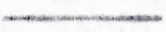


Archives
Closed
LD
175
.A40K
Th
100

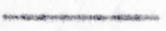
THE ROBIN MOOR INCIDENT



A Thesis
Presented To
the Faculty of the Department
of Social Science



In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts



by
Laurie Keith Hill



The Robin Moor Incident

by

Laurie Keith Hill

Approved by:

Eratis Williams

Director of Graduate Studies

Approved by:

H. Yoder

Chairman of Thesis Advisory Committee

Approved by:

Max Dixon

Major Professor



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AN UNLIMITED NATIONAL EMERGENCY	1
II. THE ROBIN MOOR SINKING AND INITIAL REACTIONS BY THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION	11
III. SOME REACTIONS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS	30
IV. A CONFLICTING POLICY	54
V. AN IMPORTANT SPEECH AND THE EVENTS OF THE SUMMER AND FALL, 1941	64
VI. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROBIN MOOR	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

CHAPTER I

On May 27, 1941, in a well-publicized national radio address, the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, announced the proclamation of an unlimited national emergency.¹ The Chief Executive first outlined the early events of World War II since its beginning in 1939, and explained the importance of the war for the continued existence of the United States and the other Republics of the Western Hemisphere as free nations. The President made this speech in the presence of the officials of the Pan American Union and the Canadian Minister. He declared that:

. . . It is appropriate that I do this, for now, as never before, the unity of the American Republics is of supreme importance to each and every one of us and to the cause of freedom throughout the world. Our future independence is bound up with the future independence of all our sister Republics.²

¹Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, vol. X. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 181.

²*Ibid.*, p. 181.

Thus, the President stressed the necessity for the countries of the Western Hemisphere to act in a united manner to prevent the European war from spreading across the Atlantic to their own shores.

The Chief Executive then outlined the steps that had already been taken to strengthen the United States militarily. In the first months of the war in 1939. The Neutrality Act, which had prevented the sale of arms and ammunition to belligerents, was revised so that the democracies, mainly Britain and France, could purchase war supplies on a "cash and carry" basis. By June, 1940, England remained the only bulwark between the Western Hemisphere and the Axis military powers.

In September, 1940, by an executive agreement between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the United States signed over to Great Britain fifty over-age destroyers which she desperately needed for convoy duty, in exchange for eight strategic bases stretching from Greenland down to the islands of the Caribbean.

In March, 1941, Congress passed the most significant legislation pertaining to the war effort to that point, the Lend Lease Bill. This important act pro-

vided for material aid "for the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States."³ This bill was desired by the President because Great Britain could no longer pay for the military supplies which she had to have to continue the war effort.

The President briefly summarized the defense measures that had already been taken to strengthen the United States. A series of agreements had been signed with the Latin American nations to guarantee a solid front against Hitler. Since 1940, the industrial might of America had been geared to building an awesome war machine. The Army and the Navy had both been enlarged and were being constantly improved and modernized.⁴

Perhaps for political reasons, Roosevelt did not mention the fact that the nation's first peacetime draft had been initiated in September, 1940. Roosevelt vividly described the world as it would be if Hitler were victorious over England:

³ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴ Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, seventh edition, (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1964), p. 717.

. . . Germany would literally parcel out the world--hoisting the swastika itself over vast territories and populations, and setting up puppet governments of its own choosing, wholly subject to the will and the policy of a conqueror.⁵

The Western Hemisphere would be slowly drained of life by the Nazi policies. The Latin American nations would be Balkanized, while Canada and the United States would be "strangled to death," the Chief Executive expressed emphatically. He painted a dire picture of American life as it would be if the United States had to compete economically with the Nazi-controlled European countries. The United States, which was economically dependent upon trade and commerce with the other nations of the world, would not be able to compete with the slave labor of Hitler's system. Then, he states, "The whole fabric of working life as we know it--business and manufacturing, mining and agriculture--all would be mangled and crippled under such a system."⁶ This, the President declared firmly, "will never be forced upon us, if we act in this present crisis with

⁵Rosenman, op. cit., p. 183.

⁶Ibid., p. 184.

the wisdom, and the courage which have distinguished our country in all the crises of the past."⁷

The President stressed the Nazi conquests in various parts of the world. They had military control of most of Europe, and in Africa they had taken over Tripoli and Libya, and Egypt, the Suez Canal and the Near East were being threatened. Spain and Portugal could be seized at any time and much of the rest of Africa was in the same situation. The Azores and the Cape Verde Islands were also in jeopardy of being taken. These important islands were considered to be "the island outposts of the New World."⁸ From these islands airplanes were only a matter of hours from the country of Brazil, and the Cape Verde Islands controlled the important shipping routes to and from the South Atlantic. The head of the American government then stated dramatically:

. . . Control or occupation by Nazi forces of any of the islands of the Atlantic would jeopardize the immediate safety of portions of North and South America, and of the island possessions of the United States and, therefore, the ultimate safety of the continental United States itself.⁹

⁷ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

Thus, to gain control of the world, Hitler had to have control of the seas, the Chief Executive explained. Then, he stated pointedly:

. . . But if the Axis powers fail to gain control of the seas, then they are certainly defeated. Their dreams of world domination will then go by the board, and the criminal leaders who started this war will suffer inevitable disaster.¹⁰

The President firmly believed that if the Nazis were limited to a land war, they would be defeated because their military forces were incapable of keeping the conquered peoples of Europe oppressed.

To Roosevelt, freedom of the seas had almost a sanctified meaning in American history. He emphasized:

. . . All freedom--meaning freedom to live, and not freedom to conquer and subjugate other peoples-- depends on freedom of the seas. All of American history--North, Central, and South American history-- has been inevitably tied up with those words 'freedom of the seas'.¹¹

The undeclared war with France at the end of the eighteenth century, the Barbary War, the War of 1812, and World War I, were given as examples of American determination to preserve freedom of the seas not only

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 186.

for itself, but for its neighbors in the Western Hemisphere.

The freedom of the seas as America had known it was becoming non-existent, he asserted. The Battle of the Atlantic continued, and British losses were staggering. Though most of the shipping to Britain went by way of the North Atlantic, there had been some losses in the South Atlantic he pointed out, and even some ships had been sunk in the waters of the Western Hemisphere. Then, the President made an ominous statement concerning these sinkings when he declared:

The present rate of Nazi sinkings of merchant ships is more than three times as high as the capacity of British shipyards to replace them; it is more than twice the combined British and American output of merchant ships today.¹²

The Chief Executive believed that the United States should increase its own shipbuilding program and also help the British to cut down on their losses. The United States naval fleet and airplanes would continue to locate German military forces and give this valuable information to the British.

Then, he continued to outline what would be American

¹² Ibid., p. 187.

national policy in the future. Any attempts by Hitler to gain control of any part of the Western Hemisphere, or to intimidate the region would be met by force. Continued assistance to Great Britain and all others who were against the Third Reich was stated again. Concerning the shipment of lend-lease goods to Great Britain, the President commented firmly, "I say that the delivery of needed supplies to Britain is imperative. I say that this can be done."¹³

The concluding statements of the speech showed the strong determination of the Administration to protect the interests of not only the United States but also the Western Hemisphere, as the President said:

. . . We reassert the Ancient American doctrine of freedom of the seas.

We reassert the solidarity of the twenty-one American Republics and the Dominion of Canada in the preservation of the independence of the hemisphere.

We are placing our armed forces in strategic military position.

We will not hesitate to use our armed forces to repel attack.

. . . Therefore, with profound consciousness of my responsibilities to my countrymen and to my country's cause, I have tonight issued a proclamation that an unlimited national emergency exists and requires the strengthening of our defense to the extreme limit of our national power and authority.¹⁴

¹³ ibid., p. 190.

¹⁴ ibid., p. 193.

Thus, in this speech the Chief Executive stressed the threat of the Nazi military machine to the Western Hemisphere, and expressed the need for a united and strong front to prevent Hitler from gaining any foothold in the region or on any islands from which his forces could threaten the American Republics. In effect, he told the German government that the United States was diametrically opposed to Hitler's schemes of world domination, and would not allow its brand of government to spread to the Western Hemisphere.

A very important segment of the speech was devoted to the importance of the freedom of the seas. Without some freedom of the seas, neither the United States nor Latin America could remain economically strong, for these nations depended upon trade and commerce for their continued existence. One can more easily understand the strong actions later taken by the President when it is learned on June 12 that the Robin Moor had probably been sunk by a German submarine on May 21 in the light of this May 27 speech. For him, freedom of the seas was intimately interwoven with the independence of the United States and the other Republics of the hemisphere.

Thus, it would seem that the German government had reacted to the President's speech (which had been well-

publicized in advance) by sinking the Robin Moor even before the address was made. The Chief Executive had little choice, actually, but to react strongly against this incident. For not only were many citizens of the United States concerned with how its government would react to this incident in the light of the May 27 speech, but also Latin America was keenly interested in the measures taken by the President. In this speech the Chief Executive had strongly stated that the United States would retaliate against any Nazi attacks. The people of Latin America were interested in seeing if the President would protect the remaining freedom of the seas as he said he would. The location of the sinking in the South Atlantic was also important to the Latins, for this area included their major trade routes to the outside world. They wondered, perhaps, if their shipping was also now to be sunk by the German navy.

The speech by the President created a favorable opinion in the democracies of the world.¹⁵ Though the Fascist powers condemned it as war-mongering by the United States President, there were no apparent repercussions from the address.

¹⁵ The New York Times, May 29, 1941, pp. 1,6.

CHAPTER II

THE ROBIN MOOR SINKING AND INITIAL
REACTIONS BY THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION

Subsequently, on June 9, 1941, two weeks after the President's speech proclaiming an unlimited national emergency, the United States Ambassador to Brazil, Jeffery Caffery, sent a message to the State Department concerning an American merchant ship. He stated that word had been received by authorities in Fortaleza, Brazil, that the Robin Moor had been torpedoed and sunk in the South Atlantic on May 21, 1941.¹⁶ A Brazilian ship, the S. S. Osorio, had picked up on June 8 at 9:00 p.m., eleven survivors of the Robin Moor, who had related the story to the ship's captain, who in turn had radioed it to the authorities at Fortaleza.¹⁷

It was learned that the Robin Moor, formerly the Exmoor, a 4,985-ton merchant ship, was operated by the Robin Line of New York.¹⁸ The ship had sailed from New

¹⁶ Shephard Jones and Denys P. Myers, ed. Documents on American Foreign Policy, vol. III. (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1942), p. 417.

¹⁷ ibid., p. 417.

¹⁸ Associated Press Dispatch, The New York Times, June 10, 1941, p. 7.

York City on May 6 for Capetown, South Africa. There were eight passengers and a crew of thirty-eight, most of whom were of United States citizenship. Four of the passengers were Americans. Mr. and Mrs. Ben Cohen were traveling to Durban, South Africa, to manage the Metropolitan Theatre. Mr. R. W. McCullough, a chemical engineer for the Firestone Company, was bound for Port Elizabeth with his son and his wife, who was not an American citizen.

The Robin Line offices had had no word from the lost merchant ship since its sailing, and there had been rumors that the ship had foundered. Concerning the fact that no word had been received from the Robin Moor, the company officials stated that for a year it had not enforced the custom of the vessel sending its position every four days. At the time of the incident, agents at the ports of call had reported ships' arrivals and departures.²⁰ The Robin Moor had been due in Capetown on June 6, so that even on June 8 there was no great alarm because the ship was two days late.

On learning of the fate of the Robin Moor, the President's personal advisor, Harry L. Hopkins, wrote a memorandum which the President refused to issue.²¹ Hopkins believed

²⁰ibid., p. 7.

²¹ Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 299.

that the sinking of the Robin Moor violated international law at sea, and violated the President's policy of freedom of the seas. He advised the Chief Executive to change the policy of using ships and airplanes to locate possible aggressors to a security patrol to protect all American flagships traveling outside of the war zones as defined by Roosevelt. The President, he believed, should authorize the United States naval forces in the Atlantic Ocean to establish the freedom of the seas, giving them discretion as to how to achieve that objective.

The President, however, urged all Americans to use restraint in making any hasty decisions in the sinking until more facts had been ascertained. There was some difficulty in making certain the identity of the attacker, for on June 11, the Italian High Command stated that its submarines had recently sunk nine steamers in the Atlantic Ocean.²² The President's press secretary, Stephen Early, said that the government did not know the cause of the sinking, for the ship had not been in a war zone.²³ The President did not want to act hastily, for he did not want to go to war

²² The New York Times, June 11, 1941, p. 1.

²³ Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 7th ed., 1964), p. 715.

unless there was no other solution. The longer that America remained a noncombatant ally of the British, the stronger militarily the United States could become.

Some governmental officials connected the sinking with the statement of the German Grand Admiral Erich Raeder on May 25, who had warned against United States convoying and the informing of British warships and merchant ships of German submarines, surface vessels, and planes.²⁴

When the war had begun in 1939, Roosevelt had established war zones by authority of a Neutrality Act passed in that year, which prohibited American ships and citizens from sailing in certain seas where belligerents were fighting.

In some newspapers, there were also comments about the sinking. In The New York Times, an editorial raised the question whether this would lead to a great change in United States-German relations.²⁵

The Atlanta Constitution also included an editorial concerning the sinking. It was assumed here also that Germany had sunk the merchant ship even before full evidence was received as to the identity of the attacker.

²⁴ The New York Times, June 10, 1941, p. 1.

²⁵ Editorial in The New York Times, June 11, 1941, p. 20.

This action, ostensibly by Hitler's navy, was compared with the actions by the Kaiser's government in World War I in encroaching upon American neutral rights. The editors believed that Hitler, as his predecessor had done in World War I, also misjudged the military power of the United States and evidently thought that there would be greater gains by sinking American merchant ships and drowning its citizens than would be lost by forcing the United States into the war.

Just as the Kaiser had soon learned, the editors declared emphatically, Hitler would also quickly perceive that this was a fatal mistake. This editorial declared the certainty of Hitler's defeat if America entered the war.

The editors regretted the sinking of the Robin Moor, but one could understand their view that American intervention was perhaps inevitable by statements they made concerning the war in general and the Robin Moor in particular. The editorial emphasized, "Of course, to all intents and purposes, the United States is already in the war. This nation is irrevocably committed to the task of defeating Hitler and removing the Nazi menace from the world."²⁶

²⁶ Editorial in The Atlanta Constitution, June 11, 1941, p. 8.

Discussing what it believed was apathy among certain American people, the article declared that, "If the sinking of the Robin Moor arouses the people of the United States-- a certain minority of them--out of their inexplicable lethargy regarding the war menace, then it will serve good purposes."²⁷ The President had also briefly alluded to this minority in his nationwide radio address of May 27, and had decried the shortsightedness of this group of Americans, who were opposed to any actions against the Third Reich.

The German press on June 10 made inconclusive reports of the Robin Moor sinking, and declared the information to be "confusing, unclear, and contradictory."²⁸ The German Admiralty, however, said nothing.

Most Americans were willing to wait until more information could be gathered as to the certain identity of the attacker before making any statement on the sinking. This damning evidence as far as many Americans were concerned, was received by the State Department on June 12. The American consul in Brazil, who had taken down the statements of the survivors when they had arrived in port on June 11,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁸ The New York Times, June 11, 1941, p. 1.

had sent this summary to Washington.

The survivors stated that on May 21 their ship was ordered to stop by a blinking light, and to send its ship's papers over to the other vessel. Upon inquiry as to what ship, the reply was merely "submarine." The submarine commander asked for the identity of the ship and he was told the Robin Moor of United States registry, traveling from New York City to Capetown.²⁹

The passengers and crew were forced to abandon ship, and get into four small boats. The ship was then torpedoed and it sank in a short time. Following this, cannon fire destroyed all floating wreckage.

The commander of the submarine then spoke to the survivors, and in poor English told them he had left some food with the captain. The survivors were certain that the commander was German because of his accented English. The submarine's only markings were those of the word "Lorricke" or "Loricke" and a figure on the conning tower similar to a laughing cow.³⁰

The survivors also stated that the Robin Moor had "the American ensign and 'U.S.A' painted on either side,

²⁹ S. Shephard Jones, ed. op. cit., p. 418.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 418.

and an illuminated flag flying from her stern at the time she was sunk. Also, when she had been stopped, she was instructed not to use her radio.³¹

Since the commander had promised to wireless their position, the lifeboats remained together in the same place to await rescue. However, after twenty-four hours of waiting, the four small lifeboats started toward the coast of Brazil. Until May 26, five days after the sinking, they remained together, but then they split up to proceed on their own.³²

When the President received this new information on June 12, his press secretary said in a press conference to the American people that "you will remember the other day you were requested that judgment on the sinking be withheld pending a determination of the facts. The request made is now withdrawn. There seems to be no longer any reason to reserve judgment."³³ Evidently, the Roosevelt administration had accepted the fact that the sinking was carried out by a German submarine.

³¹ Ibid., p. 419.

³² Ibid., p. 416.

³³ The New York Times, June 12, 1941, p. 9.

The Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, had a discussion with the President at this time dealing with the Robin Moor incident. President Roosevelt had said to him that the United States would seize a German ship and hold it on the "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" principle.³⁴ It was clear that the Chief Executive was angered at the German action. Ickes encouraged the President to do more than this, but Roosevelt felt this would be sufficient for the time being. The Secretary of the Interior did not think that the President had enough nerve to go through with even this mild threat. However, as later events were to prove, the President did react strongly to this incident in public actions.

The national government quickly explained to the American people that this action by the German government was unprovoked and violated international law. On June 12, the Under-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, filling in for the ailing Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in a press conference stated that the cargo of the Robin Moor was entirely general in nature. The ship's manifest showed

³⁴ Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, The Lowering Clouds, 1939-41, vol. III (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 552.

no ammunition, explosives, military equipment, or any war materials of any kind. The ship's cargo did not violate the President's proclamation of May 1, 1937, under the Neutrality Act, which forbade the shipment of war materials to nations at war.³⁵ Its cargo included steel rails, brassieres, hosiery, chemicals, paints, canned goods, packaged foods, automobiles and automobile parts, etc., as far as the State Department knew at this time.³⁶ The Under-Secretary also gave the destinations of the cargo in Africa--Lawrence Marques, Port Elizabeth, Capetown, Port Natal, and East London--and added that none of these ports were in the war zones as declared by the President.³⁷

The question that continued to concern American government officials and others interested in foreign affairs was why the Robin Moor had been sunk. What motive did the Germans have in sinking this unarmed merchant ship while it was sailing outside of the President's proclaimed war zones?

One answer is given by a noted biographer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.³⁸ Robert E. Sherwood notes the great battleship of the German navy, the Bismarck,

³⁵ S. Shephard Jones, ed., op. cit., p. 419.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 419.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 419.

³⁸ Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 296.

was sunk on the same day as Roosevelt's important address of May 27 proclaiming an unlimited national emergency. He gave his opinion of the relationship of the two events with the Robin Moor sinking.

He said that he could not completely understand why Hitler sent his great battleship into the North Atlantic toward the Western Hemisphere at this time. Why should Hitler risk his best battleship? The only explanation that he could find was that Hitler hoped his mighty battleship could sink a convoy of merchant ships, and thereby show the United States and the world the contempt that Germany had for anything that Roosevelt might say in his well-publicized speech of May 27.³⁹ Sherwood believed this was true, for in the same week Germany had sunk the first American ship in the war, the Robin Moor.

This seems a logical explanation, for the submarine commander possibly knew about the plans that had been made for the Bismarck. What difference would it make if the Robin Moor was sunk, because within a week an entire convoy would possibly be destroyed by the Bismarck? The sinking of a convoy in the waters of the Western Hemisphere

³⁹ Ibid., p. 296.

would create such a crisis that the Robin Moor incident would not be important. Though the German commander did not kill the people aboard the ship, he did leave them in lifeboats seven hundred miles from any land. All evidence of the Robin Moor was destroyed so that the disappearance would be a question mark. Evidently, he did not radio their position as he had promised, because he did not want them found for awhile, anyway.

Thus, the sinking perhaps was merely intended to be a side show to the main event which did not take place in the North Atlantic, because the British hunted down and destroyed the Bismarck on the day of the President's important speech.

Other Americans writing at the time of the incident did not connect the sinking of the Robin Moor with the Bismarck, but they did think that the Germans were trying to intimidate the United States with this action. There was also the fear among some Americans that this might be the portent of a new era in United States-German relations. I shall deal with these views of articulate Americans in a following chapter.

The Roosevelt administration also thought that the Robin Moor sinking might be the portent of a new German

foreign policy and reacted strongly. The Under-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, continued to act as the official spokesman for the national government concerning this matter. He replied to the following comments of German officials on June 13 and June 14 to the press which were carried in American newspapers.

The German officials giving these views were spokesmen for the Naval War Staff, and were not talking for Adolf Hitler or von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister. On June 13, one official stated that "German naval forces will continue to sink every ship carrying 'contraband' for Britain."⁴⁰ Though he said Germany had no information about the incident from her own sources, the Robin Moor was fair game, because it carried steel rails which the Germans considered as contraband.

German officials made more bitter comments to the press on June 14 concerning the American and British protests of the sinking. Germany "won't be buffalced by American or English discussions concerning the Robin Moor," an authorized German source declared, and he added, "Whenever any ship with contraband sails, we'll shoot at it, whether it is the Robin Moor, the Exmoor (the vessel's former name) or anything else."⁴¹

⁴⁰ The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 1.

⁴¹ Ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 1.

The spokesman reiterated the comments concerning the ship's manifest which included railroad rails. The British considered these as contraband and therefore, the Germans did also. "We've said time without number that we sink any vessel bound for England with war materials, and the world with the utmost formality has been informed that we are conducting a total blockade of England," the German official stated emphatically.⁴² He continued to say that if a ship carried contraband, it need not have the British Isles as a destination to be subject to destruction. If materials were intended to aid the British in any war theatre, they were fair game for the Germans.

The spokesman read Hitler's warning of January 30, 1941, concerning neutrals aiding Great Britain. "Whoever imagines he can aid England must, in all circumstances, know one thing--every ship, with or without escort, that comes before our torpedo tubes will be torpedoed."⁴³

These statements buttressed the views of the Roosevelt administration and other influential Americans that surely the Robin Moor sinking was the beginning of

⁴² Ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 1.

⁴³ Ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 1.

a move against American shipping. Unless America reacted strongly to this action by the German navy, United States shipping might be forced from the seas.

The German officials had stressed the fact that the ship had carried contraband, but Sumner Welles in his comments to the press emphasized that the setting of people afloat hundreds of miles from land violated international law and an agreement signed by Germany in 1936. He noted the fact that twenty-seven crew members and eight passengers, most of whom were Americans, were still lost on June 14. The Under-Secretary did not discuss the ship's manifest, and whether or not it included contraband, but condemned the barbarity of setting human beings afloat in small boats seven hundred miles from land.⁴⁴ On June 15, he made a reply to the newspapers concerning the statement by German authorities that all United States merchant ships carrying contraband would be sunk. He said, "The people of the United States never have been impressed with what they regarded as bluster or threats."⁴⁵

Even while the Under-Secretary was making comments

⁴⁴ The New York Times, June 15, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., June 15, 1941, p. 1.

to the press on the sharp remarks made by the officials of the German Naval War Staff on June 13 and June 14, the federal government was instituting positive actions. The President on June 14 issued an order freezing the German and Italian assets. This action was ordered within twenty-four hours after a German government official in Berlin had made it clear that Germany intended to ignore Roosevelt's reassertion of the freedom of the seas in his Unlimited-National-Emergency-Speech of May 27 by continuing to sink United States ships like the Robin Moor whether or not they were in the war zone.⁴⁶

Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, believed that the Executive Order of June 14, which froze all German and Italian assets in the United States, as well as those European occupied countries not already frozen, such as Albania, Austria, and Poland, was a direct result of the atrocious sinking of the Robin Moor.⁴⁷

The Executive Order was not purely a financial move, because on June 2 the Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau, had stated that freezing German and Italian assets would serve no purpose because the "barn is empty."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Frank L. Kluckhohn, The New York Times, June 15, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, vol. II (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 945.

⁴⁸ Frank L. Kluckhohn, loc. cit., June 15, 1941, p. 1.

They had already removed most of their funds to other countries.

The freezing of these assets had several effects. Both countries quickly retaliated by freezing United States assets. America now required Axis agents and their nationals to obtain a license from the Treasury Department each time they wished to transact business. The United States actually lost money by this action. Italian and German assets in America were between \$300,000,000 and \$400,000,000, while United States interests in Germany alone were between \$475,000,000 and \$500,000,000.⁴⁹ The principal advantage of this action was in giving the government a better means of checking up on Nazi activities in the United States through control of the transactions necessary to finance these activities.

Then, on June 16, the President ordered Germany to close its consulates, as well as specified travel and propaganda agencies in the United States by July 10, a step which was just short of breaking diplomatic relations.⁵⁰ It was claimed that these branches of the Nazi government were engaged in misconduct and fifth-column

⁴⁹ Arthur Krock, The New York Times, June 15, 1941, part IV, p. 3.

⁵⁰ The New York Times, June 16, 1941, p. 1.

activities. In retaliation, Germany and its junior partner, Italy, soon ordered the United States to do the same in their countries. Then, on June 21, the President ordered Italy to close its consular agencies, as well as specified propaganda and travel bureaus.⁵¹

Perhaps, in the closing of these German offices on June 16, the President was influenced by the facts brought out in the letter of Representative Celler on June 14. He declared that:

. . . Diplomatic relations with Germany should be broken off, primarily to prevent sabotage. Unless and until we dismiss the German Ambassador and his staff and his consular agents, by breaking off relations with the Reich, we will have a repetition of World War (I) sabotage.⁵²

Representative Celler mentioned the destruction of several plants in the last few months, and questioned whether German sabotage was involved. The Jersey City waterfront fire of May 31 had caused \$25,000,000 in damage. In Wheeling, West Virginia, the Wheeling Machine Products Company, which depended on defense orders for seventy per cent of its production, had a fire on June 6. On the same day in Jacksonville, Florida, two ship terminals had been burned causing \$800,000 in losses.⁵³

⁵¹ ibid., June 22, 1941, p. 1.

⁵² ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 3.

⁵³ ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 3.

The possible connection of the German agencies with sabotage of American industrial plants and port facilities probably had some influence on the Chief Executive's action in closing the German consulates and other agencies.

Cordell Hull, though, continued to believe that the President was reacting here also to the German encroachment on the freedom of the seas, though the reason given was that these agencies had been engaged in questionable activities.⁵⁴ However, it was actually a combination of anger over the Robin Moor sinking along with this constant irritation from the German agencies in America.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., June 16, 1941, p. 3.

⁵⁵ In both the freezing of the German and Italian assets in the United States, and the subsequent closing of their consulates, I found no public statements by any government official that these actions were connected to the Robin Moor sinking. Also, I did not find any comments by newspaper editors and columnists, or even Congressmen connecting these government orders with the Robin Moor. I would suppose it was so obvious the events were connected that it would not have to be stated.

CHAPTER III

SOME REACTIONS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS

While the Roosevelt administration was reacting strongly to the sinking of the Robin Moor, newspaper editors, columnists, Congressmen, and other public organizations were discussing the ramifications of this act. As more facts came in which pointed to the certainty that the Robin Moor was sunk by a German submarine, there were various reactions among the nation's articulate people. Though some bitterly denounced the incident, one fact remains clear. These interested Americans were unwilling to go to war over this crisis in United States-German relations.

There were some who believed that it would lead to a break in diplomatic relations, but the strongest actions advocated by most of these articulate Americans were the arming of United States merchant ships and the conveying of these vessels by United States military forces.

In Congress, there was a wide divergence of views toward this incident. Several Congressmen gave their views on the situation on June 13. At this time the report of the survivors which implicated the German

navy had been released. Many of these Congressmen minimized the importance of the act.

Senator Allen J. Ellender, a Democrat from Louisiana, stated, "It is just unfortunate in my mind. I don't think it will have any effect in taking us into war. That is one of the risks shipowners must take."⁵⁶

A Democrat from Rhode Island, Senator Theodore F. Green, said, "I don't think the sinking will have any more effect than the sinking of the Panay by Japan. An act of war is bilateral, not unilateral. It is doing a thing which the other party recognizes as an act of war."⁵⁷

"It was very unfortunate, but there is no reason more to get unnecessarily excited over the incident," replied Representative John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, the House majority leader.⁵⁸

Representative James A. Shanley, a Democrat from Missouri, cautioned, "The utmost restraint should be exercised until Germany has a chance to explain. Eleven

⁵⁶ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

ships were sunk before February 3, 1917, when the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany."⁵⁹

A Republican from Oregon, Representative James W. Mott, doubted that the Germans had sunk the Robin Moor as he said, "I don't think the Germans want to create an incident and I am inclined to doubt that she sank the boat. It just doesn't add up."⁶⁰

He was joined in this sentiment by several isolationists of the 1920's and 1930's. The vociferous Congressman from North Dakota, Senator Nye, conjectured that, "it would not be wholly impossible for the British themselves to engineer little programs of that kind."⁶¹ However, he retracted this statement on the next day. In his opinion, though, there "seems hardly to have caused more than a ripple of public opinion."⁶²

Two Congressmen who were certain that the President was determined to get the country into the war at any cost were fearful that the President would use the Robin Moor sinking to start war with Germany. Senator Hiram W. Johnson, a Republican from California, had been an ex-

⁵⁹ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁶⁰ The New York Herald Tribune, June 13, 1941, p. 2.

⁶¹ The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁶² Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

treme isolationist since World War I. He hoped "this isn't the incident that they have all been looking for with bated breath."⁶³

Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, an isolationist Democratic Senator, trusted "that this is not one of those incidents that the interventionists have been saying the President is looking for to get us into war. This country is not prepared for war, nor do the people want to get into it."⁶⁴

Other Congressmen, however, were very concerned about the incident as it might affect American relations with Germany. They were not isolationist, though, and placed the responsibility on Germany to explain this unwarranted act.

Congressman Ralph O. Brewster of Maine made a reply to the reporters on the incident that showed he was very concerned about the matter. The Senator stated strongly, "The effect of the sinking depends on the attitude of Germany--whether it is a determined policy or an accident. If Hitler says 'What are you going to do about it?' that is one thing; if he says 'So sorry,' that is another."⁶⁵

⁶³ The New York Herald Tribune, June 13, 1941, p. 2.

⁶⁴ ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 2.

⁶⁵ The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 6.

Representative Dewey Short, a Republican from Missouri, exclaimed that the Germans "aren't as smart as I thought they were."⁶⁶

A member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Frederick Van Nuys, a Democrat from Indiana, said that the gravity of the crisis depended on the location of the ship. He declared, "If it was in dangerous waters, either in a war zone or approaching a war zone--when it was sunk I don't think we should become unduly exercised. But if it was in peaceful waters the situation is much graver."⁶⁷

Three Congressmen commenting made very strong statements concerning the incident. Representative Andrew J. May of Kentucky, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee, urged that, "We ought to convoy with battle-ships and see who shoots first and who can outshoot."⁶⁸

The Representative from Kentucky was outdone in his stern statement by Senator Carter Glass of Virginia, who exclaimed loudly, "I think we ought to go over there and shoot hell out of every U-boat."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁶⁷ The New York Herald Tribune, June 13, 1941, p. 2.

⁶⁸ The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 724.

Representative Emanuel Celler was also determined that this was the point where the United States demanded its rights from Germany as he impatiently said, "We have sufficient warning from our experience during the last war. Forewarned is forearmed. The last straw is the unwarranted sinking of the Robin Moor by a Nazi submarine."⁷⁰

From these comments, it can be seen that the Robin Moor incident was not grounds for any drastic actions by the American government as far as some of those interviewed were concerned. Others, however, were concerned, and they were determined that the national government must not allow this act to go unanswered. Few made such comments as the isolationist Senator, who questioned whether the President would use the incident as an excuse for war. Thus, if the President were looking to Congress for support of actions toward Germany, he would find mixed reactions toward any measures that he might carry out.

In the newspapers, the editorials and the columns of the various writers also expressed divergent views

⁷⁰ Wilfrid Fleisher, The New York Herald Tribune, June 14, 1941, p. 1.

as to the importance of the Robin Moor incident. Many of the nation's foremost columnists on foreign affairs and some of the leading newspaper editors became very concerned over the sinking after the news was received on June 12 that the attacker was a German submarine. They tried to answer the many questions concerning the issue, which continued to puzzle articulate Americans. Several columnists tried to answer the important question of why Germany had done this. Walter Lippmann thought this was definitely a change in German foreign policy toward American shipping, especially after such bellicose statements to the press on June 13 and 14 by German officials concerning the sinking. This noted columnist made the assumption that Hitler was determined to win the war by the end of the summer of 1941. Lippmann tried to understand the military strategy of Hitler, and came to the conclusion that he figured war with the United States was inevitable, so why wait until the United States war capacity would reach a peak.⁷¹

He also assumed that the sinking was an effort by Hitler to intimidate the United States, and to show to

⁷¹ Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow," The Times-News Picayune (New Orleans), June 18, 1941, p. 10.

the oppressed continent of Europe that Germany had no fear of America.⁷²

Anne O'Hare McCormick, another columnist, also wondered at the time why Germany had done this.⁷³ In her estimation Germany made a huge blunder when it carried out this act. She gave significant reasons why Germany should not have done this. The Third Reich would not necessarily have the aid of the Japanese if Hitler started a war with the United States. Japan was obliged to help only if Germany were attacked first. The aim of the Axis heretofore had been to finish the war before the United States had entered the conflict. The German-imposed government in France had been getting little support from the people, anyway, and the entrance of America into the war would encourage them to further resistance. Also, the United States involvement in the war would have a profound moral effect on the entire world. All the subjugated peoples would gain new hope if the land of liberty joined as their military ally against totalitarianism.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., June 18, 1941, p. 10.

⁷³ Anne O'Hare McCormick, The New York Times, June 14, 1941, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 16.

Perhaps, Anne McCormick thought, the Germans were trying to form a combination with the Russians to offset American powers. Or they were trying to mobilize the other countries of the world into a bloc against the Western powers. Actually, this columnist could not understand just why this unprovoked incident had occurred.

This type of speculation was continued in all the discussions and writings of the Robin Moor incident. A major issue that was discussed was how this sinking would affect United States-German relations and the retaliatory measures that the government should take. A writer in The New York Times thought that the sinking would be treated more seriously than any that took place before World War I. In that war, though well over a hundred American lives were lost in the Lusitania sinking, the vessel had been British. American vessels had been very leniently dealt with. For example, in 1915, the William P. Frye, an American merchant ship, was sunk in the South Atlantic, but the passengers and crew were safely provided for. Before Germany began her unrestricted submarine warfare on January 31, 1917, only eleven American ships had been attacked, and only three American

lives were lost on a United States ship, the Gulflight.⁷⁵

Joseph G. Harrison, writing in The Christian Science Monitor on June 13, believed that this was a grave crisis in American relations with the Third Reich, and he declared that:

. . . It is felt that here is a clear-cut example of German disregard for the lives, rights, and property of innocent persons and the Administration is expected to do its utmost to stress this fact. Many foresee the incident may result in a presidential order of 'shoot on sight' within the range of an increasingly broadening area of Western Hemispheric waters.⁷⁶

Wilfrid Fleisher, a columnist for The New York Herald Tribune, also thought the sinking raised a grave issue. He compared this incident with the German submarine actions in World War I, which led to the entrance of America into the war. He declared:

. . . The report from Consul Linthisum (the report from the Consul to the State Department on June 12 implicating a German submarine as the attacker of the Robin Moor) was regarded tonight as raising a grave issue, comparable to the series of incidents, which led to President Wilson's decision to arm American ships to resist the unrestricted German submarine in the World War and to America's entrance into that war.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Bertram D. Hulen, The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Joseph G. Harrison, The Christian Science Monitor, June 13, 1941, p. 9.

⁷⁷ Wilfrid Fleisher, op. cit., June 13, 1941, p. 1.

Hanson W. Baldwin, a columnist writing in The New York Times, emphasized that:

The Robin Moor case, particularly if followed by another incident may lead to orders to our men-of-war to shoot, and as the President in his recent speech (May 27) intimated, we may take measures to seize certain Atlantic outposts.⁷⁸

The last statement of The New York Times editorial on June 14 gave the editors' forceful viewpoint, when they declared, "If we do not choose to back away, we shall at once proceed to do what we have long had every reason and right to do. We shall arm our ships and give them the protection of our Navy."⁷⁹

An editorial in The Times-News-Picayune advocated similar measures to be taken against the German government for the unprovoked act of aggression. It believed that the U-boat attack closely resembled an act of war, and the concluding statement was that:

. . . Meanwhile the apparently unjustified and illegal sinking of the Robin Moor places the American government on notice that Nazi submarines infesting the high seas do not respect the American flag and that adequate measures to defend our ships against their attack need to be taken at once.⁸⁰

In a later editorial, the editors of this New Orleans

⁷⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, op. cit., June 16, 1941, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Editorial in The New York Times, June 14, 1941, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Editorial in The Times-News-Picayune (New Orleans), June 13, 1941, p. 10.

newspaper stated their belief that the Robin Moor was just the first of many sinkings that were to come.⁸¹

Thus, these influential newspaper editors and columnists were fearful that this was the initial move, perhaps, in a new German foreign policy, and they believed the national government would take strong action to compel the German leaders to see that the United States would not allow its ships to be attacked in the open seas.

Throughout these writings, there is a continued comparison of the events leading to the entrance of America into World War I with the events of World War II up to that time. Many writers concluded that the Robin Moor would be the initial act by the German navy, which would be followed by others. Once again the United States would eventually be forced into war over the historic right of freedom of the seas. Several writers emphasized that the United States had made great efforts to remain neutral. America had curtailed her ancient belief in freedom of the seas, and had kept her ships and citizens out of the war zones as defined by the American President, the Third Reich, and the British, too.

⁸¹ Ibid., June 17, 1941, p. 8.

These efforts had seemed to be to no avail with the sinking of the Robin Moor. In The New York Times, the editorials concerning the incident stressed the conscientious efforts that the United States had made to remain out of the war. It stated, though, the:

. . . United States Congress surrendered the historic American right of freedom of the sea, by forbidding American ships to enter 'combat zones' in time of war, we now find that this act of self-abrogation has not purchased us immunity from Hitler's guns.⁸²

The editors of this influential newspaper interpreted the action as a challenge to America. They condemned the Germans for sinking a neutral ship whose identity they certainly knew, and then abandoning the passengers and crew 700 miles from land. This barbaric action drove the point home that the Germans did not keep the promises they had made by signing the Treaty of London concerning neutral rights made in 1930, which they finally agreed to abide by in 1936. On November 23, 1936, von Ribbentrop, the German representative, "most respectfully declared that the German government accepts the regulations restated above and accepts them as binding upon it from today."⁸³

⁸² Editorial in The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 16.

⁸³ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 16.

This act of violating the rights of neutrals was a special one with other editors also. This simply proved the disregard that Germany held for laws which they had agreed to abide by. The editors of The Christian Science Monitor said that the Robin Moor sinking showed the duplicity on the part of the Nazi government. In Hitler's Cudahy interview in May, 1941, he had declared that conveying means war. On May 25 Admiral Raeder had said the same thing in another interview. The editors then avowed that "for the Robin Moor and her people including women and a child, lack of convoy meant war--without any opportunity to defend themselves."⁸⁴ They doubted the credibility of the words of the leaders of the Third Reich, and the Robin Moor was just another example to prove this point. They concluded the editorial with this firm assertion:

. . . What America must judge by is acts and Nazi acts indisputably prove that there is neither peace, honor nor safety in running away or in failing to protect American ships, citizens, and rights. There should be convoys for Lend-Lease materials and merchant ships should be armed.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Editorial in The Christian Science Monitor, June 13, 1941, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., June 13, 1941, p. 16.

An editorial in The New York Herald Tribune also used the Robin Moor incident as an example of the German government's actions in trying to intimidate the United States. Even though the American government had removed its ships and citizens from combat areas, this proved to be no protection against the Nazis. They also inquired what had happened to the ancient American doctrine of the freedom of the seas. American security depended on this ancient doctrine, they stressed, and urged strong action against Germany with this final comment:

. . . If this country, awake to the deepest interests of its own national security, acts to clear the sea lanes on which that security depends, then an outrage of this sort provides every legal and moral justification--if any more were needed--for whatever belligerent action United States vessels may be obliged to take in the accomplishment of that national necessity.⁸⁶

Throughout American history the Atlantic Ocean had been a protective barrier to keep the United States from becoming embroiled in European wars. The United States had been able to develop in peace, partially because of this body of water that separated America from Europe. With the loss of the Robin Moor, Walter Lippmann, a

⁸⁶ Editorial in The New York Herald Tribune, June 13, 1941, p. 20.

noted columnist, considered the United States' security to be threatened. At this point the United States had lost control of the Atlantic Ocean. For him, the question was how America could regain control and security for American shipping. The writer stressed the locality of the sinking which was in the narrow seas through which all shipping had to pass from the North Atlantic to the South Atlantic, from North America to South America, and from Europe to South America. This incident pointed up the extreme importance of the freedom of the seas for the independence and defense of the Western Hemisphere.⁸⁷

He concluded his article with the question:

. . . Could there be a more conclusive demonstration that if the Axis dominated Europe and Africa it will be in a position to dominate all the trade routes and all the military supply lines between North and South America--and that once the Nazis were established there we should have to abandon all thoughts of hemispheric defense or we should have to fight an offensive war to reconquer the strategic control of the Atlantic Ocean?⁸⁸

In his address of May 27, the President had stressed the need for hemispheric solidarity. How would this be possible, Lippmann is inquiring, if the Germans controlled

⁸⁷ Walter Lippmann, op. cit., June 16, 1941, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid., June 16, 1941, p. 10.

the trade routes? Not only was the Robin Moor sinking important for American shipping, but also for the possibility of disrupting United States sea connections with Latin America.

From the journalists and editors giving their views above, it would be supposed that the nation would have supported the President in strong action against Germany. However, there was sentiment among certain journalists that the Robin Moor sinking was not so important or grave as others thought it to be. A columnist in The Chicago Daily Tribune, an isolationist newspaper, thought that the Administration would be satisfied with a strong note to Berlin. He interpreted the view of Congress as one of restraint, because the crew and passengers had been placed in lifeboats.⁸⁹ Another writer in the same newspaper, Chesly Manly, did not think the Roosevelt administration would use the Robin Moor sinking as a pretext for more aggressive action against Germany. This columnist thought that even administration leaders were urging restraint concerning the incident. Since the passengers and crew had been placed in boats and given food and water, the major question, in his view, was whether the

⁸⁹ Walter Trohan, The Chicago Daily Tribune, June 13, 1941, p. 1.

submarine commander had the opportunity to radio their position as he had promised.⁹⁰

Clearly the leading newspaper in the midwest, The Chicago Daily Tribune, was not very aroused about the Robin Moor, unless it was to minimize the incident. The midwest was an isolationist center and the leading newspaper in that area mirrored the views of the influential groups.

Civilian organizations and other Americans were also alarmed by the Robin Moor incident. Two pro-British organizations, the Fight for Freedom, Incorporated, and the New York Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies thought it necessary to sever relations and convoy ships and shoot if necessary.⁹¹

A telegram was sent to the President on June 15 by twenty-nine prominent Philadelphians, and they advocated the sinking of all U-boats sighted, the repeal of the Neutrality Act, and the occupation of all islands in the Atlantic Ocean strategic to the defense of the Western Hemisphere.⁹²

⁹⁰ Chesly Manly, The Chicago Daily Tribune, June 14, 1941, p. 2.

⁹¹ The New York Times, June 14, 1941, p. 3.

⁹² Ibid., June 15, 1941, p. 2.

They declared that even appeasers could see the futility of bowing to the demands of the Nazi government.

These twenty-nine Americans would evidently be behind the President in positive actions that he might take against Germany, but among some there was the feeling that the American people were too apathetic about the sinking. The replies of several Congressmen who seemed to view the incident very casually caused some to wonder about this indifference. Harold L. Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, stated that "the papers here did not seem to be as excited as the circumstances seemed to warrant according to my view."⁹³

Anne O'Hare McCormick wrote an article on June 14 in which she tried to explain the reasons for the seemingly apathetic reactions of some segments of the general public and in some official circles. She stated:

. . . It causes no more excitement in the capital than in the country, but the reporter who comes to Washington at intervals is struck by the hardening that has taken place in recent weeks in the temper of the government. Official and popular reactions to the Robin Moor do not signify apathy, but a maturing comprehension that 'incidents' are really incidental, and that no diversion shall stop the increasing momentum of the defense effort, now actually one sees here, the big business of America.⁹⁴

⁹³ Harold L. Ickes, op. cit., p. 552.

⁹⁴ Anne O'Hare McCormick, op. cit., June 14, 1941, p.16.

I think this columnist touched on a vital point, for I believe most Americans of this time were almost reconciled to American involvement in the war at some future date. If the President acted against Germany, they would support him, but, in fact, the Robin Moor was simply another incident in the movement toward war for some Americans.

Even after the remainder of the crew and passengers were reported safe on June 16, there was still a strong feeling against Germany among some United States citizens. An editorial in The Atlanta Constitution gave the view of some Americans when it asserted, "The heinousness of the act by the German submarine commander is not lessened because the survivors were thus rescued. As far as he was concerned, these Americans--including three women and a two-year-old boy--could have been food for sharks."⁹⁵

The editors of this strongly internationalist and pro-British newspaper, advocated that the Robin Moor should not be a pretext for war. The sinking called for calmness, they asserted, and America should enter the war only at the most optimum time.⁹⁶ It is important that this interventionist newspaper also understood that

⁹⁵ Editorial in The Atlanta Constitution, June 19, 1941, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Ibid., June 19, 1941, p. 12.

war at this moment was not in the best interests of the United States. No major newspaper that has been cited advocated war to solve the Robin Moor issue. There was a determination that the United States should not be intimidated, but there was also the belief that Germany would have to force the United States into the conflict by continuing actions such as the Robin Moor.

The New York Herald Tribune on June 18 had an editorial voicing similar sentiments to that of The Atlanta Constitution. It emphasized:

. . . In all the relief over the fact that none was lost, it is still difficult to forget the fact that these people were barbarously abandoned in four open boats in the middle of the South Atlantic, with a little bread and water among them and many hundreds of glaring and tossing miles between them and land.⁹⁷

The editorial very pointedly included the proximity of the nearest land to the four boats. They were seven hundred miles from Bolam, West Africa, five hundred miles from the Cape Verde Islands, and one thousand miles from Cape San Roque, Brazil.⁹⁸

The barbarity of the sinking and the stranding of the passengers and crew without much hope of rescue

⁹⁷ Editorial in The New York Herald Tribune, June 18, 1941, p. 22.

⁹⁸ Ibid., June 18, 1941, p. 22.

proved to be a continuing major complaint of concerned writers.

There was fear in some circles, as has already been shown, among isolationist Congressmen, that a small minority of Americans including the President were determined to get the United States into the war. Upon notification of the safety of the remaining thirty-five survivors on June 16, Representative Rankin in the House of Representatives related this to an advertisement in a newspaper, signed by a group of Americans, which criticized the President for not plunging the United States into war over the sinking of the Robin Moor.

. . . This just shows that in this day of unrest, in this day of propaganda and confusion, how necessary it is to stop the effort of these pressure groups to intimidate the President of the United States into plunging this country into the European war.⁹⁹

There was fear also that the President himself was hoping for war to break out between the United States and Germany. An editorial in The Chicago Daily Tribune callously accused the President of seeking to use the Robin Moor as a pretext for getting the United States into war with Germany by the retaliatory actions taken

⁹⁹ Representative Rankin, "Robin Moor Sinking," June 16, 1941, Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 5, p. 5196.

against the Third Reich. This editorial was written after the remaining crew members and passengers had been found alive. The editorial truculently declared:

. . . So extraordinary is the war psychology that it is understandable that the war party can furtively regret that there was no loss of life in the sinking of the Robin Moor. Some dead might have hastened the coming of the greater blood letting and the larger sacrifices . . . Mr. Roosevelt now endeavors to drive Hitler into one of his rages, apparently hoping to break through the Nazi determination not to go to war with the United States.¹⁰⁰

Gladstone Williams and Kenneth G. Crawford in their column, *Washington Parade*, surmised that since the remaining survivors had been found alive the United States would not carry out "warlike measures against Germany."¹⁰¹ They criticized the isolationists, who had branded the President as a warmonger, and as a person that might use the Robin Moor incident as a pretext for war. These two columnists firmly believed that the President was trying with all his power to avoid war.

Thus, in this lengthy discussion of American reactions to the Robin Moor sinking, I have shown that the merchant ship was an important question of the day for many arti-

¹⁰⁰ Editorial in The Chicago Daily Tribune, June 19, 1941, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ Gladstone Williams and Kenneth G. Crawford, "Washington Parade," The Atlanta Constitution, June 18, 1941, p. 4.

culate Americans. Thus, government officials, newspaper editors, columnists, and civilian organizations had some reaction to the incident, if only in a negative sense. There were those who dismissed the sinking as unimportant, while a few thought it meant war. However, most of the views given advocated a strong stand against Germany to protect United States shipping, but there was certainly no great feeling that this should mean the entrance of America into the European war. However, if Germany had continued its sinking of American vessels, it can be easily seen from the views given in this chapter that the nation would have supported the President in positive, aggressive actions against Germany. Very few Americans were willing to be pushed around, and though they did not want war, they would not have allowed Germany to continue sinking American vessels.

CHAPTER IV
A CONFLICTING POLICY

In this chapter, I shall attempt to answer the question that continued to bother Americans. Was the Robin Moor sinking the portent of a new German foreign policy toward American shipping? If one studies the German sources, it can soon be seen that this belief is not necessarily true.

There had been plenty of discontent in the German Naval War Staff with the restrictions placed on their military forces by the Fuehrer concerning American shipping. If one studies the correspondence of Grand Admiral Erich Raeder with Hitler, it is seen that the Admiral did want his naval forces to be able to sink American neutral shipping in compliance with international law and German prize regulations.

On April 12, 1941, more than two months before the Robin Moor sinking, the Admiral requested:

- . . . 1. Permission for German naval forces to operate freely in the Western portion of the Atlantic Ocean up to the customary international three-mile zone.
2. Cancellation of the preferred position which American merchant ships have enjoyed so far in the conduct of our naval warfare.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Howard M. Smyth, ed., Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, vol. XII (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 519.

The Grand Admiral desired the first of these restrictions lifted so that his submarines could operate freely in the Western Hemisphere's "safety belt" which had been established at the meeting of the American Republics in Panama in September, 1939.¹⁰³ This zone extended south of Canada around the remainder of the hemisphere varying from three hundred to one thousand miles in width. The belligerents were to refrain from action in this area. Though there had been violations by both sides, generally the zone was a neutral area.

Raeder was also fearful that American merchant ships would begin supplying the British with war materials by sailing into the Red Sea. He stated that "no longer should American merchant ships be exempted from actions taken by the German navy when the naval commanders are complying with the laws of sea warfare and German prize regulations."¹⁰⁴

The German Ambassador to Brazil, Ritter, was also in agreement with Admiral Raeder about freeing the German navy from self-imposed restrictions in dealing with

¹⁰³ Thomas A. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 687.

¹⁰⁴ Howard M. Smyth, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 519.

America's merchant marine. The Ambassador had a special reason for desiring the lifting of these restrictions.¹⁰⁵ The German blockade-runner, the Lech, was due to leave Rio on April 15, escorted by two submarines. He had written Hitler a memorandum early in April asking that these restrictions be lifted.

The head of the Third Reich replied to the requests of Ambassador Ritter on April 12.¹⁰⁶ The two submarines were allowed to accompany the Lech, and if attacked in the American security zone, they were to retaliate, though this was contrary to the general neutrality of the zone as the United States had it.

Concerning Ambassador Ritter's request that American merchant ships no longer be given special rights, the Fuehrer did not give him a concrete answer. The question of searching and seizing neutral ships in accordance with prize regulations in the American security zone and in the other oceans outside of the different war zones, as proclaimed by the different powers, was a difficult one to decide. Heretofore, neutral shipping in these areas had not been proceeded against. Hitler

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 519.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 529.

evidently feared any new policy that might bring America into the conflict. His answer to Ambassador Ritter was that he would personally have to confer with Grand Admiral Raeder about any new policy change.¹⁰⁷

Ribbentrop, Germany's Foreign Minister, gave his own views on American neutral shipping to Ambassador Ritter. He believed that submarine warfare should be initiated against American shipping only if:

1. Everything is done in this connection to protect American lives.
2. The Navy is confident that even at the present time such a course of action will result in a really significant increase in the number of sinkings.¹⁰⁸

The Foreign Minister stated that he believed Hitler did not think the number of sinkings would increase enough to hazard the risk of American intervention.¹⁰⁹

Then, on April 15, three days after Hitler's reply to Ambassador Ritter, he decided that the German military forces should have complete use of their weapons and all restrictions would be lifted in the area around England

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 530.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 530.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 530.

and Iceland.¹¹⁰

Thus, the two major leaders of the German government concerning foreign affairs in April, 1941, von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister, and Adolf Hitler, were determined not to risk the outbreak of war with America.

Then, on May 25, four days after the Robin Moor sinking, Admiral Raeder gave his interview concerning United States convoying and aiding British shipping to the representative of the Japanese News Agency Domei. This seemed to some, as I have already said, to be related to the Robin Moor incident. However, in a memorandum by Ambassador Ritter on June 9, 1941, he stated that General Jodl had informed him that during Grand Admiral Raeder's recent report to the Fuehrer, new and more aggressive orders to the naval forces that were discussed in connection with the Raeder interview had been temporarily set aside.¹¹¹ The memorandum concluded with this statement

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 530.

Perhaps, Hitler was reacting to the American President's declaration on April 10 that the United States would occupy bases on Greenland. This statement is significant not only for its effect on the war in the North Atlantic, but because he still had not decided on any policy change concerning American neutral shipping.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 587.

as Ambassador Ritter interpreted his conversation with General Jodl:

Likewise, the attack on North American merchant ships within the framework of the prize regulations was not permitted. The Fuehrer wants to avoid everything that could lead to incidents with the United States.¹¹²

Subsequently, this statement by the Ambassador showed that Hitler did not order any sinking of American merchant ships, and was not planning any drastic policy change in the near future concerning American neutral shipping. The sinking was not ordered by Hitler to test American nerve and to intimidate Roosevelt into backing down from his pro-British policies. The Fuehrer did not want the United States to enter the war on the side of England, especially with his plans made several months in advance to invade Russia.¹¹³ It would be senseless to bring another powerful adversary into the conflict until Russia was defeated.

The Bismarck was sent into the North Atlantic by Grand Admiral Raeder, not under the orders of Hitler. In his memoirs, the Admiral stated that he took full

¹¹² Ibid., p. 987.

¹¹³ William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 1047.

responsibility for dispatching the Bismarck on its fateful mission.¹¹⁴ No mention was made by the Naval Chief that the ship had been sent specifically for the purpose of carrying out operations to intimidate the Chief Executive of the United States. Though from the material that I have been able to gather, I cannot show conclusive evidence that Admiral Raeder did not have the above stated purpose in mind, the Admiral did say that the Fuehrer was very apprehensive about sending his great battleship on this mission.¹¹⁵ So, from this evidence that I have found, I believe that Hitler was not willing to risk impairing relations with America, though Admiral Raeder and his Naval War Staff desired a change in policy toward American shipping.

From the reports given by Naval War Staff members to the press, it is easily seen that this group was quite willing to allow United States-German relations to deteriorate. It was definitely desiring a change in German policy toward American shipping. Yet, I found no information that Admiral Raeder ordered the sinking of the

¹¹⁴ Erich Raeder, My Life (United States Naval Institute, 1960), p. 95.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

Robin Moor, and have had to assume that the commander committed the act on his own.

Another fact that continued to anger American officials was that the German government never conceded that a German submarine had sunk the Robin Moor, even when certain evidence showed that it was a German U-boat. However, in a footnote to a memorandum from Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to Ambassador Ritter, it was stated that in a note of June 11 the Naval War Staff had informed the Foreign Ministry that the German submarine U-69 had sunk an American steamer named Exmoor on May 21.¹¹⁶ Further details were not available, because the submarine was still carrying out operations.

The diverse opinions among high officials in the German government can be seen in a memorandum from von Ribbentrop to Ambassador Ritter on June 14.¹¹⁷ The Foreign Minister declared that the offensive, aggressive remarks given out by certain government officials to the press should not be continued. He thought more precautions had to be taken as to what was said, that

¹¹⁶ Howard M. Smyth, ed., op. cit., p. 1029.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1029.

might offend the United States until the facts of the sinking had been ascertained.

The head of the Foreign Ministry wondered if the U-boat commander had acted in compliance with international law. He asked several penetrating questions in this note to Hitler. Did the ship fly the American flag and how was it otherwise marked? The Foreign Minister wanted to know for certain if adequate lifesaving measures as defined under international law and German prize regulations had been taken as the Naval War Staff had asserted. Before making any more statements, the Foreign Minister thought the government should wait to see if all the passengers and crew had been saved. If the sinking had taken place on a well-traveled route, the action of the commander in setting the passengers and crew afloat would be easier to defend, he said. Did the sinking occur within or outside of the American security zone? Von Ribbentrop wanted to know definitely if the cargo consisted of more than fifty per cent of contraband goods.¹¹⁸

The Foreign Minister was fearful that the press announcements would cause the American government to assume that there would be further attack on United

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1029.

States merchant ships. Also, he demanded that the Naval War Staff refrain from sinking additional American ships, because this was contrary to Hitler's decision not to encroach upon American neutral shipping.¹¹⁹ He did not want it thought that Hitler's orders to leave American shipping alone were being circumvented by the announcements to the press.

Von Ribbentrop did not appreciate the actions of the Naval War Staff in allowing the sinking to occur; He was also opposed to their issuing such bellicose statements to the press which might force the German government into a war with America.

This request by the Foreign Minister was honored by government officials. There were no longer bellicose statements made to the press concerning the incident.

So, the Robin Moor incident was not to be the initial move in a new policy toward American shipping, but it is significant the Roosevelt Administration thought it was, and retaliated with this belief as a basis for its action.

CHAPTER V
AN IMPORTANT SPEECH AND THE EVENTS
OF THE SUMMER AND FALL, 1941

The news reached the United States on June 16 that the other crewmen and passengers had been found by a British vessel on June 4, and had landed at Capetown, South Africa.¹²⁰ More evidence was gathered from these survivors that the submarine had been a German vessel. A columnist in The New York Times quoted Melvin Mundy, the Chief Officer of the Robin Moor, as saying:

. . . It was obvious, however, to all of us that the submarine was German. All the men, even those who spoke distinct English, did so with a decided German accent. I have known plenty of German sailors, so I was sure. Another proof we had was that the submarine commander gave me bandages for my leg, which was injured. Each bandage was marked with German trademarks.¹²¹

This evidence, along with other facts that had come in, confirmed the belief that the submarine had been German. The insignia of the "laughing cow" had been used by Germany's number one submarine commander, Captain-

¹²⁰ The New York Times, June 17, 1941, p. 1.

¹²¹ Ibid., June 17, 1941, p. 1.

Lieutenant Guenther Frien. He had been reported lost in the spring of 1941, and perhaps a close friend of his was using the insignia.¹²²

Though the Roosevelt Administration was also relieved that the remaining crew members and passengers were found alive, this did not change the fact that Germany had carried out an unprovoked attack on American shipping. This definitely brought a crisis in United States-German relations, and if the United States did not continue to clamor about this action, then Germany might continue such sinkings.¹²³

On June 20, Roosevelt sent a message to Congress stating his viewpoint on the unwarranted sinking by the German navy.¹²⁴ The Chief Executive began his speech by declaring that the Robin Moor incident violated the rights of neutrals to sail the seas. He reiterated the facts of the sinking and placed full blame on the German government for this irresponsible and indefensible action. He sternly remarked:

. . . The total disregard shown for the most elementary principles of international law and of humanity brands the sinking of the Robin Moor as the act of an international outlaw. The Government of the United States

¹²²Ibid., June 14, 1941, p. 1.

¹²³"On the High Seas," Time, XXXVI (June 23, 1941), p.17.

¹²⁴ Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., op. cit., p. 227.

holds Germany responsible for the outrageous and indefensible sinking of the Robin Moor. Full reparations for the losses and damages suffered by American nationals will be expected from the German Government.¹²⁵

The President declared that German attempts to intimidate the United States would be met by force. He avowed that "the Government of the Third Reich may however be assured that the United States will neither be intimidated nor will it acquiesce in plans for world domination which the present leaders of Germany may have."¹²⁶

He stated that "viewed in the light of the circumstances the sinking of the Robin Moor becomes a disclosure of policy as well as an example of methods."¹²⁷

Roosevelt declared this to be the beginning of an attempt by the German government to control the seas, so as to make it easier to conquer Great Britain, which depended for its life on imports. The President further stipulated:

. . . We must take it that notice has now been served upon us that no American ship or cargo on any of the seven seas can consider itself immune from acts of piracy. Notice is served on us in effect, that the German Reich proposes so to intimidate the United States that we would be dissuaded from carrying out our chosen policy of helping Britain to survive.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 228.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 229.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 229.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

The United States, thus, could use the seas only with the permission of the Nazi navy. The President closed his speech with a very determined sentence, "We are not yielding and we do not propose to yield."¹²⁹

The Chief Executive had now served notice on Germany that the United States would not stand idly by and allow that country's submarines to menace American shipping. By declaring Germany as an "outlaw nation engaged in piracy," the President was moving toward the policy of ordering military planes and vessels to fire on German military forces to protect American commerce.¹³⁰ Thus, Roosevelt regarded the German attack as a test to see how America would react. So, he took a firm stand, and the next step was up to Germany. If Hitler carried out any other hostile action against American merchant ships, then in my opinion Roosevelt would have almost been forced to arm American merchant ships, to use military vessels and airplanes to retaliate, and even to allow American military forces to initiate action against the German navy.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

¹³⁰ Turner Catledge, The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 1.

The President's message to Congress brought both criticism and approval from at home and abroad. The Democratic leaders in Congress looked for a very sharp note to Germany, and if that did not work, then there would be arming of merchant ships.¹³¹ Some Republicans agreed on the necessity of standing up to Germany. Representative Charles A. Eaton, a Republican from New Jersey, said, ". . . a sound American message. Of course it is one more step into a great tragedy, but I am not willing to see our shipping driven off the seven seas by anyone."¹³²

There was still sentiment in Congress that the President was overemphasizing this incident that had not cost any American lives. Representative George Bender, a Republican from Ohio, thought that "he's putting a big head on a little nail."¹³³

Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a Democratic isolationist from Montana, gave the non-interventionist view. He stressed the President said nothing new in his speech, ". . . it was just another bitter and warlike diatribe against Germany."¹³⁴

¹³¹ The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³² Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³³ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

The Senator from Montana also made a very significant comment concerning the Robin Moor Cargo which the Administration had never answered. The President had demanded complete reparations, but Senator Wheeler questioned how this could be done if one considered the cargo of the vessel:

. . . Though the treatment of the passengers and crew was inexcusable, the President did not tell the American people that seventy per cent of the Robin Moor cargo was contraband of war, and as such was subject to seizure or destruction by belligerents.

Its cargo was seventy per cent contraband according to German lists, according to English lists, and according to American lists of the last war.¹³⁵

A Democratic Senator from North Carolina, Robert R. Reynolds, raised the same question as Senator Wheeler, though he was not so critical of the speech:

. . . I understand that the Robin Moor carried steel rails, which are listed as contraband by both belligerents. Of course that will lead to considerable controversy in any reparations negotiations.¹³⁶

Senator Claude Pepper gave the view of the extreme interventionists when he cried out, "This announcement cruelly demonstrates what has been eating into the consciousness of so many of us for so long--Adolf Hitler must be destroyed or eventually he will destroy us."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³⁷ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

Very few Congressmen, however, were quite as bellicose as Senator Fepper.

American organizations that had been created either to oppose any support to the democracies or to aid them in every way possible had diverging views of the speech. The Keep-America-Out-of-War-Congress voiced its criticism of the speech through its leader, Norman Thomas, who said, "It looks like a deliberate attempt to inflame public opinion for war on a day when even the Gallup Poll reports seventy-nine per cent of our people are against involvement in the war."¹³⁸ Thomas felt that the President should have handled the incident through normal diplomatic channels instead of sending a strong message to Congress.

Taking the opposite view, the Committee-to-Defend-America-by-Aiding-the-Allies gave its strong approval. This organization reiterated its earlier statement advocating the use of arming ships or aerial or surface convoys.¹³⁹

In the newspapers, those that had earlier been keenly interested in the incident reacted favorably to

¹³⁸ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹³⁹ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

the President's speech. The New York Herald Tribune upheld the Chief Executive in his warning to Germany. The facts of the Robin Moor would be known by everyone, and the editors felt the American people would more actively support their Chief of State. They declared that "reactions in the House and Senate cannot fail to uphold the nation's Commander-in-Chief in his historic warning to the pirates of the Nazi regime."¹⁴⁰

An editorial in The New York Times congratulated the President on the speech. If the United States yielded, then America would not be able to carry commerce to any part of the ocean without the approval of Germany, the editors stressed. Its concluding statement was that, "Since we do not intend to yield, we can only move forward to protect what we would hold."¹⁴¹

One writer, Frank L. Kluckhohn, went so far as to say that he was of the opinion if Germany rejected the speech, then there would very possibly be a break in diplomatic relations.¹⁴² However, few others were of

¹⁴⁰ Editorial in The New York Herald Tribune, June 21, 1941, p. 14.

¹⁴¹ Editorial in The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 16.

¹⁴² Frank L. Kluckhohn, The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 1.

this sentiment.

A noted columnist, Ralph McGill, thought that the President's speech had shown the Germans that the United States would not be intimidated by the barbarian-like tactics of the Nazi warlords. McGill enjoyed the speech, and thought that the President had outsmarted the Germans again, as he exclaimed:

. . . The whole thing is a game and we are very lucky indeed to have a President who understands it. A less brilliant man would have got us into the war a long time ago. Mr. Roosevelt can play the game. He has just kicked the Nazis in the shins.¹⁴³

Thus, in the main, the reactions to the President's message were almost the same as the reactions to the sinking itself. Those who had minimized the sinking also minimized the importance of the Chief Executive's message. However, there continued to be a strong feeling in America that the national government had to react as it did to demonstrate to Germany that the United States would not allow such incidents as the Robin Moor to occur.

The other nations of the world had been interested in the Robin Moor incident, and had been speculating as to how the United States would react. They wondered if

¹⁴³ Ralph McGill, "One Word More," The Atlanta Constitution, June 21, 1941, p. 4.

this would mean a break in diplomatic relations with Germany or even worse. As would be expected, the nations aligned with Germany, Italy and Japan, had taken the side of the Third Reich in this crisis. The view of the Italian press toward the President's message of June 20 can be summed up in the statement of a writer, Signor Gaydo, who stated:

. . . But the civilized world, no less than the Axis, is now accustomed to the very arbitrary and offensive words of American bellicosity. It is not the Axis which threatens America. It is Roosevelt who is deliberately seeking war against the Axis powers.¹⁴⁴

Another Italian newspaper, La Tribuna, stressed the fact that America had ceased to be a neutral by her aid to England. It cynically remarked, "So America is the master who can send arms and ammunition to England, and every reaction against this is to be considered a gesture of piracy and against international law."¹⁴⁵

Both the Italians and the Japanese believed that the sinking had been legal, because the ship was carrying "contraband" to a port of the British empire. This continued to be a question that the Roosevelt Administration

¹⁴⁴ Herbert L. Matthews, The New York Times, June 22, 1941, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Allen Raymond, The New York Herald Tribune, June 22, 1941, p. 3.

did not answer. Was the ship carrying cargo that was contraband?

Great Britain had been gratified that the President had carried out such actions as he did, and they thought this message would bring the United States closer to conflict. They interpreted the sinking as the beginning of a new policy. The Daily Express emphasized that, "Although Roosevelt does not reveal his plans, it is easy to surmise what he will do. He will not see American ships like the Robin Moor sunk with impunity. He will protect his ships."¹⁴⁶

The Daily Sketch was even more optimistic about the significance of the message by the Chief Executive. The message was thought of as his most bitter to that point of the war. The Daily Sketch concluded with this stirring statement:

History will probably see this solemn warning to Nazidom as the beginning of the end of the gospel of international murder, robbery, and trickery.¹⁴⁷

The Daily Telegraph viewed the outcome of the war as depending upon the decisions made by the American

¹⁴⁶ The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

President.

. . . As this fateful struggle advances to its climax it is for the words of the President of the United States that the world waits most anxiously. It is in American hands and not those of the dictators that the ultimate issue lies.¹⁴⁸

Great Britain was understandably very interested in American reactions to the sinking. The sooner that the United States entered the war, the better it would be for Britain. So, perhaps, they overemphasized the importance of the Chief Executive's message.

Latin American nations were fearful that Germany might cut off their trade with the rest of the world, and they were anxiously waiting to see if the Colossus of the North would stand up and protect the Western Hemisphere. In Mexico it was thought that the message was a definite step closer to war, while in Argentina it was believed that soon there would be convoying of American ships and arming of merchant ships.¹⁴⁹ The Chief Executive did have to consider the Latin American nations in his reactions to Germany's unprovoked act. America could not lose the respect of these nations, because that

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., June 21, 1941, p. 6.

would mean there would be no unity in the Western Hemisphere against the Nazis. The President had discussed the importance of the unity of the Republics of the Hemisphere in his speech of May 27. Thus, the President's strong words were motivated not only for the government of Germany, but for the countries below the American border.

The only word on the speech from a German spokesman to the press was the "the President made a speech and the stock market fell two points."¹⁵⁰ Here, the Germans were desiring that the incident would blow over, if they simply did not react to this stern message.

The German Charge d'Affaires in the United States wrote a memorandum to the German Foreign Minister on the President's message. He minimized the bitterness and sternness of the Chief Executive's words. His opinion was that:

. . . The strong language of the President was primarily directed to the American people, and to England and her satellites, if the President wanted to have it appraised as a strong threat addressed to us, it was, nevertheless, not the expression of a purposeful policy, which today is ready for everything.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., June 22, 1941, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Howard M. Smyth, ed. op. cit., p. 1060.

Thomsen believed that Roosevelt had abandoned the idea of a strong note to Germany, because the German government had reacted strongly to his actions. The President had taken the easy way out by sending a message to Congress, so the Charge d'Affaires stated.

This must have been the viewpoint of many in the German government, too, for there never was a statement to the American government concerning the Robin Moor. As far as the German government was concerned in its public utterances, there never was an admission that the German navy had perpetrated this act. They surmised that Roosevelt did not want war either, and was willing to allow the crisis to ease if Germany did not interfere again with American shipping.

Sumner Welles had sent the President's message to the German Charge d'Affaires, who promptly replied he was not in a position to pass it on to his government.¹⁵²

Thus, the Robin Moor incident soon became past history, and the controversy over the sinking was no longer a topic of interest among most Americans. It was not until September 19, 1941, almost four months after the

¹⁵² Laland M. Goodrich, ed., Documents on American Foreign Policy, vol. IV (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1942), p. 85.

sinking, that the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, sent the second American note to the German Embassy in Washington concerning this issue. The Secretary said that the American government had ascertained the extent of the losses and damages in the sinking of the Robin Moor. The United States was prepared to accept \$2,967,092 in satisfaction and full settlement of all claims, but this did not include any punitive damages, which America was willing to forego.¹⁵³

The German Charge d'Affaires replied to this note in the same way that he had answered the first memorandum concerning this matter. He stated:

. . . I have the honor to reply to you herewith that the two communications made are not such as to require an appropriate reply by my Government. In this regard I refer to my note of June 25 (June 24) of this year.¹⁵⁴

The crisis over the Robin Moor soon became secondary, but it continued to play a part in American foreign affairs. Neither Germany nor America wanted war at this time. Germany had invaded Russia on June 22, and this had taken the complete attention of her military leaders

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

in the weeks following the invasion. One columnist, Anne O'Hare McCormick, had thought the President's message of June 20 was inspired by something more than the sinking of the Robin Moor. She believed, "It was timed and toned to convince Russia that the United States means to stand against Germany to the end."¹⁵⁵ There had been reports during the winter and spring of 1940-1941 that Hitler was planning to turn against his partner, Stalin, and evidently the President was hoping this was true.¹⁵⁶

The Germans did not want to become involved with the United States during this time, also. When Naval Affairs Committee sessions were held on July 12, Mr. Knox, the Secretary of the Navy, said that no American ship had been sunk since the Robin Moor, though several had been stopped and searched on the way to African ports.¹⁵⁷ As has been shown, there were no official plans by Hitler or his Foreign Minister to continue such sinkings, and evidently they had overruled the wishes of the Naval War Staff to allow such incidents to occur, again. However, it would seem that they must

¹⁵⁵ Anne O'Hare McCormick, The New York Times, June 21, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ William L. Shirer, op. cit., p. 1104-1106.

¹⁵⁷ The New York Times, July 12, 1941, p. 5.

have compromised somewhat with Admiral Raeder's staff to allow them to stop and search American ships on the way to African ports.

One criticism of Roosevelt's message to Congress had been the fact that though he said America would not yield to German aggression he did not come forth with any positive policy. This shortcoming was answered on July 13 by Administration spokesmen, who said that any new German sea effort to disrupt the operation of the American merchant marine would be regarded and treated as an act of piracy.¹⁵⁸ Responsible officials would not predict open shooting by the Navy on German warships and submarines without provocation. Yet, they did say that the United States would deal with pirates in 1941 as it had those on the Barbary Coast in the 1800's.¹⁵⁹

The Roosevelt Administration had again moved cautiously to show Germany that the United States would not be intimidated. The significant point here is the caution with which the President had moved. It was over a month after the government learned of the sinking, that

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., July 13, 1941, p. 16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., July 13, 1941, p. 16.

the President finally allowed it to be known that any more sinkings would be treated as if the attackers were pirates. Here again, it can be seen that the Chief Executive was desirous that relations with Germany would not deteriorate to such a point that shooting might begin. Though the American Chief of State was firm in standing up for America's freedom of the seas, he did not try to force Germany into an untenable position at this time.

In July, 1941, the United States moved closer to involvement in war with Germany by placing American troops in Iceland. Also, American destroyers were then used to convoy lend-lease ships to Iceland, where Britain took over the convoying.¹⁶⁰

Each action by the national government is important for the reaction of the German government. Admiral Raeder immediately rushed to Hitler when he learned of the United States occupation of Iceland. This aggressive action, along with the American convoying of lend-lease ships to Iceland, he considered as an act of war. He demanded the right to sink American freighters in the convoy area and to attack American military vessels if

¹⁶⁰ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 730.

necessary.¹⁶¹ Hitler, however, would not do this, and issued an order on July 19 stating that "in the extended zone of operations United States merchant ships, whether single or sailing in English or American convoys, and if recognized as such before resort to arms, are not to be attacked".¹⁶² Within the German war zones, which the United States also recognized, the Fuehrer allowed American vessels to be attacked. However, Hitler declared that this zone "did not include the United States of America-Iceland sea route".¹⁶³

Finally, on September 4, the Robin Moor ceased to be the only American ship attacked by the Germans. The Greer, a United States destroyer, had been attacked by a German submarine. Then, on September 11, the President ordered the navy to shoot-on-sight if Axis raiders entered the American defense zones. The patrol was also ordered to protect British ships.¹⁶⁴

On September 17, in light of this new action by the American President, Admiral Raeder urged the

¹⁶¹ William J. Shirer, op. cit., p. 1153.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 1153.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 1153.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 730.

COLLON CONLEN

HW 2 YPTA BOND

Fuehrer to release the German navy from the restrictions against attacking American ships.¹⁶⁵ Once again, Hitler refused, because he wanted to make certain of the victory over Russia, before bringing America into the conflict.

Raeder's record of the conversation declares:

(Since) it appears that the end of September will bring the great decision in the Russian campaign, the Fuehrer requests that care be taken to avoid any incidents in the war on merchant ships before about the middle of October.¹⁶⁶

Here again, there is the conflict between Hitler and his Naval War Staff over the treatment of American vessels.

Though the Naval War Staff obeyed Hitler's directive as far as possible, there was certain to be conflict with American military vessels and merchant ships. Incidents were bound to occur, especially with the United States military forces aiding the British. Other attacks by the German forces in September and October overshadowed the Robin Moor. These other attacks included not only monetary damages, but the loss of American lives. The Greer incident was followed in the same week by the sinking of two American merchant ships.¹⁶⁷ The attack on the

¹⁶⁵ William L. Shirer, op. cit., p. 1154.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 1154.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 730.

American destroyer, Kearny, with a loss of eleven lives on October 17, was followed by the sinking of the United States tanker Salinas and then the Reuben James on October 30 with a loss of over one hundred lives.¹⁶⁸

However, it was not until November 13 that Hitler issued a new directive allowing German submarines to defend themselves against attack by American warships.¹⁶⁹ It is significant in this directive that Hitler still did not say anything about allowing the German navy to sink American merchant ships outside of Germany's proclaimed war zones. Even though a few American merchant ships were sunk before the attack upon Pearl Harbor, Hitler remained determined that Germany should not get into conflict with the United States, until Russia had been defeated.

So, in the several months following the Robin Moor incident, it continued to play its part in American relations with Germany. Though it was soon overshadowed by other crises between the German military and the American military forces, it was an important point in the continued deterioration of relations between the two nations in the summer of 1941.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 730,731.

¹⁶⁹ William L. Shirer, op. cit., p. 1155.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROBIN MOOR

In this concluding chapter the importance of the Robin Moor incident will be summarized. Though there were additional sinkings of American ships by the German navy, the Robin Moor sinking is of special significance, because it was the first one. Before this incident, Germany had made great efforts to keep from provoking the United States into the war on the side of England. Memories of World War I had made Hitler see the importance of ending the war before America became involved. After this incident relations deteriorated between the United States and Germany. The relationship of the Robin Moor with the freezing of German and Italian assets and then the closing of their consulates has been shown. These actions by the United States brought swift retaliatory measures from the German and Italian governments, which also froze American assets and closed United States consulates in their countries.

An attempt has been made to answer the question of why Germany carried out this attack against an unarmed neutral ship. Though the German Naval War Staff wanted to be able to use its naval forces against American shipping, as well as American military vessels, this was not the policy of

Hitler and von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister. These two leaders were quick to prevent any change in German foreign policy toward United States shipping during the summer of 1941. Thus, though this was not a change in German policy, it is important that the Roosevelt administration, several influential newspapers, and columnists, various Congressmen, and some other articulate Americans did think this was the portent of a new German foreign policy, or, at the least, an effort to intimidate the United States away from its pro-British policies.

The President's message to Congress on June 20 declaring the Robin Moor sinking as one of piracy was a forceful one. If there were additional sinkings of American ships, the United States would be forced to react strongly.

Though the President did not declare how the United States would react, his message was so stern that he would have been forced to do something effective in order to vindicate his strong statements. The Chief Executive had placed himself in a situation that would be difficult to back down from. He had committed the nation to some form of retaliation, if Germany continued to sink American ships.

However, Roosevelt did not want war with Germany at this time either, and the crisis was allowed to ease away.

It certainly would not have taken the federal government three months from the time of the President's June 20 message to ascertain the damages and costs of the Robin Moor and its cargo. Yet, as I have previously stated, it was not until September 19 that a note assessing the claims against the German government was sent to the German Charge d'Affaires in Washington. The President's message of June 20 was sent to the German Embassy in Washington to be transmitted to the government in Berlin, but actually no formal protest was made to the German government itself. Thus, neither side wanted war at this moment for its own reasons. It would not have been in the best interests of either country to get into conflict at this time. Germany was committed to the Russian invasion and the United States was still not militarily or psychologically prepared for entry into the war.

Certainly, war would not have broken out immediately if Germany had continued to sink American vessels. The President did not declare war on Germany in the fall of the year, when its naval forces recommenced the sinking of American ships. For early in September, two more American-owned merchantmen were sunk. Yet, events could have escalated sooner than they did, if Germany had instituted a foreign policy shift in May or June instead

of in September and October. Here again, though, Hitler had given his submarine commanders strict orders to avoid conflict, except where American forces made retaliation necessary. Also, Hitler did not issue this order until November 13, after these events had already occurred. Too, the order did not concern itself specifically with American shipping, but with United States military forces which were aiding the British. Even up to the outbreak of war on December 7, 1941, Germany did not begin sinking American merchant ships on a large basis.

Yet, as was pointed out earlier, actions in the fall of the year by the United States and German military forces moved the two nations closer to war. The German attacks on American military vessels and merchant ships brought reactions from the President with his shoot-on-sight orders in the American safety zone on September 11. Two months later, in November, the last vestiges of the Neutrality Act were repealed. American shipping was allowed to sail into the combat zones, which had previously been forbidden to merchant ships by the American Chief Executive. United States vessels were now armed and convoyed, and were allowed to carry lend-lease goods to Great Britain.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 731.

Thus, if this further deterioration in relations between the two nations had occurred during the summer instead of in the fall of the year, then the Naval War Staff may have been able to influence Hitler to allow American shipping to be destroyed. Therefore, the chances for war breaking out between the United States and Germany before Pearl Harbor would have been increased.

The Robin Moor incident pointed up the determination of the Roosevelt Administration and other interested Americans to protect the freedom of the seas. Also, it demonstrated their resolve to continue all-out aid to Britain short of a declaration of war. This brings up one question that the Roosevelt Administration never effectively answered. What rights does a neutral have during war? An attempt to answer the important question of how international law would justify or condemn the incident will be made. Also, the broader significance of the Robin Moor in the context of a wider morality, as well as the legal issue, will be examined.

First of all, it should be understood what a neutral state is. One author defines a neutral country as one which "gives no assistance--direct or indirect--to either belligerent side."¹⁷¹ It is completely impartial

¹⁷¹ J.C. Stankovic, An Introduction to International Law (London: Butterworth and Company, Ltd., 1963), p. 440.

to the conduct of the war. Traditionally, neutrals could trade with belligerents as long as the products were not contraband. Belligerents had always had the right to search neutral ships to determine if they were carrying contraband to an enemy.

This brings up the question as to what constitutes contraband. One author defines the term in this manner: "Contraband is the designation for such goods as the belligerents consider objectionable because they may assist the enemy in the conduct of the war."¹⁷² In pre-twentieth century times, goods being shipped to a belligerent "were classified as absolute contraband (e.g., explosives); conditional contraband (depending on their use for warlike or peaceful purposes); and noncontraband (e.g., soap)."¹⁷³ Before World War I contraband had been considered generally as arms and ammunition or other weapons of war. However, in World War I, the British had widened the list to include such goods as food. Thus, the meaning of contraband was re-defined to include almost anything that would help a nation in the war effort, either directly or indirectly.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 448.

¹⁷³Bailey, op. cit., p. 902.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 568.

Even at the beginning of World War II, the categories of goods being shipped to a belligerent by a neutral were in effect non-existent. As soon as the war began in 1939, a noted American diplomatic historian stated that

. . . By her contraband control Great Britain stopped all goods destined for Germany; by her retaliation she stopped all goods being exported across the seas from Germany . . . The category of contraband simply evaporated, for all practical purposes, by being expanded to include anything useful to the enemy.¹⁷⁵

Significantly, both Britain and Germany used almost the same contraband lists in World War II that the United States had employed as a belligerent in World War I. The United States had agreed to the narrow interpretation of contraband when it had become a belligerent in the First World War.¹⁷⁶

In World War II, the British included such things as tools, implements, maps, pictures, currency, metals, food, forage, clothing, and all means of communications and transportation as contraband.¹⁷⁷ Foodstuffs, live animals, feed, clothing, and raw materials used for their manufacture were also part of the German contraband lists.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵Samuel P. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York: Holt, 1955), p. 645.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 645.

¹⁷⁷The New York Herald Tribune, June 14, 1941, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

Germany had also stated that anything on the British lists was on the German lists, too.

The Robin Moor's cargo included many of these items such as steel rails and 459 automobiles and trucks, which made up a majority of the ship's cargo. Though none of these items were on the President's lists of goods prohibited to be carried to the ports of belligerents, they were part of the German and British lists, and also on the American lists of World War I.¹⁷⁹

Following the practice of World War I, combat zones (extensive areas of the sea leading to an enemy's ports) had been declared by both Germany and Great Britain after the outbreak of war in 1939. Neutral ships, in effect, were prohibited from these sea zones, and if found there, they were in jeopardy of being sunk. As explained in the second chapter, Roosevelt had declared war zones around England, Germany, and the German-controlled European countries, which prohibited American vessels and citizens from sailing in these areas. Germany had given notice that any ship carrying contraband to Britain or the Empire would be sunk, though a formal combat zone had not been established around South Africa.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Bertram D. Hulen, The New York Times, June 13, 1941, p. 6.

The nations of the British Commonwealth had also declared war on Germany in 1939.¹⁸¹ Since South Africa was one of the countries of the British Empire, neutral shipping was also subject to search and seizure by German military forces, even though Germany had not exercised this privilege. So, when the German submarine commander had checked the ship's manifest, and had found what he considered to be contraband in route to an enemy port, he was justified in seizing the vessel.

Yet, it had also been traditional for a military vessel to take a neutral ship into a port to be tried before a prize court, if that ship was carrying contraband to an enemy. This the sub did not do, and perhaps it was impossible for a submarine to do, as World War I had demonstrated. Concerning the sinking of the Robin Moor and the subsequent abandonment of the crew and passengers hundreds of miles from land, it must be remembered that the supreme law of war is that a warship must protect itself above all else.¹⁸² Therefore, the submarine commander could not have easily taken the passengers and crew aboard, nor could it have taken the

¹⁸¹Goldwin Smith, A History of England (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 766.

¹⁸²Arthur Krock, The New York Times, June 15, 1941, Part II, p. 3.

merchant ship to a port where the case could have been adjudicated by a Prize Court. Old methods of warfare had become impractical in modern wars, and this was especially true with the use of the fragile submarine easily sunk by a surface ship.

Even some Americans, as I have shown, accepted the disputed fact that the ship carried contraband. In the Congressional debates in November over the repeal of the Neutrality Act, comments were made concerning the ship's manifest. Senator Wheeler said

. . . The Robin Moor, for example, was carrying motortrucks and other contraband under our World War [] lists to the Union of South Africa, against whom the Neutrality Act was applied long ago, although South African waters have never been declared by the President to be within a combat zone.¹⁸³

Senator Nye, an extreme non-interventionist, declared in the debates that the Robin Moor was carrying contraband of war to a belligerent's ports, thus violating the rights of neutrals.¹⁸⁴

Thus, as far as legality was concerned, Germany did have a right to seize the Robin Moor's cargo, but the most

¹⁸³ Senator Wheeler, comments in debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. November 5, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, Part 8, p. 8521.

¹⁸⁴ Senator Nye, comments in debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, Part 8, pp. 8310, 8311.

valid German argument, as the two Senators above would agree, was that America had ceased to be a neutral. Since the war had begun, the United States had been on the side of Britain. A very flagrant example of unneutral activity was the Destroyer-Base Deal between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in September, 1940. A few months later, the passage of the Lend-Lease Bill in March, 1941 was an economic declaration of war against Germany.¹⁸⁵ The United States sheltered and repaired British warships in its ports. English pilots were being trained in America, and United States ships had been turned over to British registry. Finally, the use of American military planes and vessels to point out German military movements in the North Atlantic to the British was also unneutral.¹⁸⁶

The American viewpoint was that the ship did follow international law, in that it allowed the German commander to have the ship searched. As far as legality is concerned, Germany had a strong case because the ship was carrying contraband. What the commander did with the people on the ship was the only illegal act that America could accuse them of without any question on the matter. Placing the crew and passengers in lifeboats seven hundred miles from

¹⁸⁵ Bailey, op. cit., p. 731.

¹⁸⁶ Arthur Krock, The New York Times, June 15, 1941, Part IV, p. 3.

land, and not allowing them to radio their position or to send an S.O.S. were the moral points that the United States could sternly criticize.

Under international law, under the London Naval Treaty, which Germany and the United States had signed, and the German Prize Law Code of September 3, 1939, it is the rule that:

. . . the destruction of vessels. . . is admissible only if the passengers, crew, and papers of the vessel have been brought to a place of safety before destruction. Ship's boats are not to be regarded as a place of safety unless the safety of passengers and crew under the existing conditions of the sea and weather is assured by the proximity of land or the presence of another vessel which is able to take them on board.¹⁸⁷

Germany violated this legal and moral agreement, and never disavowed the act. This inhumane action by the Germans continued to bother some Americans. The fact of the sinking was not as important to some, as was the fact that the crew and passengers were placed in such dire circumstances. Though Senator Bailey of North Carolina overemphasized the American effort to remain neutral, he did bring forth an important moral point that could not be denied, as he declared,

¹⁸⁷Walter Lippmann, "The American Case." November 4, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXVII, Part 14, p. A4987.

. . . But did our Neutrality Act and our combat zones prevent the Germans in the role, in the attitude, in the capacity, and in the character of assassins, from shooting down the Robin Moor in the open seas of the world, and turning the helpless men and women and babies¹⁸⁸ out in open boats a thousand miles from land?

When the American side is considered, the entire war must be viewed as well as the moral and legal issues. Was it in America's best interest to remain an impartial neutral in this struggle to the death between democracy and totalitarianism? Without a certain amount of freedom of the seas, the United States would not be able to continue trading with other nations of the world. Consequently, if Great Britain were to fall, there would be no Royal navy to keep back the German military forces from destroying the American merchant marine. When the President sent a birthday message to the King on June 12, the American determination to aid Britain was carefully included as he said

. . . I do not need to emphasize to your Majesty my sympathy--the sympathy of the whole united American nation in the great cause of freedom and justice which the peoples of the British Empire are now so valiantly defending. The United States has pledged full material assistance to Great Britain and her Allies in this struggle and I assure your Majesty of the determination of the government and the people

¹⁸⁸ Senator Bailey, comments in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, Part 8, p. 6339.

of the United States to carry out that pledge.¹⁸⁹

This message was sent after information had been received that the attacker of the *Robin Moor* was German. Subsequently, it demonstrated the importance to Roosevelt that Great Britain should not be defeated by Germany.

Germany could have argued, as she did, that the United States had violated the rights of neutrals in acts such as the Lend-Lease Bill, so that Germany could not in its own best interests uphold international law. However, America passed acts favoring Great Britain only because Hitler was "imperiling the vital interests of the United States."¹⁹⁰ Hitler had infringed upon the neutral rights of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium. He would not have been able to defeat France or threaten English sea power without usurping these four countries' rights. With a madman like Hitler, if America were to remain impartial, then it would have to take the risk of losing important allies.

Yet, in this question discussed over morality and legality, one point remains clear. The United States was not acting as a neutral in 1939-1941, and therefore as

¹⁸⁹The New York Times, June 14, 1941, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰Lippmann, op. cit., p. A4987.

one columnist put it, "But when we abandoned neutrality we took risks of this kind, and treaties and international law go out the window with neutrality."¹⁹¹ The President talked about the rights of neutrals and the freedom of the seas, but the United States was no longer a neutral, but a noncombatant ally of the British.

One American citizen wrote a letter to the editors of The New York Times concerning an editorial that had been written condemning the Germans for this unwarranted act. The citizen, John M. Parker, an ex-major in the army, then chided the editors for their righteous editorial as he stated,

. . . Of course, the sinking of the Robin Moor was a flagrant casus belli of the worst variety, but how about our smuggling munitions of war to Great Britain month after month? Isn't that also casus belli? We are giving all the aid we possibly can to a nation who is at war with Germany, with whom we are supposed to be at peace. How long are we going to continue to kid ourselves this way, each country saying: 'You're another?' Isn't it about time we sent our Navy to the North Atlantic (where it should have been ten months ago) and cleaned house for the Huns and stopped bickering about international law, which no longer exists? Then, when we get the North Atlantic cleaned up, we should drive these pirates from the seven seas, not only for the sake of humanity in general but for our own protection.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹Arthur Krock, The New York Times, June 22, 1941, Part IV, p. 3.

¹⁹²John M. Parker, The New York Herald Tribune, June 18, 1941, p. 22.

This is the realistic view of the incident, I believe, and many Americans agreed with him. That is one of the reasons there was not a greater uproar over the Robin Moor sinking. Thus, in conclusion, even though neither nation desired war at this time, this event did move the United States closer to military conflict with Germany.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Bailey, Thomas A. A Diplomatic History of the American People. Seventh edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1964.
- Bemis, Samuel F. A Diplomatic History of the United States. Fourth edition. New York: Holt Publishing Company, 1955.
- Drummond, D. F. The Passing of American Neutrality, 1937-41. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955.
- Rauch, Basil. Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor. New York: Creative Age Press, 1950.
- Sherwood, Robert E. Roosevelt and Hopkins. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
- Shirer, William L. The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960.
- Smith, Goldwin. A History of England. Second Edition. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.
- Starke, J. G. An Introduction to International Law. Fifth edition. London: Butterworth and Company, Ltd., 1963.
- Tansill, Charles C. Back Door to War. Chicago: H. Regnery Company, 1952.

B. DOCUMENTS

- Goodrich, Leland M. (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Policy. Vol. IV. Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1942.

Jones, Shephard S. and Myers, Denys P. (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Policy, Vol. III. Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941.

Smyth, Howard M. (ed.) Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45. Vol. XII. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1962.

C. DOCUMENTS OF LEGISLATIVE DEBATES

AND COMMENTS

Bailey, Senator Josiah W. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, p. 8339.

Brooks, Senator C. Wayland. "Letter from A Robin Moor Crewman" to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 31, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, p. 8378.

Connally, Senator Tom. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, p. 8311.

Danaher, Senator John A. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. November 6, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, p. 8569.

Hill, Senator Lister. "The American Case" by Walter Lippmann. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. November 4, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 4, p. A4987.

Nye, Senator Gerald P. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, pp. 8310, 8311.

Rankin, Representative John E. Comments to House of Representatives on "Robin Moor Sinking." June 16, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 9, p. 1196.

Taft, Senator Robert A. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. October 29, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, pp. 8521, 8522.

Wheeler, Senator Burton K. Comments to Senate in Debate on Modification of Neutrality Act. November 5, 1941. Congressional Record, LXXXVII, part 8, pp. 8521, 8522.

D. PUBLIC SPEECHES AND PAPERS

Rosenman, Samuel I. (ed.) The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1941. Vol. X. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.

E. ARTICLES

Newsweek, XVII (June 23, 1941), pp. 13-16.

"On the High Seas," Time, XXXVII (June 23, 1941), p. 17.

F. NEWSPAPERS

The Atlanta Constitution, June, 1941, to November, 1941.

The Chicago Daily Tribune, June, 1941, to November, 1941.

The Christian Science Monitor, June, 1941, to November, 1941.

The London Times, June, 1941.

The New York Herald Tribune, June, 1941, to November, 1941.

The New York Times, June, 1941, to November, 1941.

The Times-News-Picayune (New Orleans), June, 1941, to November, 1941.

G. PERSONAL LETTERS, DIARIES,
AND MEMOIRS

- Hull, Cordell. The Memoirs of Cordell Hull. Vol. II.
New York: Macmillan Company, 1948.
- Ickes, Harold L. The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes,
The Lowering Clouds, 1939-41. Vol. III. New
York: Simon and Schuster, 1954.
- Raeder, Erich. My Life. Trans. Henry W. Drewel.
United States Naval Institute, 1960.
- Ribbentrop, Joachim von. Ribbentrop Memoirs. Trans.
Oliver Watson. Weidenfeld, 1954.
- Roosevelt, Elliot (ed.) F.D.R., His Personal Letters,
1928-45. Vol. IV. New York: Duell, Sloan, and
Pierce, 1950.

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the sinking of an American merchant ship, the Robin Moor, by a German submarine on May 21, 1941. I have tried to show the importance of this incident upon American history. This was a critical point in the nation's history, as the country moved closer to military involvement in World War II. Since the Robin Moor was the first American ship to be sunk by the Germans in World War II, it is of special significance.

First, I have provided background material explaining the progress of the war to the spring of 1941, and how the United States had become involved. This has been done through the use of a national radio address by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on May 27, 1941, declaring an unlimited national emergency.

I have shown how the United States and the German government reacted to this incident. Not only the Roosevelt administration, but also Congress, some influential newspapers and columnists, and other civilian organizations were aroused by the sinking. I have tried to show that, though this action was not the beginning of a new German foreign policy, the Roosevelt administration interpreted it as the initial move in further

encroachment upon America's freedom of the seas.

After this incident, relations deteriorated further between the United States and Germany. I have shown that the freezing of German and Italian assets in the United States and the closing of their consulates were also closely related to the Robin Moor incident. I have made an effort to connect the events from June through November, 1941, and how they were related to the Robin Moor. Also, I have sought to tie in the sinking of this vessel with the determination of the United States to continue all-out aid to Britain short of war.

In the concluding chapter I have summarized the importance of the Robin Moor, not only in the relations of the United States with both Germany and Britain, but also in the broader questions of the legal and moral rights of a neutral nation in time of war.

000
000