

Transcript: King George VI's handwritten notes for a memorandum on his conversations with President Roosevelt on June 10 and 11, 1939

I had two good conversations with the President, besides many opportunities of informal talks on current matters in the car driving with him. He was very frank and friendly, & seemed genuinely glad that I had been able to pay him this visit. He gave me all the information in these notes either in answer to my questions, or he volunteered it.

Mr. Mackenzie King was present at the first conversation at Hyde Park. We talked of the firm & trusted friendship between Canada & the USA. FDR mentioned that he thought it was a waste of money to build a Canadian fleet as he had already laid his plans for the defense of the Pacific Coast of Canada, especially Vancouver Island (Assembling plants for aeroplanes in Canada). On mentioning the Neutrality Act the President gave us hopes that something could be done to make it less difficult for the USA to help us. Cordell lead public opinion on to the right tack. He gave us the following story to illustrate how he was tackling the subject in the Middle West & putting it in a way which they as farmers would understand.

"In the event of a war & say Germany & Italy were to win it, which means that the British Fleet & the French Army had been defeated, which at the moment are our first line of defense, how would you like to lose one of your best customers the United Kingdom? Then again Hitler could say to our great neighbors to the south of Argentine & Brazil 'You cannot sell your beef or your coffee in Europe except through me & Germany. I am the Master of Europe & in return I will send you the article I think you will require in return at my price.'"

I was alone with him for the 2nd conversation. We discussed Europe in a general way. He hoped France & Italy would try & get together.

He was doing his best to get New York to loan money to Roumania. I told him how difficult it was for us to help the Balkans as there was the Mediterranean to convoy things through, & they would want all they had got in a war. I explained to him Roumania's position as to frontiers having 4 to cope with. Because of the air we were only just becoming frontier-conscious ourselves. In the whole of N. America he has none. He was definitely anti Russian. I told him so were we but if we could not have an understanding with her, Germany probably would make one.

He showed me his naval patrols in greater detail about which he is terribly keen. If he saw a U-boat he would sink her at once & wait for the consequences.

If London was bombed USA would come in. Offensive air warfare was better than defensive & he hoped we should do the same on Berlin.

FDR's ideas in case of War

Trinidad Patrol. Base for his fleet at Trinidad to fuel & replenish stores. From this base he can patrol the Atlantic with ships & aeroplanes on a radius of approximately 1000 miles on a sector of latitude of Haiti to latitude of Brazil. This patrol should locate any enemy fleet, which tried to get to S. Am. or the West Indies.

Bermuda Patrol. Base as above. To patrol N. Atlantic from Cape Cod to Florida, with ships & aeroplanes to prevent submarines from attacking convoys.

Brazil. Germans have an air base at Natal Cape St. Roques also a landing ground on the island of Fernando Noronha 200 miles from the coast. Brazil is pretty sure to kick out the Germans. He would then use it himself.

Haiti, Cuba, & West Indies are potential friendly bases.

The idea is that USA should relieve us to these responsibilities, but can it be done without a declaration of war.

Debts. Better not reopen the question. Congress wants repayment in full, which is impossible, & a small bit is of no use, as they will want more later.

Credits. USA will want Nickel from Canada. They will buy our surplus rubber. In return they can send steel sheets which can be cut for aeroplanes wings. Rough castings with bored cylinders to be machined at home. Can be used for aeroplanes or motor boats.

FDR wishes to do .

Trinidad Patrol. Base for his fleet to fuel etc. From there he can patrol with planes 900 to 1000 miles every day on different sector to prevent an enemy fleet from attacking the West Indies.

Bermuda Patrol. Same as above. Aeroplane Patrol up & down coast to spot submarines. Cape Cod to Gulf of Mexico.

If Germany & Italy win a war, they can say to the Argentine, "How can you sell you beef or wheat? The USA does not want it. We will sell it to Europe for you & we will give you what we think you want in return on commission."

Brazil. How can you sell your coffee or wheat? Answer ditto.