.



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BERLE DIARY NOTES

September 1941

(The shoot-on-sight, "rattlesnake" speech of September 11, 1941, was worked on by Berle, as well as by Hull, Hornbeck, Pasvolsky, Atherton and Dunn in the State Department. On the margin of the fourth draft, dated September 10, 1941, Berle had written: "Rosenman, Hopkins and the President were meanwhile drafting on the train.")

* * *



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Samuel I. Rosenman

ABC
Slate Dept. draft
September 9, 1941

COPY FOR MR. HOPKINS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PR. SIDNEY

(This is the third draft
incorporating the Hyde Park
suggestions.)

What I am going to say to you tonight concerns an extremely serious situation. It does not relate just to the episode of the admitted attack by a German submarine a few days ago on the United States destroyer GREER; nor to the sinking of the URAMA, a peaceful ship flying the flag of a sister American Republic; nor to the sinking of an American flagship in the Indian Ocean.

In cold calm we are taking the long range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events which must be considered as a whole and in their relation to the settled policies of this nation which have been our permanent guides for more than one hundred fifty years.

For generation after generation we have stood for the general American policy of freedom of the seas -- meaning by that, that no nation has the right, even in war time and at long distances from the theatre of land war, to make the broad oceans unsafe for commerce. That was our policy in

the



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the French War in 1793; and in the Barbary War of 1805; and in the War of 1812, and in all our later history. Unrestricted submarine warfare constitutes an act of defiance — an act of aggression — against our historic American policy today in 1941, just as much as was the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare anywhere in the world announced in January 1917.

It has likewise been the settled and wise policy of this republic, throughout its entire history, to take necessary measures for the defense of this hemisphere. These measures vary with military technique, and with the degree of danger that warfare will be waged against us.

Our policy has applied from time immemorial, not merely to the Atlantic waters, but to the waters of the Pacific as well. The freedom of the seas, capped by the paramount right of self-defense are the foundation stones of American foreign policy.

(A) II

Today, the German Government has issued no formal declaration of unlimited acts of aggression. Instead, and in defiance of the law of the seas, it has asserted the right to declare, on paper, that great areas of the seas are to be closed, and that no ships may enter them save at peril of being sunk without warning.

These paper zones are not limited. One very large area



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area thus claimed by the Nazi leaders of the German Reich lies in the Western Hemisphere. It covers much of the North Atlantic Ocean; it surrounds Iceland and is intended to control both outposts of the New World.

These paper zones, and especially this North Atlantic zone, are frankly intended to stake out a claim to these New World bastions, -- a claim which the Nazi rulers of Germany propose to take up and occupy as soon as they can.

Now we are faced with a series of events which must force any reasonable person to conclude, both that a policy of unlimited acts of aggression has been adopted though it has not been officially announced, and that the time is drawing close when this staked-out claim to the outer defenses of the New World is to be taken up.

We are thus faced with a direct challenge to the two fundamental American policies which have safeguarded this nation throughout its history.

We once more have what amounts to piracy on the high seas -- a piracy which American policy has consistently opposed. We also have the definite extension of warfare *actually* into the Western Hemisphere or into waters which have a *remote* definite relationship to the safety of the Western Hemisphere.

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SAMUEL I. ROSENSTEIN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

-4-

On July 7 of this year I announced that Iceland had requested that we assure the adequate defense of that country, and that we had agreed to undertake that defense. I then said: "The United States cannot permit the occupation by Germany of strategic outposts in the Atlantic to be used as air or naval bases for eventual attack against the Western Hemisphere. We have no desire to see any change in the present sovereignty of those regions. Assurance that such outposts in our defense frontier remain in friendly hands is the very foundation of our national security and of the national security of every one of the independent nations of the New World".

The sequence of events has proved by overt acts what we already knew were the intentions of the Nazi Germany. During the past six months attack has succeeded attack on the American policy of safety. These attacks have been widespread. An American flag merchant ship was sunk by a German submarine in the middle of the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean. The passengers and crew were forced into open boats hundreds of miles from land. Providentially, with the odds against them, they were rescued after many days of severe hardship. No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparation has come from the German Government.

In



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In July of this year an American battleship, in North Atlantic waters, was followed by a submarine which for some time sought to maneuver into a position to attack. The periscope of the submarine was plainly seen; and no British or American submarines were within many hundred miles of the spot at the time.

Last week the American destroyer GREER, on her way to Iceland and not far from Greenland, was attacked in daylight several times by a submarine. But to her great good fortune the torpedoes fired at her made no hits. In view of the repetition of attacks, there could have been no mistake on the part of the submarine as to the nationality of the vessel attacked if the submarine had her periscope above water at any time. If the periscope was not above water, and if the torpedoes were fired by sound methods rather than by sight, the attacks were equally reprehensible, in that they were wanton attempts to sink a vessel whose nationality had not been established.

In either case, the attacks can well be labeled piratical from the standpoint of international law and specific international conventions.

In any case, they plainly constituted an attempt against the integrity of the necessary naval defenses of

the

the United States. The German Radio in describing the situation to the German people is saying that a state of naval warfare exists between the United States and Germany.

We need not be confused in our estimate of the facts by the loud claims of the German Navy that its submarine was attacked by the American destroyer. We have an accurate record of the facts making it plain that the claim of "attack" is merely the usual propaganda line taken in the best German manner. As frequently happens, it is inconsistent with other claims made at the same moment. For instance, it is insisted that the submarine was engaged in blocking operations, in which of course, her task would be to attack. Yet an endeavor is made to suggest that a German submarine was somewhere off the coast of Greenland engaged merely in defending herself. You do not have a defensive blockade. In point of fact, the submarine did not attack, and was intended to attack.

The claim that an American ship attacked merely follows Hitler's settled policy, (I use his own words) of telling a big lie because it is more likely to be believed.



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Records of the Executive Branch

From the Bureau of
Samuel I. Rosenman
To the Bureau of

At this time it is a piece of sheer effrontery for the present German Government to ask civilized nations to believe anything it says. This is the same Hitler who said in 1936: "The lie goes forth again that Germany tomorrow or the day after will fall upon Austria or Czechoslovakia." This is the same Hitler who on May 1, 1938 said: "The motto must be, Never war again." This is the same Hitler who in April 1939 said: "We are rearming but do not dream of attacking other nations, providing they leave us alone." This is the same Hitler who a few short weeks before the outbreak of war said: "Mr. Roosevelt believes that the tide of events is once more bringing the threat of arms and that if this threat of arms continues a large part of the world is condemned to common ruin. As far as Germany is concerned, I know nothing of this kind of a threat to other nations.....All states bordering on Germany have received much more binding assurances and above all suggestions than Mr. Roosevelt has asked from me."

Where, today, are these promises, these assurances, and those who relied on them?



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conquer Europe, but to conquer the world. Today I must bring to your attention the new proof. With the new evidence, with the new warnings, and with the indication now given through the overt act of the German Navy, it would be the height of folly for the nations and peoples not yet brought under the heel of this would-be conqueror, to fail to take full notice, and to act accordingly.

This is no mere localized movement in aid of war operations in Europe. It is part of a definite attempt to create a permanent world system by murder or massacre, by threat of force or fact of piracy. Through methods of brutality and inhumanity without parallel in civilized history, the Nazi regime has proposed to destroy everything worthwhile in the fabric of organized society throughout the world. This is their own boast, constantly repeated, and abundantly proved by deeds.

We are left no doubt as to the end result, should these plans be permitted to succeed.



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If by fear or laziness we let this regime penetrate the outer defenses, we shall have to meet it with arms on the soil of the American Hemisphere. We have reluctantly been forced to the conclusion that no agreement with the present Government of Germany is possible, for that Government has no respect for treaties, or for international law, or for the decent treatment of neutral nations, or, indeed, for human life. We must, therefore, face the situation in the only way by which it can be faced -- by acts rather than words.

It would be unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become ~~inflamed~~ ^{infuriated} by some one act of violence. But it would be inexcusable folly to minimize such incidents as the attack on the destroyer Greer, in the face of evidence which makes it clear that the incident is not isolated, but part of a general plan.

With our feet firmly on the ground, and considering the events in their series, and relying firmly on the right of free traffic in the sea, and on the unvarying principle of all necessary defense, we must take the necessary measures which will safeguard American freedom.

At home, this means closing ranks. There must be national unity in a common effort. This must reflect

itself

itself in greater endeavor. It must mean evergrowing production of the instruments of defense. It must mean putting those arms where they are most needed in combating a common parallel.

On the sea, we are required to strengthen our defense. The increased danger and threat of danger calls for increased means and improved methods of protection. There is no other safe course.

I have accordingly given the following orders to the naval forces of the United States:



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THIRD DRAFT

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

The Navy Department of the United States has reported to me that on the morning of September 4 at _____ o'clock the United States destroyer GHEER, proceeding in full daylight towards Iceland, had reached a point southeast of Greenland. She was carrying American mail to Iceland. She was flying the American flag. Her identity as an American ship was unmistakable.

She was then and there attacked by a submarine. Germany admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine deliberately fired a torpedo at the GHEER, followed later by another torpedo attack. In spite of what Hitler's propaganda Bureau has invented, and in spite of what some American obstructionist organization may prefer to believe, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.

Our destroyer was in waters which the government of the United States has declared to be waters of self-defense -- outposts of American protection in the Atlantic.



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Samuel I. Rosenman

THIRD DRAFT

In the North, these outposts have been established by us in Iceland, Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland. Through these waters there pass endless lines of ships, bearing the material of war, for which the people of the United States are spending billions of dollars, and which, by Congressional action, they have declared to be essential for the defense of their own land.

The United States destroyer, when it was attacked, was proceeding on a legitimate mission. Many other American ships and planes are now patrolling these Atlantic waters — protecting legitimate shipping there in the interest of the defense of the United States.

If the destroyer was visible to the submarine when the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship. On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface and, with the aid of its listening devices, fired in the direction of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the trouble to learn its identity — as the official German



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

THIRD DRAFT

commanding would indicate — then the attack was even more outrageous. For it indicates a policy of indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas — belligerent or non-belligerent.

This was piracy — legally and morally. It was not the first nor the last act of piracy which the Nazi Government has committed against the American flag in this war. Attach has followed attack.

A few months ago an American flag merchant ship, the RORIN LION, was sunk by a Nazi submarine in the middle of the South Atlantic, under circumstances violating long-established international law and every principle of humanity. The passengers and the crew were forced into open boats hundreds of miles from land. No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparations has come from the Nazi Government.

In July, 1941, an American battleship in North American waters was followed by a submarine which for hour after hour sought to maneuver itself into a position of attack. The periscope of the submarine was clearly seen. No British or American submarines were



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From the "Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman"

THIRD DRAFT

any place within hundreds of miles of this spot at the time, so
the nationality of the submarine is clear.

Five days ago a United States Navy ship on patrol picked
up three survivors of an American-owned ship operating under the
flag of our sister Republic of Panama — the S. S. SIKSHA. On
August twenty-sixth, she had been first torpedoed, and then shelled,
near Greenland, while carrying civilian supplies to Iceland. It
is feared that the other members of her crew have been drowned.
In view of the established presence of German submarines in this
vicinity, there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identity of
the attacker.

Five days ago, another United States merchant ship,
the "Steel Seafarer" was sunk by a German aircraft in the Red Sea
two hundred and twenty miles south of Suez. She was bound for an
Egyptian port.

Four of the vessels sunk or attacked flew the American flag
and were clearly identifiable. Two of those ships were warships of
the American Navy. In the fifth case, the vessel sunk clearly
carried the flag of Panama.



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S. I. Rosenman
From the Papers of
S. I. Rosenman

In the face of all this, we Americans are keeping our feet on the ground. Our type of democratic civilization has outgrown the thought of feeling compelled to fight some other nation by reason of any single piratical attack on one of our ships. We are not becoming hysterical or losing our sense of proportion. Therefore, what I am thinking and saying does not relate only to these apparently isolated episodes.

Instead, we Americans are taking a long-range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events on land and on sea which must be considered as a whole — as a part of a world pattern.

It would be unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become inflamed by some one act of violence. But it would be inexcusable folly to minimize such incidents in the face of evidence which makes it clear that the incident is not isolated, but part of a general plan.

The important truth is that these acts of international lawlessness are a manifestation of a design which has been made clear to the American people for a long time. It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas for themselves.



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THIRD DRAFT

For with control of the seas in their own hands, the
way can become clear for their next step — domination of the
United States and the Western Hemisphere by force. Under Nazi
control of the seas, no merchant ship of the United States or
of any other American Republic would be free to carry on any
peaceful commerce, except by the condoning grace of this
foreign and tyrannical power. The Atlantic Ocean which has been,
and which should always be, a free and friendly highway for us would
then become a deadly menace to the commerce of the United States,
to the coasts of the United States, and to the inland cities of
the United States.

The Hitler Government, in defiance of the laws of the
sea and of the recognised rights of all other nations, has pre-
sumed to declare, on paper, that great areas of the seas — even
including a vast expanse lying in the Eastern Hemisphere — are to
be closed, and that no ships may enter them for any purpose, except
at peril of being sunk. Actually they are sinking ships at will
and without warning; in widely separated areas both within and far
outside of these far-flung pretended zones.



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This Nazi attempt to seize control of the oceans is but a counterpart of the Nazi plots now being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere -- all designed toward the same end of domination and control. For Hitler's advance guards -- not only his avowed agents but also his dupes among us -- have sought to make ready for him footholds and bridgeheads in the New World, to be used as soon as he has gained control of the two oceans surrounding us.

His intrigue, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the Government of the United States. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy.

Last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was smashed by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that Government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently, an endeavor was made to subvert the Government of Bolivia. Within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air landing fields in Colombia, within range of the Panama Canal. I could multiply instances.



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These conspiracies were plainly carried on with intimidation to clear the sea for Nazi lines of communication and conquest. On land, every resource of cajolery, or money, or planting of fear has been employed to acquire the New World terminals. At sea, the campaign to control through piracy, commencing in the Atlantic, has now been opened.

To be ultimately successful in the world mastery, Hitler knows that he must get control of the seas. He must first destroy the bridge of ships which we are building across the Atlantic, over which we shall continue to roll the implements of war to help destroy him and all his works in the end. He must destroy our patrol on sea and in the air. He must silence the British Navy.

It must be explained again and again to people who like to think of the United States Navy as an invincible protection, that it can be true only if the British Navy survives. This is simple arithmetic. For if the world outside the Americas falls under Axis domination the shipbuilding facilities which the Axis powers would then own in all of Europe, in the British Isles, and



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in the Far East would be far greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of all the Americas — not only greater, but three or four or even five times greater. Even if the United States threw all its resources into such a situation, for doubling and redoubling the size of our Navy, the Axis powers, in control of the rest of the world, would have the man-power and the physical resources to outbuild us several times over.

It is time for all Americans of all the Americas to stop being deluded by the romantic notion that the Americas can live happily and peacefully for generations to come in a Nazi-dominated world.

Generation after generation, America has battled for the general policy of the freedom of the seas. That policy is a very simple one — but a basic, fundamental one. It means that no nation has the right to make the broad oceans of the world at great distances from the actual theatre of land war, unsafe for the commerce of others.

That was our policy in the French War in 1790; in the Barbary wars in 1805; in the War of 1812 — and in all our later history.



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Our policy has applied from time immemorial -- and still applies -- not merely to the Atlantic but to the Pacific and to all other oceans as well.

Unrestricted submarine warfare in 1941 constitutes a defiance -- an act of aggression -- against that historic American policy today, just as German unrestricted submarine warfare did in January 1917.

It is now clear that Hitler has begun his campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity.

His intention has been made clear. The American people can have no further illusions about it.

No tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere, no soporific lullabies that a wide ocean protects us from him -- can have any effect on the hard-headed, far-sighted and realistic American people.



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Because of these episodes, because of the movements and operations of German warships, and because of the clear, repeated proof that the present Government of Germany has no respect for treaties or for international law, that it has no decent attitude toward neutral nations or human life — we Americans are now face to face not with abstract theories but with cruel, relentless facts.

This attack on the Greer was no localized military operation in the North Atlantic. This was no mere episode in a struggle between two nations. This was one determined step towards creating a permanent world system based on force, terror and murder.

And I am sure that even now the Nazis are waiting to see whether the United States will by silence give them the green light to go ahead on this path of destruction.

The Nazi danger to our western world has long ceased to be a probability. The danger is now — not only from a military enemy but an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion.

There has now come a time when you and I must see the cold inexorable necessity of saying to these inhuman, unrestrained seekers of world conquest and permanent world domination by the sword — "You seek to throw our children and our children's children



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From the Private Office
Samuel I. Rosenman

into your form of terrorism and slavery. You have now attacked our own safety. You shall go no further."

Normal practices of diplomacy — note writing — is of no possible use in dealing with international outlaws who sink our ships and kill our citizens.

One peaceful nation after another has met disaster because each refused to look the Nazi danger squarely in the eye until it actually had them by the throat.

The United States will not make that fatal mistake.

No act of violence or intimidation will keep us from maintaining intact two bulwarks of defense: first, our line of supply of material to the enemies of Hitler, and second, the freedom of our shipping on the high seas.

We will not turn them over to barbarous domination. No matter what it takes, no matter what it costs, we will keep open the line of legitimate commerce in these defensive waters.

We have sought no shooting war with Hitler. We do not seek it now. But neither do we want peace so much, that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our naval and merchant ships while they are on legitimate business.



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I am not going to talk again at this time about the inherent wickedness of the German leadership. I am not going to use invective against German leaders. I am not greatly concerned when each day that passes I read the rather hysterical names which they call me personally and the United States as a whole, in their daily press; and I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned either by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of Kassel by the use of long-range invective.

But when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has hit before you crush him.

These Nazi submarines and disguised raiders are the rattle-snakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hazard at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag -- symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.

It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended. A continuation of attacks in our own waters, or in waters which could be used for



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THIRD DRAFT

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further and greater attacks on us, will inevitably weaken American ability to repel Hitlerism.

Do not let us split hairs. Do not ask yourselves whether the Americas should begin to defend themselves after the fifth attack, or the tenth attack, or the twentieth attack.

Active defense is in effect now.

Do not let us split hairs. Do not let us say — "We will only defend ourselves if the torpedo succeeds in getting home, or the crew and the passengers are drowned."

This is the time for prevention, not merely retaliation.

If submarines or raiders attack in distant waters, they can attack equally well within sight of our very shores. Their very presence in any waters which America deems vital to its defense constitutes an attack.

In the waters which we deem necessary for our defense, American naval vessels and American patrol planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow — first.



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Samuel I. Rosenman

Upon our naval and air patrol — now operating over a vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean — falls the duty of maintaining the American policy of freedom of the seas. That means very simply and clearly that our patrolling vessels and planes will protect all merchant ships — not only American ships but ships of any flag — engaged in commerce in our defensive waters. They will protect them from submarines; they will protect them from surface raiders.

Under the Constitution of the United States, I am responsible as President and as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy for the defense of America against attack. The Constitution does not require that this obligation be carried out only if our own continental soil is invaded.

For example, [the second President of the United States, John Adams, ordered the United States Navy to clean out European privateers and European ships of war which were infesting the Caribbean and South American waters, destroying American commerce.]

The third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, ordered the United States Navy to end the attacks being made upon American ships [on their way to and from the Mediterranean] by the corsairs of the nations of North Africa.



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My constitutional obligations as historian it is cleasy
it is inscopable.

It is no act of war on our part when we decide to protect
the seas which are vital to American defense. The aggression is
not ours. Ours is solely defense. If German or Italian vessels
of war enter the waters, the protection of which is necessary for
American defense, they do so from now on at their own peril.

The orders which I have given as Commander-in-chief to
the United States Navy and Army are to carry out that policy.

The sole responsibility rests upon Germany. There will
be no shooting unless Germany asks for it.

That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the
clear right of this sovereign nation. That is the only step possible,
if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to
maintain around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have
not taken it hurriedly or lightly. It is the result of months and
months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer. In the protection
of your nation and mine it cannot be avoided.



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From: [unclear]
Samuel T. Rosenman
J. O.

The American people have faced other grave crises in their history — with American courage and American resolution. They will do no less today.

They know the actualities of the attacks upon us. They know the necessities of a bold defense against these attacks. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts.

And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty and of the righteousness of what they do, they will — with Divine help and guidance — stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

*State
Dept.
Draft*

Fourth Draft

September 10, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

What I am going to say to you tonight concerns a situation closely affecting our national safety and welfare. It does not relate just to the episode of the admitted attack by a German submarine a few days ago on the United States destroyer Greer; nor only to the sinking of the Savanna, a peaceful ship flying the flag of a sister American republic; nor only to the sinking of an American flag ship in the Red Sea area.

In cold calm we are taking the long range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events which must be considered as a whole and in their relation to the settled policies of this nation which have been our permanent guides for more than one hundred fifty years.

For generation after generation we have stood for the general American policy that no nation has the right, even in war time, to make the broad oceans unsafe for commerce and travel. It has at the same time been the

wise



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

wise and settled policy of this Republic, throughout its entire history, to take necessary measures on land and sea for the defense of the United States and of the other independent nations of this hemisphere. These measures on land and sea, and now in the air, have varied with changes in military technique, and with the degree of danger that warfare would be waged against us.

That was our settled policy laid down by President Adams in the French quasi-war in 1798; and by President Jefferson in the Barbary War of 1805; and by President Madison in the War of 1812; and carried on in all our later history.

Our policy has applied from time immemorial, not merely to Atlantic waters, but to the waters of the Pacific and of all the seven seas. The laws of the sea, capped by the paramount right of self-defense, are basic in American foreign policy.

Unrestricted attacks by submarines, surface raiders, or aircraft, directly threaten these twin policies. They create, and are intended to create, a state of lawlessness and piracy on the high seas. They are intended to in-



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FDR's Personal Secretary
1933-1945

timidate us into weakening or abandoning the legitimate defenses of the hemisphere. This comes at a time when such defenses were never more urgently needed, since they are our main protection against an avowed movement toward world conquest, strenuously waged with vast concentrations of force on land, at sea, and in the air.



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Inconceivable as it may seem, the Hitler Government on the morning of March 26, 1941 undertook to mark off a vast expanse of sea lying the Western Hemisphere. This area covered much of the north Atlantic Ocean; it surrounded Iceland, and touched the southeastern shore of Greenland. The obvious design was to set up German control

control of both of these outposts of the new world and the surrounding sea. The Hitler Government accompanied this declaration by a threat that any ship which entered the pretended zone thereby exposed itself to the danger of destruction and that the German Government would assume no responsibility for resulting damage.

Now we have had thrust upon us a series of incidents which make it obvious that the would-be conquerors are not only trying to appropriate the seas everywhere but are even encroaching on the outer defense of the new world.

We



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We are thus faced with a direct challenge to the two fundamental American policies which have safeguarded this nation throughout its history.

We once more have piracy on the high seas -- piracy, which American policy has always opposed. We now have that definite extension of Nazi warfare into the Western Hemisphere.

On July 7 of this year I announced that Iceland had requested, and that we had insured the adequate defense of that country. I then said: "The United States cannot permit the occupation by Germany of strategic outposts in the Atlantic to be used as air or naval bases for eventual attack against the Western Hemisphere."

The sequence of events has proved by overt acts what we already knew were the intentions of Nazi Germany. During the past six months attack has succeeded attack on the American policy of hemispheric security. These attacks have been widespread.

In May an American flag merchant ship, The Robin Moor was sunk by a German submarine in the middle of the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean. The passengers and crew were forced into open boats hundreds of miles from land.

"providentially"



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Samuel I. Rosenman
Personnel
JO RANSOM

Providentially, and with the odds against them, they were rescued after many days of severe hardship. No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparation, has come from the German Government.

In July an American battleship, in North Atlantic waters, was followed by a submarine which for some time sought to maneuver into a position to attack. The periscope of the submarine was plainly seen; and no British or American submarines were within many hundred miles of the spot at the time.

Recently, the steamship Sessa, flying the flag of one of the American republics, was torpedoed while proceeding from the United States to Iceland with supplies aboard for the civilian population of that island. It is reported that of those aboard only three survived.

Within the past few days the American steamship Steel Seafarer was torpedoed and sunk in the Red Sea. Happily, all of her complement safely reached shore.

It is beyond reasonable doubt in all these cases that the assailant was German or Italian.

Last



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Last week the American destroyer Green, on her way to Iceland and not far from Greenland, was attacked in daylight several times by a submarine. By great good fortune the torpedoes fired at her made no hits. In view of the repetition of the firing, the attack was deliberate. If the submarine had her periscope above water at any time, there could have been no mistake on its part as to the nationality of the vessel attacked. If the submarine did not have her periscope above water but was firing at the sound of the Green's propellers, the attack was a wanton attempt to sink a vessel whose nationality had not been established.

From the standpoint of international law and specific international conventions, these acts are acts of piracy.

From any point of view, they plainly constituted an assault upon the essential naval defenses of the United States.

Under the circumstances it is incontrovertible that we are faced, either with a deliberate act of intimidation against



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against the United States, or with the beginning of a general reign of unrestricted terrorism on the high seas like the general policy of frightfulness which has already become only too familiar on land.

No one need be misled for a moment by the loud and false claim of the Hitler Navy that its submarine was attacked by the American destroyer. We have an accurate record of the facts making it plain that the claim of "attack" is merely the usual propaganda line taken in the best Nazi manner. In point of fact, the submarine did attack, and it was intended that she should attack.

False announcements of this sort are a settled part of Hitler's policy. His theory is that the more colossal the falsehood the more likely it is to be believed. Let me quote Hitler himself on the point:

"The great masses of a people *** will more easily fall victims to a great lie than a small one."

Now it is a piece of sheer effrontery for the Hitler Government to ask civilized nations to believe anything it says. This is the same Hitler who said

in 1938:



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in 1930: "The lie goes forth again that Germany tomorrow or the day after will fall upon Austria or Czechoslovakia."

This is the same Hitler who on May 1, 1938 said: "The motto must be, Never war again." This is the same Hitler who in April 1939 said: "We are rearming but do not dream of attacking other nations, providing they leave us alone."

This is the same Hitler who a few short weeks before the outbreak of war said: "Mr. Roosevelt believes that the tide of events is once more bringing the threat of arms and that if this threat of arms continues a large part of the world is condemned to a common ruin. As far as Germany is concerned, I know nothing of this kind of a threat to other nations . . . All states bordering on Germany have received much more binding assurances and above all suggestions than Mr. Roosevelt has asked from me."

These promises, wilfully false, have long since been brushed aside. Those who relied on them, if they are not dead, are reduced to semi-slavery. A Hitler statement today is unworthy of the attention of serious people.

But



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But we cannot disregard the marked increase of danger, demonstrated by events, especially in the Atlantic, and the compelling necessity for us correspondingly to strengthen our defenses. The attack on the Greer, off the Greenland coast, means that the campaign against our hemispheric security on which American safety depends is already under way. It marks, in fact, the beginning of a drive to carry out a plan which has long been known to us. That plan involves nothing less than forcible domination of the Atlantic Ocean, to be followed by conquest of the Western Hemisphere. The new attacks indicate that the campaign to bring this about has already begun.

In pursuance of the plan, footholds are to be acquired on the American continents, and lines of communication between them and Germany are to be opened by seizing control of the high seas with submarines, surface craft and air raiders, by processes of ruthless piracy.

The attempts to seize land footholds in the American Hemisphere were undertaken through a series of plots and intrigues,



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intrigues, chiefly in South America. The list is long. Last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was smashed by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that Government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently, an endeavor was made to subvert the Government of Bolivia. Within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air landing fields, within range of the Panama Canal. I could multiply instances.

These conspiracies -- for that is what they were -- were plainly carried on in conjunction with a design through intimidation or otherwise to clear the sea for Nazi lines of communication and conquest. On land, every resource of cajolery, or money, or planting of fear has been employed to acquire the New World terminals. At sea, the campaign to control through piracy, commencing in the Atlantic, has now fairly opened.

A dispassionate analysis of the facts compels the conclusion



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conclusion that this campaign definitely strikes at us.

I have previously reported our conviction that the policy of Hitler was not merely to conquer Europe, but to conquer the world. On May 27 I reported to you

"The Axis powers can never achieve their objective of world domination unless they first obtain control of the seas. This is their supreme purpose today; and to achieve it they must capture Great Britain."

It is in these circumstances of common danger that we are aiding British resistance to the fullest extent.

With the new evidence, with the new warnings, and with the indication now given through the overt act of the German Navy, it would be the height of folly for the nations and peoples not yet brought under the heel of this would-be conqueror, to fail to take full notice, and resolutely to act accordingly.

These naval operations are not intended to be mere local or regional activities in aid of Hitler's European War. They are part of a definite attempt to create world system by murder and massacre, by threat of force and fact of piracy. Through methods of brutality and inhumanity without parallel in civilized history, the Nazi régime has

set



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set out to reshape the world according to a hideous design which it has conceived for a master-and-slave system and which its leaders call a "new order". This is their own boast, ceaselessly repeated, and abundantly proved by deeds.

If by fear, supineness or inexcusable neglect we let this régime penetrate the outer defenses, we shall have to meet it with arms somewhere on the soil of the American Hemisphere.

It would be unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become irritated by some one act of violence. But it would be criminal folly to minimize the significance of such incidents as the attacks on the Greer, the Robin Hood, the Sessa and the Steel Seafarer, in the face of evidence which makes it clear that these incidents are not isolated, but are part of a general plan.

With our feet firmly on the ground, considering the events in their series, relying firmly on the right of

free



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free traffic on the sea and on the unvarying principle.

of all necessary defense, we must take the necessary
measures which will safeguard American freedom.

At home, this means closing ranks. There must be
nationality unity in a common effort. This must reflect
itself in greater endeavor. It must mean redoubled
energy in the production of instruments of defense. It must
mean increased willingness to accept sacrifice and incon-
venience so that the flow of materials shall continue.
It must mean putting arms where they are most necessary
in combating a common peril.

On the sea we must now still further strengthen our
safeguards. The demonstrated increase of danger and threat
of danger must be met by correspondingly increased means
and improved methods of defense.

The lines of communication must not be cut, and opera-
tions necessary for the defense of hemispheric security
must not be endangered.

I have directed that action be taken accordingly.



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America first

*Dictatorship
7/16/41*

*W.H.
well*

To revert for a moment to the episode of the U.S.S.

Greer, I am informed that an American organization, widely applauded and encouraged in the Government controlled press of Germany and Italy made a statement which would have American citizens believe that Hitler's Government does not wish to attack American ships or American shipping -- and that, therefore, the Hitler Government assertion that the U.S.S. Greer fired first must be believed. It is more than a matter of interest -- it is a matter which Americans should always remember -- that the responsible leaders of this organization are deliberately telling their fellow citizens that the reports made by the officers of the U.S.S. Greer to the Navy Department are false and of no account.

It should be noted also that the dictators of Nazi propaganda have already called attention, with glee, to the fact that certain Americans prefer to believe the word of Hitler and to discard the word of their own government and their own President. (check this)



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All of this is a mere continuation of the German and Italian attempt, through daily praise, to encourage and magnify those Americans whose names have become household words on the other side as aiders and abettors of the Nazi and Fascist systems... You Americans do not have to be told their names.



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Plunkett
6 SEPTEMBER 1941



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NEW YORK, N. Y.

FROM: USS LANSDALE
TO : OPNAV
INFO: COMDESDIV 14

THREE MALE SURVIVORS OF SS SESA (PANAMANIAN REGISTRY) IN
LATITUDE 68-35 LONGITUDE 34-50. SHIP WAS TORPEDOED 17 AUGUST
ABOUT 300 MILES FROM REYKJAVIK PROCEEDING TO THAT PORT FROM
NEW YORK. SURVIVORS BELIEVE THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES OF A CREW OF
53.

CR P445

COPY FOR THE WHITE HOUSE.

NOTE: (REPRODUCTION OF THIS MATERIAL IN ANY FORM IS NOT AUTHORIZED
EXCEPT BY SPECIFIC APPROVAL OF THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY)

Print the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

PM
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (br)

Cairo

Dated September 8, 1941
Rec'd 5:06 a.m., 9th.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

1300, September 8, 9 a.m.
FOR GENERAL DURIS FROM PIBURN.

"U.S.S. STEEL SEAFARER sunk night of September 5-
6 at 11:20 p.m. by German bomber twelve miles off
Shadwan light, 220 miles south of Suza. Entire crew
reported safe.

After (?) of 5 - 6 on Suza, movement of ships
was resumed 2 p.m., September 6. Ships started
transit of canal at 11 a.m., September 7, preceded
by (?) mine sweepers".

KIRK.

(?) Apparent omission

NK



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From the records of
Samuel I. Rosenblatt
September 10, 1941

UNITED STATES MARITIME COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

September 8, 1941

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

The following is the latest information from the Navy on the Panamanian-flag vessel SESCA (ex-Danish) and the American-flag vessel STEEL SEAFARER:

SESCA torpedoed on August 17 - Latitude 61° 05 minutes, Longitude 34° 50 minutes, approximately 300 miles off Reikiavik to which port vessel was bound. Three male survivors picked up by USS Destroyer LANSDALE out of a crew of 53.

STEEL SEAFARER sunk by aerial bombing during night September 5 and 6, just below entrance of the Gulf of Suez; 24 of the crew landed on Island of Shadwan, remainder of the crew picked up. All reported safe.

SESCA loaded and en route to Iceland.

STEEL SEAFARER loaded (Land-Lease cargo) and en route to Suez.

Jerry Land
E. S. Land
Chairman



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From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 9, 1941

JUDGE ROSENMAN:

MR. HOPKINS ASKED ME TO
GIVE THIS TO YOU BUT I OVER
LOOKED IT BEFORE YOU LEFT.
I HOPE IT ISN'T TOO LATE.
SORRY.

LOIS BERNEY



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From the Private Office of
SAMUEL I. ROSENMAN



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From the Papers of
General J. Roosevelt

the very ~~sup~~
gentlemanly ~~and~~
keep tight

It is my obvious duty in this crisis. It is the clear right of this sovereign nation. That is ~~part~~ ~~is a part~~ of the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain ~~surround~~ around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have not taken it lightly. It has been the result ~~many months~~ ~~of constant thought and~~ ~~and prayer.~~ ~~and concern in our own~~ anxiety to ~~other countries~~

The American people have faced other crises with American courage and American determination. They ~~soon~~ will do no less to-day. They ~~will~~ know the realities of the aggression being committed upon them by ~~this alien force~~. They know the necessities of bold defense ~~against this aggressor~~. They know that ~~the time will come~~ ~~they have the~~ clear heads and bold hearts. And with that inner strength that comes ~~to~~ to a free people conscious of their duty and the righteousness of what they do, they will ~~get~~ the divine help and guidance to stand this ~~bold~~ against this latest

assent to upon their devolving their
~~debt~~
freedom and
sovereignty.



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H Taylor
Heller

HOTEL RITZ
15 Place Vendome
Paris, France

May 23 1949
En Route to Rome



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HYDE PARK, N.Y.

Hon. Samuel I. Rosenman,
165 Broadway,
New York 6.

Dear Judge Rosenman:

My secretary has forwarded your letter of May 19th and has sent me a copy of my memorandum of September 2 1941 to FDR -- which I in turn now pass on to you.

I had never heard that or a similar statement made concerning submarine conditions of that time -- or thereafter for that matter.

I am glad to give it to you, for any use you may desire.

Sincerely yours,

Arnold Taylor

From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

COPY

September 2 1941



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Dear Miss Tully,

Will you hand the enclosed to the President with the statement that referring to our submarine discussion at Hyde Park, the thought took shape in my mind as indicated in this brief statement; and that perhaps it may be of passing interest to him.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) MYRON C. TAYLOR.

From the Papers of
Samuel I. Rosenman

Miss Grace Tully,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

COPY



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If I am armed and lawfully in a forest, and suddenly along my path I hear the warning rattle of a rattlesnake, and though it has not yet otherwise disclosed itself, I would feel justified in discharging a shot into the apparent location of the snake. If I killed it, I would probably have saved my life, and no one would question my right to do so; no one would feel that I should wait until it had struck me, and bitten and perhaps killed me, before taking action.

One would consider this a parallel to the case of a vessel lawfully upon the high seas, which became aware of the under-water presence of any danger, be it submarine or other, and which used any instrument within its power to protect itself from attack.

From the papers of
Samuel I. Bortman

(MT 8-27-41)

ACCUSE PRESIDENT

Germans Say He Seeks
to Provoke Incidents
to Get Us Into War

GIVE 'DETAILS' OF FIGHT.

And Assert the Submarine Did
Not Know the Identity of Ship
'Attacking' and 'Pursuing' It

By Telephone to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
BERLIN, Sept. 8.—President Roosevelt was openly accused in official quarters today of an attempt to precipitate an incident at sea for the purpose of bringing the United States into the war.

The charge was made in connection with a German communiqué issued in German quarters of American and British reports that a German submarine had attacked an American destroyer, presumably the Greer, off Iceland Thursday afternoon.

The communiqué released by the official German news agency this afternoon admitted that a German U-boat had engaged in a running encounter with a destroyer on Wednesday afternoon after having been attacked by the latter with depth bombs. The statement accused the destroyer of having opened the attack and asserted that the action took place in the Gelcken Werke zone.

The German submarine, it was said, returned the attack by firing two torpedoes at the destroyer. According to the German statement, the destroyer continued its bomb attacks until midnight and then abandoned the pursuit.

Statement of the Germans

The German communiqué was as follows:

"On the fourth of September a German submarine was attacked with depth bombs and continuously pursued in the German blockade zone at a point charted at Lat. 63 degrees 33 minutes N. and Long. 22 degrees 6 minutes W. The German submarine was unable to establish the nationality of the attacking destroyer.

"In justified defense against the attack, the submarine U-880 fired two torpedoes at the destroyer, both of which missed aim. The destroyer continued its pursuit and attacks with depth bombs until midnight, then abandoned them.

"If official American quarters namely the Navy Department, assert the attack was initiated by the German submarine, such charge can only have the purpose of giving the attack of an American destroyer on a German submarine, which was under the strict compulsion of neutrality, a semblance of legality." This attack is evidence that President Roosevelt, despite his previous assertions to the contrary, has come



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Sept. 8, 1941. Roosevelt

This attack is evidence that President Roosevelt, despite his previous assertions to the contrary, has commanded American destroyers not only to report the location of German U-boats and other German craft, as violating neutrality, but also to proceed to attack them.

Charges We Are Being Baited

"Roosevelt thereby is endeavoring with all the means at his disposal to provoke incidents for the purpose of getting the American people into the war."

Up to the publication of today's communiqué, the German press had made no reference to the Greer incident, and official quarters at the noon hour were not disposed to discuss it. There was frequent comment that the incident was being exploited by Washington for internal and political reasons.

The communiqué might be interpreted as an indication that the German Admiralty recognized that Mr. Roosevelt's alleged "shoot-at-sight" order to American naval craft operating in the North Atlantic had become a factor to be reckoned with.

It was stated on the Wilhelmstraße that nothing was known of an official word by the American Government in connection with the Greer incident. Comment beyond that contained in the communiqué today was not forthcoming.

Our Ship Called Aggressor By The Associated Press

BERLIN, Sept. 6.—A German submarine fired two torpedoes at the United States destroyer Greer, a British vessel, in the North Atlantic today, but it declared that the American warship was the aggressor and acted on orders of President Roosevelt.

According to the official German version, the destroyer attacked first in Icelandic waters which the Germans have declared to be inside their territorial limits. The submarine commander, not knowing the destroyer's nationality, acted justifiably in exercise of the primitive right of self-defense.

The communiqué, issued through Diodato, put the submarine shot from the southwest of Iceland.

According to the communiqué, two hours and nineteen minutes elapsed between the time the submarine attacked at 12:30 P. M. and the U-boat discharged two torpedoes at 2:39 P. M.

The Greer, it said, ending two days of official silence, acknowledged that the submarine's torpedoes went wide of their mark. On the other hand, the submarine was as yet unable to furnish her commander a report.

There was some disposition in informal comment in Berlin thereafter to believe that the episode would aggravate relations between Germany and the United States.

However, some sources regarded the incident as highly dangerous. It was not stated precisely why the submarine, despite daylight hours, did not know whether the destroyer was an American ship.

Anyway, that was beside the point. It was conceded, in view of the admission of the Greer that she was being attacked. Besides its defense of the submarine's conduct on that score, the communiqué asserted that the incident occurred in waters patrolled by the German



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Samuel I. Rosenman

Sept. 1941

Greef incident. Comment beyond that contained in the communiqué today was not forthcoming.

Our Ship Called Aggressor

BERLIN, Sept. 5.—A German submarine fired two torpedoes at the United States destroyer Greer, a German communique acknowledged today, but it declared that the American warship was the aggressor and acted on orders of President Roosevelt.

According to the official German version, the destroyer attacked first in Icelandic waters which the Germans have declared to be inside their blockade zone, and the U-boat commander, not knowing the destroyer's nationality, acted justifiably in exercise of the primitive right of self-defense.

The Germans, said through DSR, put the opening clash about 200 miles southwest of Iceland.

According to the German account, two and one-halfteen minutes elapsed between the time the destroyer attacked at 12:30 P. M. and the U-boat discharged two torpedoes at 2:38 P. M.

The communiqué, ending two days of official silence, acknowledges that the submarine's torpedo attack was the first strike. On the other hand, the submarine was able to get somewhere for her commander to report.

The communiqué, in disposition in informal comment in Berlin, therefore, to question whether the episode would aggravate relations between Germany and the United States.

However, some sources regarded the incident as highly dangerous.

It was not stated precisely why the American destroyer, despite hours, could not determine that the destroyer was an American ship.

Anyway, that was what the point was contested, in view of the assertion that the U-boat was being attacked. Besides its defense of the submarine's conduct on that score, the communiqué asserted that the incident occurred in waters proclaimed by the German Government as a war zone and that the submarine commander properly assumed that the ship he attacked was British.

In the communiqué which it appended declaring that the German U-boat had been attacked by a destroyer and had been pursued for two hours before discharging two torpedoes "which missed their mark," the German news agency, D. A. R., stuck at American and British news agencies, saying:

"American and English news bureaus have reported that one of which, on the morning of Sept. 4, in the course of an encounter between the American destroyer Greer and a German U-boat, the destroyer was attacked by the U-boat."

"The torpedoes, it was said, missed their mark. The destroyer was not damaged, though it was maneuvering with depth charges. Official German sources establish the following:

"In accordance with the German version of the incident to the effect that the destroyer, and not the submarine, was the aggressor,



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MS. 2200, p. 1.

From the Papers of

Sidney I. Rosenman

Say

FLASH

WASHINGTON.--PANAMIAN SHIP UNDER AMERICAN OPERATION SUNK OFF

ICELAND.

9/9--S1216P

SS Sesia

THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT 24 MEN, INCLUDING ONE
 AMERICAN, WEST
 GERMAN, WERE LOST WHEN A PANAMIAN SHIP OPERATED BY AN AMERICAN
 FIRM WAS TORPEDOED AND SUNK SOUTHWEST OF ICELAND.

9/9--S1216P

AND SHIP SINKING

THE STATE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT FOLLOWS:

"THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN INFORMED BY THE NAVY DEPARTMENT
 THAT ON SATURDAY MORNING, SEPT. 6, THE NAVY PICKED UP THREE SURVIVING
 MEMBERS OF THE CREW OF THE SS SESIA, ABOUT 300 MILES SOUTHWEST OF
 ICELAND.

"TWENTY-FOUR MEMBERS OF THE CREW ARE UNREPORTED AND PRESUMED LOST.
 "THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT THE SURVIVORS STATED THE
 SHIP HAD BEEN SUNK BY A TORPEDO ON AUG. 17. THERE WAS ONE AMERICAN
 CITIZEN MEMBER OF THE CREW. HIS NAME IS LADING AND HE IS NOT ONE OF
 THE SURVIVORS.

"THE NAMES OF THE THREE SURVIVORS HAVE NOT BEEN FURNISHED TO THE
 DEPARTMENT OF STATE. THE SESIA WAS A FORMER DANISH VESSEL WHICH WAS
 ACQUIRED FROM THE DANISH GOVERNMENT UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE RECENT LAW
 PERMITTING TAKING OVER OF IDLE FOREIGN FLAG SHIPS IN AMERICAN WATERS.
 THE VESSEL WAS UNDER PANAMA REGISTRY AND WAS TRANSPORTING SUPPLIES FOR
 THE GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND AND OWNED BY THAT GOVERNMENT.

"THE CARGO CONSISTED OF FOODSTUFFS, CEREALS, LUMBER AND OTHER
 GENERAL CARGO AND DID NOT INCLUDE ARMS, AMMUNITION OR IMPLEMENTS OF
 WAR."

A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES PROVIDED
 THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT THE SHIP HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER BY
 THE MARITIME COMMISSION AND ON ITS LAST VOYAGE WAS OPERATED BY A NEW
 YORK FIRM.

9/9--S1216P 20-0

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From the Papers of

Samuel I. Rosenman

Dad
180

♦ ♦

President Roosevelt's Address to the Nation

"I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of nazi-ism by the use of long-range invectives.

"But when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him.

"These Nazi submarines and raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag—symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.

"It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended. A continuation of attacks in our own waters, or in waters which could be used for further and greater attacks on us, will inevitably weaken American ability to repel Hitlerism.

"Do not let us split hairs. Let us not ask ourselves whether the Americas should begin to defend themselves after the fifth attack, or the tenth attack, or the twentieth attack.

"The time for active defense is now."

♦ ♦

Delivered Over Nation-wide Broadcast
Thursday, September 11, 1941

Printed in the Congressional Record
of September 15, 1941

*Not printed
at Government
expense*

United States Government Printing Office, Washington : 1941

417016—21150

ADDRESS

BY

President Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mr. BARKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Recom the address delivered by the President over a Nation-wide broadcast on last Thursday evening, September 11.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the Recom, as follows:

The PRESIDENT. My fellow Americans, the Navy Department of the United States has reported to me that on the morning of September 4 the U. S. destroyer Greer, proceeding in full daylight toward Iceland, had reached a point southeast of Greenland. She was carrying American mail to Iceland. She was flying the American flag. Her identity as an American ship was unmistakable.

She was then and there attacked by a submarine. Germany admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine deliberately fired a torpedo at the Greer, followed later by another torpedo attack. In spite of what Hitler's propaganda bureau has invented, and in spite of what any American obstructionist organization may prefer to believe, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.

Our destroyer, at the time, was in waters which the Government of the United States had declared to be waters of self-defense—surrounding outposts of American protection in the Atlantic.

In the north, outposts have been established by us in Iceland, Greenland, Labrador, and Newfoundland. Through these waters there pass many ships of many flags. They

417016—21150

bear food and other supplies to civilians and they bear material of war, for which the people of the United States are spending billions of dollars, and which, by congressional action, they have declared to be essential for the defense of their own land.

The United States destroyer, when attacked, was proceeding on a legitimate mission.

If the destroyer was visible to the submarine when the torpedo was fired, then the attack was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to sink a clearly identified American warship. On the other hand, if the submarine was beneath the surface and, with the aid of its listening devices, fired in the direction of the sound of the American destroyer without even taking the trouble to learn its identity—as the official German communiques would indicate—then the attack was even more outrageous. For it indicates a policy of indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas, belligerent or nonbelligerent.

This was piracy—legally and morally. It was not the first nor the last act of piracy which the Nazi government has committed against the American flag in this war. Attack has followed attack.

A few months ago an American-flag merchant ship, the Robin Moor, was sunk by a Nazi submarine in the middle of the South Atlantic under circumstances violating long-established international law and every principle of humanity. The passengers and the crew were forced into open boats hundreds of miles from land, in direct violation of international agreements signed by the Government of Germany. No apology, no allegation of mistake, no offer of reparation has come from the Nazi government.

In July 1941 an American battleship in North American waters was followed by a submarine, which for a long time sought to maneuver itself into a position of attack. The periscope of the submarine was clearly

seen. No British or American submarines were within hundreds of miles of this spot at the time, so the nationality of the submarine is clear.

Five days ago a United States Navy ship on patrol picked up three survivors of an American-owned ship operating under the flag of our sister Republic of Panama—the steamship *Seneca*. On August 17 she had been first torpedoed without warning, and then shelled, near Greenland, while carrying civilian supplies to Ireland. It is feared that the other members of her crew have been drowned. In view of the established presence of German submarines in this vicinity, there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identity of the attacker.

Five days ago another United States merchant ship, the *Steel Seaweed*, was sunk by a German aircraft in the Red Sea 220 miles south of Suez. She was bound for an Egyptian port.

Four of the vessels sunk or attacked flew the American flag and were clearly identifiable. Two of these ships were warships of the American Navy. In the fifth case, the vessel sunk clearly carried the flag of Panama.

In the face of all this, we Americans are keeping our feet on the ground. Our type of democratic civilization has outgrown the thought of feeling compelled to fight some other nation by reason of any single piratical attack on one of our ships. We are not becoming hysterical or losing our sense of proportion. Therefore, what I am thinking and saying does not relate to any isolated episode.

Instead, we Americans are taking a long-range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals and to a series of events on land and on sea which must be considered as a whole—a part of a world pattern.

It would be unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become inflamed by some one act of violence. But it would be inexcusable folly to minimize

such incidents in the face of evidence which makes it clear that the incident is not isolated, but part of a general plan.

The important truth is that these acts of international lawlessness are a manifestation of a design which has been made clear to the American people for a long time. It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas for themselves.

For with control of the seas in their own hands, the way can become clear for their next step—domination of the United States and the Western Hemisphere by force. Under Nazi control of the seas, no merchant ship of the United States or of any other American republic would be free to carry on any peaceful commerce, except by the condescending grace of this foreign and tyrannical power. The Atlantic Ocean which has been, and which should always be, a free and friendly highway for us would then become a deadly menace to the commerce of the United States, to the coasts of the United States, and to the inland cities of the United States.

The Hitler government, in defiance of the laws of the sea and of the recognized rights of all other nations, has presumed to declare, on paper, that great areas of the seas—even including a vast expanse lying in the Western Hemisphere—are to be closed, and that no ships may enter them for any purpose, except at peril of being sunk. Actually they are sinking ships at will and without warning in widely separated areas both within and far outside of these far-flung pretended zones.

This Nazi attempt to seize control of the oceans is but a counterpart of the Nazi plot now being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere, all designed toward the same end. For Hitler's advance guard—not only his avowed agents but also his dupes among us—have sought to make ready for him footholds and bridgeheads in the New

World, to be used as soon as he has gained control of the oceans.

His intrigues, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the Government of the United States. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy.

Last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was smashed by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that Government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently an endeavor was made to subvert the Government of Bolivia. Within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air landing fields in Colombia within easy range of the Panama Canal. I could multiply instances.

To be ultimately successful in world misery Hitler knows that he must get control of the seas. He must first destroy the bridge of ships which we are building across the Atlantic, over which we shall continue to roll the implements of war to help destroy him and all his works in the end. He must wipe out our patrol on sea and in the air. He must silence the British Navy.

It must be explained again and again to people who like to think of the United States Navy as an invincible protection that this can be true only if the British Navy survives. That is simple arithmetic.

For if the world outside the Americas falls under Axis domination, the shipbuilding facilities which the Axis Powers would then possess in all of Europe, in the British Isles, and in the Far East would be much greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of all the Americas—not only greater but two or three times greater. Even if the United States threw all its resources into such a situation, seeking to double and even redouble the size of our Navy, the Axis Powers, in control of the rest of the world, would have the manpower and the physical resources to outbuild us several times over.

It is time for all Americans of all the Americas to stop being deluded by the romantic notion that the Americas can go on living happily and peacefully in a Nazi-dominated world.

Generation after generation America has battled for the general policy of the freedom of the seas. That policy is a very simple one, but a basic, fundamental one. It means that no nation has the right to make the broad oceans of the world at great distances from the actual theater of land war unsafe for the commerce of others.

That has been our policy, proved time and time again, in all our history.

Our policy has applied from time immemorial—and still applies—not merely to the Atlantic but to the Pacific and to all other oceans as well.

Unrestricted submarine warfare in 1941 constitutes a defiance—an act of aggression—against that historic American policy.

It is now clear that Hitler has begun his campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity.

His intention has been made clear. The American people can have no further illusions about it.

No tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere, no soporific lullabies that a wide ocean protects us from him ever long have any effect on the hard-headed, farsighted, and realistic American people.

Because of these episodes, because of the movements and operations of German warships, and because of the clear repeated proof that the present Government of Germany has no respect for treaties or for international law, that it has no decent attitude toward neutral nations or human life, we Americans are now face to face, not with abstract theories, but with cruel, relentless facts.

This attack on the Greer was no localized military operation in the North Atlantic. This was no mere episode in a struggle between two nations. This was one determined step toward creating a permanent world system based on force, terror, and murder.

And I am sure that even now the Nazis are waiting to see whether the United States will by silence give them the green light to go ahead on this path of destruction.

The Nazi danger to our western world has long ceased to be a mere possibility. The danger is here now—not only from a military enemy but from an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion.

There has now come a time when you and I must see the cold, inexorable necessity of saying to these inhuman, unrestrained seekers of world conquest and permanent world domination by the sword, "You seek to throw our children and our children's children into your form of terrorism and slavery. You have now attacked our own safety. You shall go no further."

Normal practices of diplomacy—note writing—are of no possible use in dealing with international outlaws who sink our ships and kill our citizens.

One peaceful nation after another has met disaster because each refused to look the Nazi danger squarely in the eye until it actually had them by the throat.

The United States will not make that fatal mistake.

No act of violence or intimidation will keep us from maintaining intact two bulwarks of defense—first, our line of supply of material to the enemies of Hitler; and, second, the freedom of our shipping on the high seas.

No matter what it takes, no matter what it costs, we will keep open the line of legitimate commerce in these defensive waters.

We have sought no shooting war with Hitler. We do not seek it now. But neither do we want peace so much that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our

naval and merchant ships while they are on legitimate business.

I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of Naziism by the use of long-range invective.

But when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him.

These Nazi submarines and raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag—symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.

It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended. A continuation of attacks in our own waters, or in waters which could be used for further and greater attacks on us, will inevitably weaken American ability to repel Hitlerism.

Do not let us split hairs. Let us not ask ourselves whether the Americas should begin to defend themselves after the fifth attack, or the tenth attack, or the twentieth attack.

The time for active defense is now.

Do not let us split hairs. Let us not say, "We will only defend ourselves if the torpedo succeeds in getting home, or if the crew and the passengers are drowned."

This is the time for prevention of attack.

If submarines or raiders attack in distant waters, they can attack equally well within sight of our own shores. Their very presence in any waters which America deems vital to its defense constitutes an attack.

In the waters which we deem necessary for our defense American naval vessels and American planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow—first.

417016-31130

Upon our naval and air patrol—now operating in large numbers over a vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean—falls the duty of maintaining the American policy of freedom of the seas—now. That means, very simply and clearly, that our patrolling vessels and planes will protect all merchant ships—not only American ships but ships of any flag—engaged in commerce in our defensive waters. They will protect them from submersion; they will protect them from surface raiders.

This situation is not new. The second President of the United States, John Adams, ordered the United States Navy to clean out European privateers and European ships of war which were infesting the Caribbean and South American waters, destroying American commerce.

The third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, ordered the United States Navy to end the attacks being made upon American ships by the corsairs of the nations of North Africa.

My obligation as President is historic; it is clear; it is incapable,

It is no act of war on our part when we decide to protect the seas which are vital to American defense. The aggression is not ours. Ours is sole defense.

But let this warning be clear. From now on, if German or Italian vessels of war enter these waters, the protection of which is necessary for American defense, they do so at their own peril.

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The orders which I have given as Commander in Chief to the United States Army and Navy are to carry out that policy—at once.

The sole responsibility rests upon Germany. There will be no shooting unless Germany continues to seek it.

That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the clear right of this sovereign Nation. That is the only step possible, if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.

I have no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have not taken it hurriedly or lightly. It is the result of months and months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer. In the protection of your Nation and mine it cannot be avoided.

The American people have faced other grave crises in their history—with American courage and American resolution. They will do no less today.

They knew the actualities of the attacks upon us. They knew the necessities of a bold defense against these attacks. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts.

And with this inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty and of the righteousness of what they do, they will—with Divine help and guidance—stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.