1951

Massachusetts newspaper reaction to Roosevelt's foreign policy -- from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor.

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/11293
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

School of Public Relations

Thesis

MASSACHUSETTS NEWSPAPER REACTION TO ROOSEVELT'S FOREIGN POLICY --- FROM THE FALL OF FRANCE TO PEARL HARBOR

By

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A.B. in Political Science, University of Massachusetts 1950

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science 1951.
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The mortal blow to isolationism as a major American sentiment was, as we have seen, delivered not by the Japs at Pearl Harbor, but by the Germans when they invaded France in 1940... The majority of our people, engulfed in the worst war in history, are saying 'We tried isolation, we gave it a good try—from the time of George Washington down to 1940, but isolation was not the solution to our problems.' It failed either to prevent World Wars or to keep America out of them.

---William A. Lydgate, What America Thinks
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the period between the fall of France, June 22, 1940, and the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the United States pursued a foreign policy which was bound to involve her in the world conflict. Unlike the policy adopted by Wilson during the first World War, Roosevelt's diplomacy seldom deviated from its main objective—all-out aid to Britain short of war.

In the days of the *Lusitania* and the Sussex, the United States followed a vacillating course based on our own technical neutrality and the freedom of the seas. Owing to the complex nature of international trade, this policy clearly favored the Allies; but the official actions of the State Department were seldom offensive to the Central Powers.

1. Lippmann, Walter, *Column*, Boston Globe, April 3, 1941, "Since May 1940, the United States, by making available to the British and French some weapons from its own reserve, ceased in fact and intent to be neutral. From then on American intervention has been intensified by the historic transfer of 50 destroyers, by the immense armament program, avowedly designed for defense against the triple axis, by the passage of the Lend Lease Bill, by the seizure of merchant ships, by an increasing participation in economic warfare, and by a succession of official declarations and of diplomatic actions."
The people, however, openly supported the Allied cause. Whether they were sympathetic to the British because of; (1) the propaganda emanating from Wellington House; (2) the fact that they spoke the same language; (3) their common political heritage, does not concern us here. Suffice to say that the American people were anything but neutral in feeling.

At that time, owing to the remoteness of the conflict, Wilson could afford to ignore the cries of public opinion. But by 1940 Wilson's 3,000 mile ocean had shrunk to a medium-sized pond. Roosevelt, faced with a similar situation, had to act quickly.

Much the same conditions that existed from 1914 to 1917 were present during the early days of the second World War. Only this time the people had more to get excited about. The threat had grown much closer and much more real. The repeated Axis aggressions soon awakened America to the dangers of complacency. The rapid and successive conquests of Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and even "indestructible" France, had a definite crystalizing effect on American opinion.

The atrocities committed by the German SS, the indiscriminate bombing of "open cities", such as Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Coventry, and the threat posed by several hundred thousand Nazi trained Germans in South America,
gave the American people ample cause for alarm. In fact, the feeling had become so intense that by the summer of 1941, the "Red Menace" had been largely forgotten. In a poll taken by the American Institute of Public Opinion, seventy-two percent of the people polled, expressed the wish that the Bolsheviks would destroy the Nazis.

But even ten months before Hitler's fateful invasion of Russia, the American people had indirectly expressed themselves in favor of war with the Germans. They answered the question of whether it was more important for America to stay out of war or for the Germans to be defeated, in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. stay out of war</th>
<th>Germany be defeated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1940</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1941</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At no time did the surveys show one section of the country showed a majority favoring aid to Britain,

2. The Public Opinion Quarterly, Princeton University School of Public Affairs, Fall Issue, 1941.
while another section showed a majority opposed. These statistics are important chiefly because they show that the people did support Roosevelt's foreign policy.

At the same time these figures represent the complete defeat of the isolationist neutrality policy of the 1930s. Before the outbreak of war in Europe, these isolationists had attempted, (quite successfully it appeared) to plant the seeds of Xenophobia in the minds of the American people. They blandly asserted that the United States entered the first World War for the sole purpose of making a few international bankers and munitions makers richer. It was their belief that all wars were fundamentally the same and that both parties, victim and aggressor, were equally guilty. No question of right or wrong was involved. The Nyes and the Wheelers had pointed out the American interests as no-interests or non-intervention.

But in spite of this background of misinformation and misguidance, the American people, one year after the outbreak of war, had recognized their true interests and were at the point of defending them.

There are a few competent authorities who have taken exception to this version of American awakening to the realities. Charles A. Beard, up until his death, one of
America's leading historians, was one of these experts who believed that Roosevelt and not the American people got us into war. Beard claimed that "President Roosevelt entered the year 1941 carrying the moral responsibility for his covenants with the American people to keep this nation out of war. These covenants were made by himself in the 1940 campaign." Beard further contended that there was nothing in the vote of 1940 to indicate that the people gave a mandate for war to the President of the United States.

It is obvious that Professor Beard did not read the reports issued by the American Institution of Public Opinion, because in the poll taken two months prior to the November 1940 election, the people were shown to favor war with Germany more than a German victory over Britain. It was not only the AIPO that disagreed with Beard, for several of his colleagues have taken issue with his unpopular thesis. Morrison and Commager, writing about the opposition of Herbert Hoover and John L. Lewis to an extension of the Conscription Act stated, "But public opinion was hardening against these nay-sayers. And when, after the German attack on the United States destroyer Greer the President ordered

4. Beard, Charles A., President Roosevelt and the Coming of War, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948, p 3
5. See p. 2
the Navy to "Shoot on Sight" any enemy subs, the nation applauded."

Walter Lippmann believed that Roosevelt, far from acting impetuously, really moved anxiously and hesitantly:

In any event the fact is that Mr. Roosevelt did not succeed in persuading the nation to attend effectively to the American interest... Thus he did not ask for greater armaments until after Japan had conquered the coast of China, had encircled the Philippines, and was poised for an attack on Singapore, Burma and the Dutch Indies. Not until after France had fallen and had left exposed the bulge of Africa... not until Britain was threatened with invasion... did he feel able to move at all.

In spite of the general condemnation of Beard's thesis, at least one writer contributed to his support. George Morgenstern, a staff reporter for the Chicago Herald Tribune and an authority of dubious standing, contended that Roosevelt's Far Eastern policy, including his personal unwillingness to compromise, forced Japan to attack the United States. Sumner Welles, Under-Secretary of State at the time, has made Morgenstern's argument appear rather far-fetched.

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In the last months prior to Pearl Harbor when Congress had finally removed many of the obstacles to executive action, the adoption of a more positive policy was made extremely difficult by the increasing probability that the policies of the European Axis would eventually force this country into war.

That was the compelling reason why the administration continued to permit the exportation of certain grades of oils and scrap iron to Japan up till three months before Pearl Harbor. That is the explanation for the President's subsequent use of the much criticized expression 'babying along' in connection with our policy toward Japan in that period.

It is obvious then, in the light of this statement, that American pressure was relatively non-extant in the Orient. Since this is the case, it is most difficult to believe that aggressive American policy forced Japan to make her attack on Pearl Harbor.

Having presented this brief summary and appraisal of the general American reaction to Roosevelt's foreign policy during this critical period in our history, it is time to state the specific purpose of this study. Obviously there is not intention of proving or disproving either the Beard-Morgenstern or the Welles-Lippmann viewpoints.

What will be attempted, however, is an analysis of Massachusetts public opinion—as reflected by its Press—in respect to the manner in which that man in the White House handled our foreign policy from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor.

Edwin Costrell admitted in his study that the Press is not the most reliable index of public opinion, but when no poll have been taken in a given area, it is probably the best criteria available.

In the following chapter an outline of the procedure used in making this study will be given. This will be preceded by a brief statement of the problem.

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CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AND PROCEDURE

I. Period of History covered by Study

It has already been noted, in the preceding chapter, that this study is concerned with Roosevelt's foreign policy during the eighteen-month period from June 1940 through December 1941. The question may well be asked why this particular phase of the President's wartime diplomacy was chosen. The answer is not to difficult to find.

Before the fall of France, Roosevelt had been obliged to follow an "obsolete" policy of isolation. No matter how much he would have liked to have instituted a realistic policy, his reactionary Congress effectively prevented him from achieving this end. Seven days after the invasion of Poland, Roosevelt proposed a "limited" national emergency under the National Defense Act. Some $80,000,000 worth of war material, which Britain and France had ordered and licensed, was frozen in American ports by this neutrality proclamation. Two months later Roosevelt signed the last of a series of abortive

...II. What America Thinks, op cit. p 40
neutrality acts. This act "sounded the death knell of the rights of neutrals to lend, sell, and ship goods to belligerent states—despite ardent defense of these rights for over one hundred and fifty years."

And it was not till France had succumbed to an ignominious defeat, that the myopic legislators on Pennsylvania Ave., recovered their vision. They realized then that they had to give the President a free rein in the management of the country's foreign policy. This policy is best exemplified by the following executive acts; each one could have been interpreted as an act of war.

(1) On July 25, 1940, the President banned the export of oil and scrap to Japan. (2) Five days later, at Havana, his State Department representative pledged protection to any foreign owned dependency in Latin America. This protection would be extended in the event that the mother country was overrun by the Nazis.

(3) On August 10, 1940, Norwegian and Danish credits, legally inherited by the victorious Germans, were confiscated by the President. (4) Eight days later, at Ogdensburg, New York, he made a defensive alliance with a belligerent nation—Canada. (5) On September 3,

1940, he traded 50 destroyers to Britain for several strategically located air and naval bases.

(6) By March 1941, Roosevelt had seen fit to seize 60 Axis and Danish ships—- they were eventually transferred to the Allies. (7) On June 14, he froze all Axis credits in the United States. (8) On April 7, American troops were landed in Greenland. (9) Three months later, on July 7, the President sent more troops to Iceland. (10) On September 11, 1941, Roosevelt issued his reckless "Shoot on Sight Order." This was tantamount to a declaration of war.

II Five Steps Closer to War

Roosevelt's foreign policy during this period is almost completely embodied in the foregoing executive acts. By analysing the Press opinion of these acts, it is believed that one can determine quite accurately the reaction of the Massachusetts newspapers to the President's foreign policy. Owing to a paucity of editorial comment in regards to several of these acts, the five most belligerent and startling were selected for this study. These were as follows:

(2) The Destroyers for Bases Trade.
(3) The Seizures of Axis and Danish Shipping.
(4) The American Military Occupation of Iceland.
(5) The Shoot on Sight Speech.

Such interventionist measures as the Lend Lease Act, the Conscription Bills, and the overall rearmament program—although indirectly the work of the President—were not included. For in each of these cases the final authority and responsibility were vested in the legislative and not the executive branch of government.

The reader has probably noted by this time that almost all of these executive acts were taken against the Berlin branch of the Berlin-Rome-Tokio Axis. The reason for this is not too difficult to explain. Sumner Welles noted that the President was obliged to handle the Japanese

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with kid gloves. And it is interesting to observe, that out of ten aggressive acts attributable to Roosevelt, only one, the ban on scrap and oil, was directed against Japan. It is also significant that the newspapers paid little heed to this attempt at containing Japanese expansion. Few newspapers thought it important enough to subject it to editorial criticism. It seems that most of the papers, as did most of the authorities, decided that the war would be settled in Europe without spreading to the Orient.

14. See page 6
III Procedure

Originally it was planned to analyse the Massachusetts Press on the basis of three distinct criteria. First, the editorials of each paper selected for study, would be examined in an attempt to determine the newspaper's official attitude towards Roosevelt's diplomacy. The various inflections would be tabulated as pro, con, or dubious.

After the editorials had been analysed and classified, the letters to the editor, dealing with these executive acts, would be treated in a similar manner.

Finally, the news articles, describing the local group and civic opinion (Church groups, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, etc.,) on these acts, would be classified as were the previous two criteria.

However, when the actual analysis was begun, it was found that the third step was quite unfeasible. For in rare instances did the newspapers print group opinion in the manner described above. The second step was not too practical either, for only one half of the papers examined, carried Letters to the Editor Column. In spite of this fact, it was decided to devote one short chapter to those letters that were published. While there will be no attempt to draw conclusions from them, it did seem worthwhile to record this obvious expression of public opinion.
The editorials were found to be quite useful and for that reason the greater part of this study deals with the newspaper's attitude toward Roosevelt's foreign policy as reflected by its editorial column. Each newspaper was examined for a two week period following each executive act. In this manner practically every editorial based on this phase of Roosevelt's diplomacy was analysed.

**Newspapers Used in the Study**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boston Post</td>
<td>372,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boston Globe</td>
<td>292,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boston Herald (Traveler)</td>
<td>347,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Worcester Telegram (Gazette)</td>
<td>127,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Springfield Republican</td>
<td>44,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lynn Item</td>
<td>16,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pittsfield Berkshire Eagle</td>
<td>21,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Taunton Gazette</td>
<td>18,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fitchburg Sentinel</td>
<td>11,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Framingham News</td>
<td>6,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>North Adams Transcript</td>
<td>11,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Haverhill Gazette</td>
<td>15,171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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15. Editor and Publisher (Yearbook) New York, N.Y., Editor and Publisher co., 1941.
The above listed papers were chosen for several reasons. First, they are published in widely distributed areas from one end of the State to the other. Secondly, they represent towns and cities of nearly average socio-economic status. And thirdly, and perhaps most important, they were the only ones available in the immediate area of research. It is quite possible that a more representative sample could have been found, but it is doubtful that the expense and effort entailed could have justified it.

As it is, these newspapers represent a total combined circulation of 1,876,524. If each paper was read by just one person, it would mean that better than one-fourth of the potential readers of the State were exposed to the views of these twelve newspapers. Six of these newspapers were urban papers, serving areas with populations in excess of 100,000. The remaining six represented communities with populations of 50,000 or less.

17. United States Government Census, 1940.
CHAPTER III

THE CANADIAN U. S. NORTH AMERICAN DEFENSE PACT

I. Background

The president could do nothing apart from urging measures of defense which he knew would never by themselves defend America, or he could exercise his executive discretion without regard for Congress. He chose the latter course... 19

On August 18, not long after the Pact of Havana had secured the southern reaches of the Western Hemisphere, President Roosevelt decided that it was time to make some defensive arrangements with the Dominion to the North. It was for this reason that he combined a routine inspection tour of the Army Base at Ogdensburg, New York, and a conference with the Prime Minister of Canada---William MacKenzie King.

The two leaders of the largest English speaking nations in America, met quietly in a private railroad car to discuss the defensive problems of their respective countries. When the discussions had been completed, they publicly announced their agreement that "a permanent joint board on defense shall be set up" to "commence immediate

19. International Politics, op cit., p 793-794
studies relating to sea, land and air problems and to consider in the broad sense the broad defense of the northern part of the Western Hemisphere."

Even though this alliance with a belligerent nation was unquestionably an unneutral act, it is significant to note that Roosevelt was not obliged to reverse himself or invent this policy just to meet the disaster represented by the defeat of France. The agreement was a logical culmination of policies of international cooperation initiated by Roosevelt before the rise of the Axis and consistently developed during the years before the outbreak of war. Amply proof of this fact is provided by a speech made by Roosevelt at Kingston, Ontario in August 1938:

The Dominion of Canada is part of the sisterhood of the British Empire. I give you my assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if the domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other Empire. 21

II Editorial Comment

The people of the Western most part of Massachusetts probably heartily endorsed the foregoing interpretation of American obligations. If they did not, it was not due to any lapse on the part of the Pittsfield Berkshire Eagle. In the lead editorial of August 17, 1940, this

20. Ibid p 794
21. The Growth of the American Republic op.cit., p.655
newspaper insisted that the United States could not and
would not permit any foreign nation to seize a "single
inch of Canadian soil":

By the relentless logic of geography and events,
the United States would have to join forces to de­
 fend a country actively at war with European
powers... The United States must be ready to face
any situation which may develop without its hav­
ing a word to say about its development. The
Conference being held, it is hoped, assures com­
plete understanding, so that any steps the United
States may be compelled to make to defend North
America may be taken promptly and surely. 22

The Eagle's competitor in the Berkshires, the North
Adams Transcript, also expressed itself in favor of the
President's action. This newspaper sincerely believed that
the creation of the joint defense board was an action that
could be viewed with satisfaction on both sides of the
border. The Transcript further believed that "This
arrangement with Canada represents a very tangible contribu­
tion to the Western Hemisphere solidarity, which we are
trying to achieve." The Transcript was particularly wary,
however, lest these defensive measures "entangle us with
Canada's activities as a nation at War." 23

The Springfield Republican, more drastically
interventionist, did not think these considerations
were too important. This newspaper felt that
"the fact that Canada is at war with Germany does not
alter the essential defensive aspect of the joint agreement."

The Republican freely stated that:

The executive agreement between the President and the Prime Minister of Canada, that a permanent joint board of defense shall be set up is in line with public opinion in both countries, although the public sees only the vaguest outlines of the project and like its authors, are uncertain of its logical implications under all circumstances that future developments might create.

To further substantiate this argument the Republican continued, saying:

...The Panama Canal is not the only vital interest in this part of the world. North America can not be adequately safeguarded against encroachment or aggression either from the Atlantic or Pacific sides without cooperation between the Dominion Government and our own. Under his normal powers as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, the President may legitimately, it would seem, move in that direction for purely defensive purposes, in view of the present crisis...

Leaving Springfield and moving East across the state, we find much the same opinions being expressed in the Worcester Telegram. In an editorial, dated August 20, 1940, the Telegram noted that "President Roosevelt is committed to a policy of hemisphere defense and since the American people are evidently supporting this policy, he was bound to include Canada in his policy." The editorial also pointed out that hemisphere defense without the cooperation of Canada was little more than a literary expression:

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24. Editorial, Springfield Republican, Sept. 4, 1940
Canada's nearness to Greenland, whose newly acquired independence, would be eliminated by a Nazi victory, means that there should be eyes toward the North as well as toward the South. Cooperation with Canada is the inevitable accompaniment of cooperation between the United States and South America.  

In the Northern part of the State near the New Hampshire border, the city of Fitchburg, in spite of a large Canadian-born element, was given unusually poor editorial coverage of this issue. Not until August 22, five days after the executive agreement had been made, did the Fitchburg Sentinel comment on the President's move. When the paper finally did express an opinion, it was in no way a blanket endorsement of the controversial treaty. The editorial began with the assertion that this "alliance" was the most warlike act thus far taken by the United States in the way of defense. But the Sentinel was not so sure that the act itself was not essential to our security:

Canada is a nation at war. We propose an arrangement whereby, it seems, we shall police Canadian waters so that British destroyers and other fighting craft now tied up in the defense of Canada may be freed to take part in the Battle of England... Necessities of our own security demand this step be taken, but there should be no misunderstanding as to the nature of the step. It is an unneutral act. It is a hostile act...  

The people of Framingham were deprived of all editorial comment by their home town newspaper. The Framingham News had excellent and continuous coverage of the

25. Editorial, Worcester Telegram, August 20, 1940.
Conference, but did not see fit to pass editorial judgement on the precedent making pact. The News did, however, express its sentiments in an editorial cartoon entitled "Hands across the St. Lawrence." The picture showed Uncle Sam reaching across the great river to offer Canada a warm handshake.

In Boston there was unanimous agreement among the editorial writers (of the three papers analysed) on this latest move of the President. The Boston Post decided that this "decision to plot a common military defense" was an excellent step in the right direction. "providing of course it is followed up with thorough preparation," The Post went on to say:

To establish our own bases on Newfoundland and other eastern points will also be of great help if political agreement on the matter can be reached...

Four days later the Post carried a follow-up editorial in which it expressed fear less a belligerent power take steps to invade Canada:

We have already declared that war or no war we will never permit an invasion of Canada. Naturally this is a wise move, for a hostile power in Canada would mean the first step in the encroachment of the United States....

The consistently pro-administration newspaper, the Boston Globe, did not take this occasion to break with its past policy. The Globe interpreted this agreement

27. Cartoon, Framingham News, August 22, 1940.
28. Editorial, Boston Post, August 20, 1940.
as further proof that the close friendship which had long existed between the United States and Canada would continue to flourish. "Canada is the best kind of neighbor, their people have many a token of our cordial intentions toward her and her interests." The Globe did not stop here but went on to analyze this latest step toward Hemisphere solidarity:

The mutual defense agreement between the United States and Canada has become within a few days the most important fact in the Western Hemisphere... Less authoritative, but thoroughly logical is the report that American destroyers may be used to patrol Canadian water. This would release a number of British vessels for service farther to the East and would involve the use of Canadian Bases for our warships. It may be that this new defensive pact will point the way to others in the Western Hemisphere... 29

The Boston Herald, not to be outdone by its competitors, freely admitted that this alliance was a wise and necessary act. While conceding that the "agreement" was an unneutral step, the Herald saw no other course open to the United States. This newspaper observed that:

...We face the possible defeat of the United Kingdom and the acquisition of her fleet or a large part of it, by the present conquerors of Europe... Hitler and Mussolini might acquire bases in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia... within bombing distance of Boston and New York... The obvious precautionary measure is to prepare for eventualities by cementing our friendships on this side of the Atlantic... 30

29. Editorial, Boston Globe, August 19, 1940.
30. Editorial, Boston Herald, August 19, 1940.
While Boston was getting excellent editorial coverage of the Roosevelt-King discussions, the people of Lynn, seven miles north of the state capitol, looked in vain for editorial comment in the Lynn Item. This newspaper remained strangely silent in the face of this very important agreement. But further north, in the Merrimac Valley, the industrial community of Haverhill was not kept in the dark concerning the President's latest move. In a lead editorial, dated August 21, 1940, the Haverhill Gazette told its readers that the United States, to be adequately prepared, must have bases in both the Caribbean and near the Gulf of St. Lawrence. "A defensive alliance between Canada and the United States is a natural step in anticipation of a German victory over Great Britain."

A few days later on August 23, the Gazette ran a cartoon entitled "Look Adolph we have one, too." The cartoon depicted a railroad car in which the President and the Prime Minister met to plan Hemisphere defense. In the same picture Hitler was shown standing next to the historic railroad car in which he imposed surrender terms on the French.

South of Boston, in Taunton, a most unusual editorial appeared. It seems that the Taunton Gazette had some difficulty in framing its editorial commentary on the

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32. Cartoon, Ibid, August 23, 1940.
United States-Canadian agreement. For two days after the event, this newspaper printed what appeared to be a poorly camouflaged re-hash of the Berkshire Eagle's August 17, 1940 lead editorial. The phraseology was in many cases a verbatim version of the Pittsfield editorial. At least the editor had sufficient imagination to use one of the better newspapers.

III Summary

Below is a chart which shows in summarized form how the Massachusetts Press view the Canadian-U.S. Defense Pact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>Dubious</th>
<th>Con</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Eagle</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Adams Transcript</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield Republican</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester Telegram</td>
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<td>Boston Globe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boston Herald</td>
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* No Editorial comment given

33. Editorial, Taunton Gazette, August 19, 1940.
CHAPTER IV

DESTROYERS FOR BASES

I. Background

The value to the Western Hemisphere of these outposts of security is beyond calculation. Their need has long been recognized by our own country, and especially by those primarily charged with the duty of charting and organizing our naval and military defense. They are essential to the protection of the Panama Canal, Central America, the Northern portion of South America, the Antilles, Canada, Mexico, and our own Eastern and Gulf Seaboards. Their consequent importance in Hemispheric Defense is obvious. For these reasons I have taken advantage of the present opportunity to acquire them. 34

Perhaps the most controversial and sensational of the President's executive acts, during this period, was the extraordinary trade which saw fifty over-aged destroyers going to Britain in exchange for 99 year leases on some British naval and air bases in the Western Hemisphere. The trade, however, was no great surprise to the American people, for almost all the newspapers had run front page stories on the probabilities of such an exchange.

Even though public opinion was generally in favor of the "Deal", the people were somewhat shocked by the high handed manner in which it was finally brought to pass.

And the fact that Roosevelt probably violated the Constitution when he ignored the Senate, did not help matters.

Besides being a violation of our own political rules, it was even more important as an affront to the dignity of International Law. The Law of Nations had long considered the transfer of war vessels from a neutral country to a nation at war an illegal act. And certainly more unlawful than the sale of war material under the same circumstances.

During the American Civil War, we had demanded that Britain pay us damages when she broke a similar law. The notorious Alabama claims dispute would have given the German jurists an interesting precedent to wave before the justices of the Hague Tribunal. That is, if they had not already abolished it.

But the President was not too concerned with these niceties of International Law. He had as his legal advisor the able Attorney General, Robert Jackson, who by means of a "masterpiece of legal casuistry," interpreted statutes to mean things which they had never been intended to mean. Jackson also ignored the fine distinction between private and Governmental transfer of arms from neutrals to belligerents.

35. International Politics, op cit., p 794
It is doubtful, however, that the President needed Jackson's shrewd assistance. For the Press of Massachusetts generally agreed that the trade was a good one.

II Editorial Comment

The Berkshire Eagle was not particularly interested in the legal gymnastics involved in the controversy, and decided at once that it was an excellent trade. The Eagle predicted that Congress would advance its "stock arguments against the destroyer swap much as it had against some other measures for national defense". In a confident statement the Eagle editorialized:

...America is immeasurably stronger than she was last week. If our Democracy is to survive it may well be because of our new Atlantic bases. Few will believe that this nation is any less of a democracy because the President has taken the course he did... 36

Two days later, after much of the debate had died down the Eagle added, "as a horse trade, even the President's most vociferous opponents have to admit its a good one." It was believed that these bases in the Atlantic would do more for National defense "in one year than all the ships which could be built in five."

In North Adams the people were given a fatalistic picture of the President's latest unauthorized move. The Transcript felt that, regardless of the manner in which

36. Editorial Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 4, 1940.
the trade was accomplished, the acquisition of these bases was a "prelude to a plan of effective national defense." It was hoped however, that the action would not lead to war.

...Concurrence in the immediate objective accomplished... by this exercise of such authority in the present instance does not obscure the possibilities to which it could lead, should Mr. Roosevelt's own intensity of feeling... carry him beyond a point to which many of us might be willing to go. 37

The Springfield Republican expressed itself enthusiastically in favor of the trade. This newspaper believed that anybody who took issue with the President over this "stunning stroke in acquiring from Britain a string of Atlantic naval and air bases in return for fifty second rate, yet reconditioned United States destroyers," represented the height of futility.

Recognizing the weaknesses in the extra-legal manner in which the trade was consummated, the Republican said:

...The best justification of the transaction is found by brushing aside legalistic manoeuvres and resting it on the highest ground of statesmanship and of national interest as did Jefferson in avowedly disregarding the Constitution, when he bought the Louisiana Territory. 38

38. Editorial, Springfield Republican, Sept. 4, 1940.

It is interesting to observe that this analogy of Destroyer Deal and the Louisiana Purchase is not quite accurate. Jefferson did not get Louisiana until the Senate had ratified a treaty to that effect.
The Worcester Telegram told the people of Massachusetts' second largest city that the President had performed a "wise and courageous act." This newspaper saw the trade as a natural culmination of a sequence of events which had already identified our policy as aid to Britain.

...The United States, last year repealed its arms embargo for the express purpose of helping the Allies. It has been helping the foes of Germany, commercially and financially and in many relief activities. To deny Britain, fighting alone against the Nazi menace, the use of some of our older warships, would be to repudiate all our professions and actions since the war began. 39

The Telegram felt that those who were objecting to the Destroyer transfer, were "dreaming in a world which no longer exists." In the days of the first World War such a trade might have meant war, for there was a "code applying to conduct of war...There is no code of that sort operating today. All rules have been declared off by Hitler and his fellow dictators."

The Fitchburg Sentinel, dubious about the benefits to be derived from a Canadian-American alliance, had nothing but praise for Roosevelt's latest piece of statesmanship. The Sentinel was dissatisfied with the President's own modest statement. "This is the most important action in

the reinforcement of our national defense since the Louisiana Purchase," but felt that "he might have been more emphatic."

...The deal, already an accomplished fact, will be recorded in history as one of the half-dozen greatest facts in American history. The American people have reason to rejoite over the bargain, and to be grateful for our Government's efficient handling of the deal.

The Framingham News, caught sleeping during the Roosevelt-King conference, jumped the gun this time with its editorial sanction of the Destroyer trade. In an editorial, written three days before the President announced the trade, the News hinted that the bases protecting the Windward Passage south of Cuba, and the Mona Passage near Puerto Rico, were not sufficient for our defense..."Other passages are unguarded and after leasing by Britain, these bases would give America an impressive military setup in the Caribbean." Later, when discussing the German reaction to the deal, the News found Hitler's condemnation of the trade, confirmation of the fact that it had been a good one.

41. Editorial, Fitchburg Sentinel, Sept. 4, 1940.
42. Editorial, Framingham News, August 30, 1940.
While the Western part of the State expressed its unanimous approval of the trade, Boston, for the first time began to show opposition to Roosevelt's dynamic foreign policy. The Boston Post, remembering its long history of Anglophobia, sharply criticized this attempt to aid the British.

The giving of our destroyers to Britain in return for rights to fortify certain points was done in a manner far removed from our rightful democratic processes... But we do know now, finally, that the people of the United States have been committed by Mr. Roosevelt to preserve the British Empire, their rights and dominions, all over the earth... If we were a British colony, we could do no more... legally the deal was as raw a piece of chicanery as has been foisted upon a trusting people in the more than 150 years of our history... Perhaps the President feels that he is doing the popular thing... But the swift, subtle and adroit action was not according to the canons of Americanism.

The other Boston papers were not influenced by such prejudices as those which swayed the Post, and were more inclined to be indulgent towards the Chief Executive. According to the Boston Globe, this trade proved that America's strategy and diplomacy was finally in the hands of able men. "Both diplomatically and strategically, the acquisition of these bases is a master stroke." The Globe was also happy to see Britain getting this long awaited aid.

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44. Editorial, Boston Post, Sept. 4, 1940.
...For Britain, the bargain provides warships of value in maintaining sea control and maritime traffic. But beyond that the British in effect have placed their territories in this part of the world behind the cordon of our defenses. They already have the assurance in the case of Canada, that we would fight any invasion there. The same protection now covers other British possessions... 45

The Boston Herald reached the same conclusions that the Globe had. Using much the same arguments, the Herald told its readers that both America and Britain are "stronger" as a result of the trade. The Herald also misinterpreted the facts concerning the Louisiana Purchase in its attempt to find legal precedence for the transaction.

Although somewhat concerned with the constitutionality of the act, the Herald was not particularly disturbed about the anticipated reaction of the Axis. Two weeks before the trade was concluded this newspaper wrote: "In the advent of the sale of American destroyers to England... Hitler or Mussolini would merely have another pretext. The transfer would not appear to make our relationship essentially different than it is now."

The Lynn Item was unprepared to accept any such blanket endorsement of the President's action. The Item

46. Editorial, Boston Herald, Sept 4, 1940.
47. Ibid, August 20, 1940.
could not understand how the exchange of fifty destroyers, "that have been modernised and put in the pink of condition," could be tolerated.

England got more than her money's worth in the trade for a few patches of soil to be used by the United States in its future programs of defending the Western Hemisphere... The steps already taken to help England in every way short of war are now accomplished by a movement within Government circles....

While the Item was unalterably opposed to the President's transfer of the United States equipment, the Haverhill Gazette, was at least a little dubious about the legality of the trade. The Gazette found that "the Attorney General had twisted a 1917 Law to prove that it did not prohibit the deal..." This newspaper, however, had already expressed its approval of the deal days before it came to pass. "If the United States could get reasonable assurance that delivery of the destroyers would mean the difference between victory for Britain, there is every reason for making the delivery."

Five long days after this momentous event had occurred, the Taunton Gazette finally prepared an editorial for its expectant subscribers. Once again the Gazette had lifted

49. Editorial, Haverhill Gazette, September 4, 1940.
50. Editorial, Haverhill Gazette, August 21, 1940.
its opinions from the Berkshire Eagle. "As a horse trade even the President's most vociferous opponents have to admit its a good one."

Not satisfied with this piece of journalistic pilfering, the Gazette wound up its commentary with a (by this time) stylish anachronism. "There is still the gravest doubt that Jefferson had any constitutional warrant to buy Louisiana...yet nobody suggests that he should not have acted as he did."  

51. Editorial, Taunton Gazette, September 9, 1940.
III Summary

Below is a chart which shows in summarized form how the Massachusetts Press viewed the Destroyers for Bases Deal.

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CHAPTER V

SEIZURE OF AXIS AND DANISH SHIPPING

I  Background

Roosevelt on March 30, ordered the Coast Guard to seize Italian, German, and Danish ships in American ports because evidence had been found that they were being sabotaged by Axis agents. The considerable number of Danish vessels were requisitioned by the United States Government to relieve the shortage...  52

The seizure of sixty German, Italian and Danish merchant ships, was one more step in America's inevitable march towards war. The move was taken ostensibly to frustrate sabotage of the vessels by their alien crews. Roosevelt acted under the old Anti-Sabotage Act of 1917. But strangely enough, Woodrow Wilson had never intended that this law should be used in time of peace. In fact, he had successfully prevented eager Congressmen from passing it until the United States had officially entered the World War.

The fact that the Law was enacted to cover a wartime situation did not hamper Roosevelt. It is quite possible that he had forgotten the conditions under which the law had originally been passed. But even this information

had been brought to his attention, there is little reason to believe that he would have considered it.

Once again the President had demonstrated to the world that he was not afraid of the Axis. He was willing to go to almost any lengths to aid the British, and by July these ships had been transferred to the Allies. No one would ever argue that the Anti-Sabotage Act covered this sequel to the original "protective action."

II Editorial Comment

As they had done in the past, the Massachusetts newspapers tended to abide by the President's decision. The approval may not have been as enthusiastic as it had formerly been, but even so, the few voices lifted in protest were for the most part like futile cries in the wilderness.

The Berkshire Eagle, remembering the tempest created by the Destroyer Deal, hastened to point out that this time the President's action was according to the "book."

"The requisite power has been on the statute books since 1917 and there was no stretching the law involved, as the news photographs of sabotage have clearly shown..." If Hitler did not find the seizure to his liking, the Eagle had an answer for him. "He still has the privilege of calling the seizure an act of war and breaking with the United States."

53. Editorial, Berkshire Eagle, April 1, 1940.
The North Adams Transcript was not quite so sure that the seizures had been a good move. According to this paper:

The taking of these ships into protective custody may be considered by their owners as an act of war---and rightly so. For even though there exists a World War Anti-Sabotage Statute which makes the seizures legal, according to our own laws, there is no sense deceiving ourselves as to our own intent...

In spite of this somewhat pessimistic appraisal of the act, the Transcript felt that the seizures were inevitable. This paper shrewdly observed that the legal explanations were superfluous and that no warlike actions require justification "provided one is realistic enough to accept the major premises of the arguments in favor of war."

In another burst of cynicism, such as is seldom seen in a small town newspaper, the Transcript ventured:

...It is only for the benefit of those who must be aroused to the proper pitch of enthusiasm that government legalists and propagandists must provide legal grounds and idealistic rallying cries. 54

The Springfield Republican was not prepared to interpret the seizures as a direct move toward war, but was still rather hesitant in accepting the Anti-Sabotage Act as the legal basis of the order. In an unheralded gesture of benevolence, the Republican suggested that the Axis nations might take the dispute before an international claims tribunal. Possibly fearful that America might come out on

54. Editorial, North Adams Transcript, April 1, 1941.
the short end of such a suit, the Republican dug deep into its files to unearth what it considered a historical precedent for the President's action.

... In 1870, the Germans sank six British colliers in the Seine to stop French gunboats from coming up the river. They protested, demanded compensation and the Germans paid it. What the Germans did then was irregular and they paid the price for it....

In Worcester, there was little confusion over whether or not the President acted correctly when he ordered the seizures. The Telegram was certain that "the United States had the legal authority for the seizure of the ships." It further declared that the President had the power to inspect all foreign ships and to place guards on them whenever they were threatened by sabotage.

In Boston the Press was again split over Roosevelt's attempt to defeat the Axis---short of war. The Boston Post admitted that the step was completely legal, but took a rather dim view of the nature of the act itself. "America, in the apparent view of the Administration can not make a real war effort unless we are at war. There is no question that this view is correct, even though most of us are opposed to going to war and reaping its consequences...."

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55. Editorial, Springfield Republican, April 1, 1941.
To further cement this argument against Roosevelt's wartime policy, the Post quoted three eminent authorities of the day.

...Former President Hoover, at Yale, decried the whipping up of war psychosis, Robert Hutchins declared that the Administration does not represent the will of the people in the rush to war, And lastly, our own Cardinal O'Connell, on Saturday, said that there is much undercover activity that the American people do not know about.... 57

The Boston Globe had little sympathy for this cautious attitude adopted by its neighbor on Newspaper Row. Admitting that the seizures were "startling," the Globe nevertheless maintained that the action had been taken in accord with the due process of law. The Globe expected a sharp protest from the Axis nations, but took comfort in the fact that the Italians had seized German ships in much the same manner during the first World War.

But the Globe was not willing to limit the act to a legal status. "Seizure of Nazi, Fascist and Danish ships in the United States ports has put our Government in possession of 300,000 tons of shipping which may possibly be used as replacements for ships destroyed in Hitler's attempt to starve Britain." 58

57. Editorial, Boston Post, March 31, 1941.
59. Ibid, April 1, 1941.
The Boston Herald was even more sanguinary about the seizures than were its competitors. "The only reaction most Americans will have to the Coast Guard's seizure of Axis shipping in American ports is regret that apparently in some cases the Coast Guard did not act quickly enough."

Commenting on a statement made by Senator Wheeler, in which he referred to the ship seizures as "another act of war," the Herald reminded the Montana Senator that the Italians had committed the initial offense when they began to sabotage their ships in American harbors.

...The commonly accepted tenets of International Law went into discard long ago; and if the United States acts with less niceness and more vigour than in other days ample precedents can be found in the repeated acts of Germany and Italy....We shall have war with Hitler when ever the mood for war against us overpowers him, not before. 61

But in Lynn, the Item was not so sure that the seizures did not mean war. In an editorial, entitled "Warlike Neutrality," the Item said:

...The seizure of German, Italian and Danish ships prompted protests from the Axis. Our own government announced that the seizures were strictly legal... and the Axis was not even asked to agree with our position. It seems very likely that our government will assume formal title over these ships as the next step and the Axis won't like that either. 62

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60. Editorial, Boston Herald, March 31, 1941.
61. Ibid., April 1, 1941.
62. Editorial, Lynn Item, April 4, 1941.
The Haverhill Gazette was not particularly worried about our action hurting the feelings of the Germans and Italians. This newspaper definitely believed that "the United States did the right thing in seizing the foreign vessels. And was quite prepared to accept the Anti-Sabotage Act of 1917 as the legal basis for the seizure. It conceded, however, that should we go further and use these ships to transport war material to Britain," we might well have committed an act of war." The Gazette felt that even this move would be justified. "if the need is desperate enough, there should be no hesitation in assigning them the job of meeting it."

63. Editorial, Haverhill Gazette, April 7, 1941.
## Summary

Below is summarized form is a chart showing the attitude of the Massachusetts newspapers in respect to the Ship Seizures.

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* *No editorial comment given*
CHAPTER VI

THE AMERICAN MILITARY OCCUPATION OF ICELAND

I. Background

The occupation of Iceland was a step to strengthen the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic against rupture by German naval and aerial forces. Iceland had proclaimed its complete independence from the crown of Denmark, but under British occupation, Iceland was belligerent territory like Denmark under German occupation. Germany expanded her retaliatory 'Blockade' of the British Isles to include Iceland, even as far as Greenland's icy waters, and began to torpedo neutral ships going to Iceland as well as to the British Isles.

In the Spring of 1940 Germany conquered Norway, because of what it called a defensive move to protect that country from a British invasion. At the time the World angrily accused Hitler of committing still another act of barefaced aggression.

A little more than a year after Quisling had become a household word in America, President Roosevelt dispatched the first of several thousand American troops to the island of Iceland. As in the case of Norway, the avowed purpose of the move was to prevent an aggressor from invading the country. But this time, the aggressor's closest base of military operations was a thousand miles away.

64. Bemis, Samuel F. A Diplomatic History of the United States, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1942 p 561
The similarity between these two distinct acts is striking. We would like to think that our motives were different than the Nazis. It is quite probable that they were, but it still does not negate the fact that Roosevelt had once more committed a belligerent act.

The Massachusetts newspapers reacted to the President's latest move with the same degree of equanimity with which they received his previous actions.

II Editorial Comment

The Berkshire Eagle once again gave Roosevelt its usual editorial approval. In a lead editorial, written one day after the occupation of Iceland, the Eagle stated unequivocally that "the Western Hemisphere is a far more secure area for the American Occupation of Iceland yesterday." The Eagle perceived a dual benefit accruing from this "logical and wisely farsighted step."

...Not only will the occupation of this strategic island of the North Atlantic be a valuable American base in the event of Nazi attack on the Western Hemisphere, but coupled with the American occupation of Greenland, it will forestall to an important degree, and perhaps nullify completely any further attempt by Germany to approach the Western Hemisphere by the Northern route.

Not completely satisfied, because it had to justify the move as an act of military expediency, the Eagle went on further to state that "...There can be no ques-
tion that the President was on completely constitutional ground in taking over the defense of Iceland under his perogatives as Commander-in-Chief of the nation's armed forces."

But if the Eagle was satisfied with Roosevelt's action, the North Adams Transcript was somewhat dubious about the implications of this offensive measure.

...Even the most pessimistic or informed Americans do not foresee any attempt by Hitler to invade this country until he feels he is well on his way to achieving victory over Britain. Consequently it appears we have another instance of indirect hemisphere defense through aid to England. In this instance however, we offer: not material aid but military aid. 66

However, the Springfield Republican did not agree with the Transcript's interpretation of the facts. The Republican believed that the President had "exercised sound judgement and gave evidence of his ability to act with decision in emergencies." The Springfield paper confidently assured its readers that "Iceland and Greenland in a way belong in the same defense pattern of Atlantic Defense far north and the United States has already obtained a base in Greenland with the cooperation and approval of the local Greenland Government and the Danish minister in exile at Washington." 67

65. Editorial, Berkshire Eagle, July 8, 1941.
67. Editorial, Springfield Republican, July 8, 1941.
Noting the obvious implications of aggression, inherent in the act, the Republican regretfully added:

...The joint military protection of Iceland by British and United States forces changes the aspect of the island's occupation and defense. The political influence of the United States in Iceland is watered down now and hereafter. The joint protection, furthermore, pushes the United States deeper into war because Britain is waging active hostilities with Germany. 68

The Worcester Telegram, however had no such regrets. It gleefully announced that the United States Navy had occupied Iceland and that "this action would be approved by the great majority of the American people." The Telegram went on to describe the action as being "in complete harmony with the President's policy regarding defense of the Americas..." Discarding all pretenses of neutrality, the Telegram stated:

...The hope is that Hitler will be stopped and beaten before he can turn his attention to the New World. But there can be no doubt that the only thing which can keep the war away from this hemisphere is the defeat of Germany in Europe...The President's action was thus clearly necessary, not only in the long range view, but for the purpose of keeping the Atlantic open for the flow of munitions to England. 69

The Fitchburg Sentinel, while not so belligerent as the Telegram, definitely agreed that the occupation had been a sound move. And it could not understand why

68. Ibid., July 11, 1941.
69. Editorial Worcester Telegram, July 8, 1941.
all the quibbling over whether or not Iceland was in the Western Hemisphere was necessary.

...If the protection of Iceland against German occupation was necessary to prevent Nazi acquisition of invasion bases against the United States and England, President Roosevelt need offer no apologies or exploit any fancy rigamarole to claim that Iceland is in the Western Hemisphere... 70

The following day the Sentinel expressed its pro-Roosevelt sentiments in no uncertain terms. While commenting on the President's loyal opposition, it asserted:

...Burton K. Wheeler should be run out of the United States Senate...Mr. Wheeler should cease to be a senator because he has woefully betrayed the trust. He announced publicly in advance that American armed forces would occupy Iceland. He revealed a strict military secret whose revelation might have brought death or injury to the boys on their way to Iceland. Mr. Wheeler will not be unseated for his grave breach of trust; but the episode should more than ever strengthen Mr. Roosevelt's resolve to act first and then tell Congress afterward.... 71

For the second straight time the Framingham News failed to comment editorially on an important phase of the Nation's foreign policy. However, the paper did run a cartoon entitled, "Arctics," which might have been interpreted as a favorable comment on the President's move.

70. Editorial, Fitchburg Sentinel July 8, 1941
71. Ibid., July 9, 1941.
The cartoon showed Uncle Sam with two islands (Greenland and Iceland) strapped to his feet as if they were galoshes. He was using them to keep his feet dry as he strode across the Atlantic, carrying supplies marked "Rush aid to Britain."

The Boston newspapers, after a division of opinion on the two previous Presidential acts, unanimously agreed that the occupation of Iceland was a necessary step. The Boston Post while positive that Hitler would interpret the occupation as an act of war, stated that: "this is not police work restoring order to Iceland. It is to establish a base to defend Iceland and incidentally, our own shores, from the threat of the greatest military force the world has known."

The Boston Globe could not bear to think that some people might call this action aggression. In a purely defensive statement, the Globe declared:

...Occupation of Iceland does not mean interference with the domestic independence of the people there. It is quite frankly, an emergency measure, and as such will cease when the dangers represented by Nazi German policy and action have been dissipated.  

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72. Cartoon, Framingham News, July 12, 1941.
73. Editorial, Boston Post, July 10, 1941.
As far as the *Globe* was concerned, this action was necessary since a Nazi occupation of this strategic island would have been a "threat to the steady flow of munitions to Britain which is a matter of broad policy clearly approved by Congress."  

The *Boston Herald* also considered the move essential to our defense, but was particularly pleased because it offered security to the dangerously exposed coast of New England. "The temporary occupation of Iceland should receive warmer approval from New England than any other section of the country; for these six states... would be the targets of German planes based there..."

Deciding that it was time to meet a grave enemy threat, even at the price of violating a time honored principle, the *Herald* stated:

...*We cannot permit a potential enemy to seize territory from which we would be easily assailed murderous. We cannot afford to abide punctiliously by the very letter of the Monroe Doctrine, if such a course exposes us to even more perils than would come from possession of a strictly western world area by one nation hostile to us...*  

In a follow-up editorial written July 9, the *Herald* observed that Congress and the American people favored the occupation of Iceland, and furthermore

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they would approve "temporary occupation of the Azores if the Nazis had designs on them."

In Lynn, the Item had once again placed its stamp of disapproval on a Presidential act. Obviously concerned about the expected Axis reaction to the American occupation of Iceland, the Item asserted: "If Hitler had wished he could easily... have construed the United States military occupation of Iceland as an act of war...."

This nominally isolationist newspaper reinforced its arguments by saying:

...Iceland is less than a thousand miles from Germany and could easily be developed into a major air base for use against the Reich...Judging by recent German statements, that belief seems to be well grounded. Hitler's spokesmen denounce the United States and its foreign policy, but they still say that Germany will not be forced into declaring war on us by "overt acts." 78

The Haverhill Gazette, uncowed by the brand of caution which infested the Lynn paper, confidently stated in its lead editorial that, "as a measure of defense, this act can not be seriously challenged..." The Gazette also claimed that "Hitler had included Iceland in the war zone... Thus there is a strong possibility that American and German forces will clash in Sub-Artic waters..." But the

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77. Ibid., July 9, 1941.
78. Editorial, Lynn Item, July 24, 1941.
Gazette's basic regret was not the fact that we might be involved in the war \textit{per se}, but rather that we were as yet still unprepared.

...As they risk a shooting war, by the Iceland occupation, our chief concern should be that if a clash with the Germans comes, there are forces powerful enough to deal effectively with any situation that may develop. 79

In an editorial entitled, "The Virtue of Being First," the Taunton Gazette stated: "It is a relief to see anti-Nazi forces move first. Always they have been fighting desperate rear guard actions after the Nazi Fuhrer has taken the initiative." 80 (Were it not for the fact that this was the third time that the Gazette had borrowed an editorial from the Berkshire Eagle, this latest piece might have been a highly original commentary.)

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Editorial, \textit{Berkshire Eagle}, July 9, 1941.
## III Summary

Below is a chart summarizing the editorial comments of the Massachusetts press on the occupation of Iceland.

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CHAPTER VII

'SHOOT ON SIGHT'

I. Background

....On September 4, the first American tanker reached Vladivostok and the U. S. S. Greer, bound for Iceland was attacked by a U-boat. Three American merchant ships were sunk between Greenland and Iceland. The President issued a 'shoot first' order. Naval convoys began protecting shipping with convoys...

It is common knowledge that December 7, 1941 was the day on which the United States entered the war. This is, of course, the official date accepted by practically all the historians. But for all practical purposes Roosevelt's September 11th address to the nation was a declaration of war against Nazi Germany. The catchy phrase, 'Shoot on Sight', and the provision for convoys of American and British shipping, were both included in the message. These two statements of policy were an open invitation for the Nazis to start the war. From that time on, it was merely a question of time.

If there is a question of whether or not these hostile moves were actually part of an undeclared war, one may be convinced by examining the war records of several Latin

81. International Politics, op. cit., p 800
American nations. Few of these countries extended themselves as much during the whole time they were officially at war, as did the United States from September 11, 1941 until Pearl Harbor.

The issue at hand, however, is not whether or not the United States entered the war because of the actions of the President or because of an attack on her own dominions. The question is, rather, how did the people of Massachusetts, as reflected by their Press, react to this latest move of President Roosevelt?

II Editorial Comment

The Berkshire Eagle found that the President had exercised the wisest discretion when he used his legal Constitutional powers to ward off the Axis. But even this unusual analysis of the facts was as nothing when compared to the Eagle's estimate of the nation's status in relation to the war. Answering a self-posed rhetorical question, "Is This War," the Eagle retorted; "not necessarily. This is a different world in many respects...the very word war does not mean what it used to mean."

82. Editorial, Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 12, 1941.
...Certainly the "shoot first" order may mean fighting, and may mean loss of lives of American sailors, marines and civilians. It might not even then be war, unlimited war, war to finish in every field... 83

But in the final analysis, the Eagle did little or nothing to prove that the United States was not in an undeclared war.

The North Adams Transcript was especially concerned about the warlike implications of the President's order. Speculating on the inevitable results of a shooting engagement between United States warships and Nazi U-boats, the Transcript said:

...Beyond that point... the whole import of the speech undergoes a profound change... It is that change---- one for which the American people as a whole, has yet given no mandate--- that we would now urge our fellow countrymen with all the earnestness at our command to ponder deeply and to ponder in a spirit wholly removed from that which we ourselves sought to inflame.

But as much as the Transcript feared an outbreak of war, it still gave its qualified approval to the executive act. "Divorced from all other implications, its direct and specific implementation by the President was the natural... sequel to a course of action which we ourselves had chosen, proclaimed and put into effect." 84

83. Ibid Sept. 13, 1941.
84. Editorial, North Adams Transcript, Sept. 12, 1941.
The *Springfield Republican* was one of the few Massachusetts newspapers that realized the true significance of the President's move. Completely reversing its consistent and often devout support of Roosevelt's policies, the *Republican* correctly observed that, "this is undeclared war." Continuing in this vein, the *Republican* asked rhetorically, "If this is not war, what is it?"

...It involves even a shooting war in theory, if not in actual events of the future "the time for active defense is now" declares the President. He established easily enough a sequence of recent Axis attacks on American ships, none of which was of extreme gravity itself... That is to say, we were already participating in the war against Hitler by giving unneutral service to his enemies in the form of a service of war supplies and also patrolling the ocean for its protection. If it was hard before to pretend that the United States was not at war with the Axis,.... it is doubly hard today. Candidly the *Republican* does not like and cannot approve the resultant situation...implied or proclaimed in the President's address. 85

The *Worcester Telegram*, if somewhat dismayed by the obvious breach of the democratic processes involved, was quite pleased with the essence of the order itself. The *Telegram* found:

....The speech extolled the historic American policy of freedom of the seas, but it made no mention of any sort of Neutrality Act

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whereby America deliberately abandoned that policy. That act is still in force and, if statutes mean anything, the policy of freedom of the seas remains in effect, legally at any rate. Maybe the President would call this splitting hairs, but it seems important to us. That law should be repealed. More than that it should never have been passed. 86

The *Fitchburg Sentinel*, in some respects, reacted to the move in much the same way that the *Springfield Republican* did. The *Sentinel*, however, while quick to observe that the speech was in essence a declaration of war, approved the warning in substance. And five days after the order, the *Sentinel* took issue with Senator David I. Walsh who was demanding public Congressional investigation of the Creer incident.

...Is there a lurking desire in the back of some Senator's head to prove President Roosevelt the liar that Hitler's hirelings have been calling him? And further do they wish to conduct our "active defense" of America in the front yard where all and sundry may hear the smallest detail and Hitler's agents can obtain their information without effort? 88

In Framingham there was little criticism of the broad implications of the President's message. The *News* was convinced that it was purely defensive in scope. "They are blind wrong who talk now about 'seeking trouble' or 'no real danger'. The truth is, trouble is being forced upon us. They are at our shores. They are sure to reach

88. Ibid., Sept. 17, 1941.
us soon, if we allow them to do so. The President asserting that: "We do not want war. But we cannot tolerate what the German seekers of the world domination are clearly undertaking to do, against us now as they have been doing against other nations...."

In Boston, the Post once again supplied the opposition to the President's method of operating the ship of state. Noting that the President had ordered the Navy to sink Axis warships in waters which we had decided were American, the Post sarcastically remarked, "If we consider the English Channel vital to our defense, we can fight Germany there under the President's order. Thus unarmed clash between our sea forces and hers is only a matter of time."

The Globe, however, maintained its perfect record of Administration support. It took the view that the German subs had initiated the aggressions by "their attacks on ships flying the American flag." The Globe concluded that "it was part of a plan of the Nazis to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas for themselves... Mr. Roosevelt has done what John Adams and Thomas Jefferson did without the consent of Congress."

90. Editorial, Boston Post, Sept. 12, 1941.
The Herald, like the Globe, kept in tact its record of editorial support of the President's major foreign policy moves. Denying that the President's order had brought the United States any closer to war, the Herald said:

The President's reaction is not a request for a declaration of war. It is the relatively mild course of informing the Axis that their warships will be fired upon if they enter the ocean area which is necessary to our defense...

The unpredictable Lynn Item, which had been dead set against Roosevelt's other moves, was of the opinion that this latest act was the epitome of moderation.

No less vigorous statement could hardly have been made by the President after calm consideration of the series of sinkings of American ships and cargos in recent weeks. Isolationists, unless they would have America crawl into a hole and pull the hole in after them can find little fault with the decision. Interventionists will not be enthusiastic about it, because it gives Great Britain and Russia nothing more than the Lend Lease aid promised them...

The Haverhill Gazette found that the United States had taken on more step in its progress toward a shooting war. But, according to the Gazette, the President's order "was the only step that the nation could take under the compulsion of Nazi attacks on American war and

92. Editorial, Boston Herald, Sept. 12, 1941.
93. Editorial, Lynn Item, Sept. 12, 1941.
merchant ships." In a statement that pretty well summed up the American foreign policy, the Gazette said:

...The United States will not in the future await attacks before making an attack. In the future the United States will strike first. German war craft discovered by American war craft in waters which the Washington government believes must be kept free of hostile forces will be attacked on sight... 94

Once again the Taunton Gazette reached into its file of old Berkshire Eagles and came up with another second-hand opinion on a Presidential act. "Is it War? This is 1941 not 1917... Certainly the 'shoot first' order may mean fighting..."

Editorial, Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 12, 1941.
## III Summary

Below in summarized form is a chart of Massachusetts newspaper reaction to the President's 'shoot on sight' address.

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CHAPTER VIII

READER REACTION TO ROOSEVELT'S EXECUTIVE ACTS

As noted above, there will be no attempt to draw conclusions from the various opinions expressed by the general Massachusetts public, via Letters-to-the editor columns. All that can be done is to present some excerpts from these letters in an effort to show the wide diversification of reader opinion. Before proceeding, however, it seems that further explanation of this decision is in order.

In the first instance, newspapers generally give letters (pro and con) equal space when they deal with a controversial issue. This seems to be due to the fact that a newspaper, printing an overwhelming number of either pro or con letters (even if it is a proportionate sample) runs the risk of being accused of unfair bias. (Some may debate this point, but from the experience of this writer such a situation does exist.) Since this is the case, it would be next to impossible to gain an accurate picture, based on adequate statistical techniques, of the actual volume of letters (pro or con) that do reach the editor's desk.
A second problem comes up when the newspaper does willingly express an unfair bias. In this case it is quite possible that the paper in question will print only those letters which conform to its own editorial policy. Under these circumstances, only an erroneous evaluation can result from an attempt to interpret the significance of these letters. Thus there seems to be no adequate standard which can be used to judge the true quantitative opinion expressed by a group of letters written to the newspapers.

By and large there were relatively few letters written to the Massachusetts newspapers concerning these five executive acts of Roosevelt. There were only three letters written which dealt with the Canada-United States defense agreement.

Writing to the Berkshire Eagle, one letter-writer declared, "that Canada is an outpost of American safety at the moment is obvious. An attack on the United States might well begin on the New Foundland or New Brunswick coast."

96. Letter to the Editor, Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 7, 1940.
A Springfield man, writing to the Republican, argued that the joint Canadian-American Defense Board on the part of Roosevelt, was an "unprecedented usurpation of power that should be reserved to Congress, for a vote and decision."

But in a letter to the Boston Herald, a local reader expressed optimism over the Agreement which he referred to as "a great occasion and great news."

Reader reaction to the "Destroyer Deal" was more spirited and quite diversified. One letter published by the Berkshire Eagle asserted that: "All the President's actions seem to call for more power which leads us towards dictatorship and war with our liberties crushed." But in another letter written to this paper, a man offered support to those looking for legal justification of the trade. "The President's defenders can look elsewhere than to the Louisiana Purchase for precedent for the trade. In 1914 the United States sold warships to the Greek Navy."

The Springfield Republican published two letters, both of which were quite favorable to the Presidential act. In one of the letters, a North Adams man said: "Every

97. Letter to the Editor, Springfield Republican
98. Letter to the Editor, Boston Herald, August 19, 1940.
99. Letter to the Editor, Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 6, 1940.
100. Ibid, Sept. 11, 1940.
red-blooded man in America squared his shoulders and thrust out his chin when news came through that the deal was consummated." In the other letter, a Springfield man, while not so emotional about the deal, agreed that it was a sound move. "As the British fleet is our first line of defense, in the name of our own safety, if nothing else, Britain should get not just 50 destroyers, but all the destroyers they so desperately need."

Several letters, both pro and con, were sent to the Boston newspapers. The Boston Globe received the bulk of these. One Boston man expressed the opinion that, "America is indeed grateful to President Roosevelt for acquiring these naval and aerial bases off our coast..." But a Medford reader thought the President was "playing with fire" when he sent these warships to Britain. "This is what our traitor of a President is doing when he sends warships to England." A Dorchester man, not content with hurling epithets, suggested that the President be impeached. A Chelsea reader disagreed with this harsh proposal and argued that "the swap meant further progress towards our security." A Cambridge man heartily endorsed this viewpoint and further stated that Roosevelt had acted as an "enlightened leader."

The Boston Post did not publish any letters on this controversy, but it did conduct a sidewalk poll to determine the man-in-the-street reaction to the trade. The following are some of the conflicting opinions that were expressed. A Chelsea man thought that "it was a good thing for the country." Another man from this suburb believed that "it is another step toward war, and it's beginning to look like they're going to send our boys over." A Revere man, of draft age, was sure that "it will add to our protection. It looks like a bargain." An East Boston man could not agree with this interpretation and argued against giving any of our navy to Britain or any other country. The ex-Mayor of Cambridge, Richard Russell, declared that "it is a long step in the right direction in the program to keep war out of the United States."  

The Boston Herald only published one letter on the controversial act. The correspondent in this case objected to the extra-legal manner in which the trade was negotiated. "The Constitution prohibits the President from making a treaty without the Senate. Roosevelt should be impeached."  

103. Interview, Boston Post, Sept. 4, 1940.  
104. Letter to the Editor, Boston Herald, Sept. 5, 1940.
Unlike the "Destroyer Deal," the seizures of Axis and Danish shipping drew little verbal comment from the people. Of all the Massachusetts newspapers examined, only the Haverhill Gazette published a letter on this move. The author of this letter believed that "it is apparent that un-American activities are springing up on all sides and it is high time we did some thing about it...."

Reader comment on the American occupation of Iceland was also quite sparse. Only the Boston Globe printed letters which were directly concerned with this action. One of these letters suggested that "if the Axis didn't like it, there wasn't much they could do about it. Let Hitler worry and fret." The other letter offered congratulations to the President on his astute vision. "Once more our President has done it. Our occupation of Iceland for its defense and ours, is a master stroke..."

The reader comments, practically non-existent as far as the Ship Seizures and the Occupation of Iceland, were concerned, picked up some after the President's "Shoot on Sight" address. In Worcester, the Telegram printed two letters which took a rather disdainful view of Roosevelt's order. One of the letter-writers philosophically conceded, "In any event be our executive right or wrong in the

105. Letter to the Editor, Haverhill Gazette, Apr. 4, 1941.
106. Letter to the Editor, Boston Globe, July 9, 1941.
stand he has elected to take, it is, and always will be
the duty of any true American to recognize Mr. Roosevelt
as America's deputed spokesman in this and all crisis."
The other writer took issue with Roosevelt's foreign
policy.

We were told that every item of our foreign
policy was to keep us out of war, and every one
of them has brought us closer to war. We were
either told an untruth or else the framers of our
foreign policy are incompetent. There are two
great nations that have undertaken to blockade
the seas and the Greer was aiding one of them. 107

The Boston newspapers did not publish any letters re-
lating to the President's "shoot first" order, but the
Globe did conduct a sidewalk poll on this action.

One Boston man told the interviewer that "it was a
great speech. They've got no right to sink our ships."
An impatient sailor said that the President should have
come to the point and declared war. But a Winchester man
was less eager for war. He told the Globe that "all he
(Roosevelt) said was "shoot first," and I wonder if that
wasn't a little steep. However, he didn't put us any
nearer the war than we are," The last man questioned be-
lieved that "Roosevelt is on the right track to warn the
Germans and Italians out of our part of the ocean."

107. Letters to the Editor, Worcester Telegram, Sept. 12, 1941.
108. Interview, Boston Globe, Sept. 12, 1941.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

Below is a chart which shows the overall Massachusetts Press reaction to the five executive acts of President Roosevelt. No provision has been made for a summary of the high and low points of public reaction to these acts. This is because of the fact that the Press opinion in each of these cases was remarkably uniform. The dropping off of editorial comment regarding the Ship Seizures was the only significant change in the newspaper reaction. And the lack of concern was, probably the result of apathy more than anything else.

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* Had no editorial comment on one act.

Totals 46 6 5
The most significant conclusion derived from this study was the fact that public opinion in Massachusetts, as shown by the Press, overwhelmingly supported Roosevelt's foreign policy during this critical time in our history. Of all the editorials that expressed opinions (pro, dubious or con) on these five executive acts, 81 per cent agreed that the acts were in the best interests of the nation. Of all the editorials that offered a definite pro or con opinion, 90 per cent approved these Presidential acts.

A nation-wide public opinion poll taken in June 1941, showed that 78 percent of the people favored the policy of abundant aid to Britain. This figure seems to approximate the reaction of the people of Massachusetts. Actually Massachusetts was even more solidly behind the President, but this may be attributed to the geographic location of the State. It is quite possible that the Coastal States were more concerned with the dangers of Hitler's aggression, than were the land locked Mid-Western States.

Even though Massachusetts as a whole gave Roosevelt powerful support, it is interesting to note that there

109. The Public Opinion Quarterly, Princeton University School of Public Affairs, Fall Issue, 1941.
were definite geographic and demographic differences in the amount of support extended. The towns and cities with populations of 50,000 or less, were 85.7 percent in favor of the President's policy (includes pro, con and dubious opinions), while the cities with populations of 100,000 or more, gave the President 76.8 percent of their support.

There were also some differences intensity of support offered by the Eastern and the Western cities of the State. On the basis of this breakdown, the Eastern cities gave the President 78 percent of their support, while the Western cities were 86.2 percent in favor of his policy. This seems quite unusual, when one considers that Eastern Massachusetts and not Western Massachusetts is the stronghold of Democratic voting power.

Pittsfield and Worcester gave the President's policy their unanimous approval. The latter city, the home of the isolationist Senator David I. Walsh, seemed to have little sympathy for the views of its favorite son.

Unfortunately the results of these statistical interpretations can be misleading. The sample used in arriving at these percentage breakdowns was much too small. There can be no doubt, however, as to the overall significance of the main conclusion. The Press of Massachusetts definitely believed that Roosevelt's actions were in consonance with the public opinion of the State.
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