

British Papers Indicate FDR

By Colin Cross
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LONDON, Jan. 1—President Franklin D. Roosevelt was so eager to get America into World War II in 1941 that he went out of his way to provoke "incidents" which could be represented as German aggression against America, according to British documents now declassified.

The documents show at least that this was what Roosevelt was telling British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in

the summer and autumn of that year.

This is revealed in secret British wartime cabinet documents for 1941-45—35 volumes of them—which will be open to historians for the first time Monday at the public record office in London.

Churchill, it emerges, dreaded that the Russians—in- vaded by Hitler in June, 1941—would either collapse or accept a compromise peace within months. If that hap- pened before the United

States entered the war, he felt Britain's situation would be desperate.

During a meeting at sea off Newfoundland that produced the Atlantic Charter in August, 1941, the two leaders discussed this. Churchill reported back to the British cabinet, and the record of what he said was marked "most secret" and withheld from even the nar- row group entitled to read cabinet minutes.

Roosevelt was "obviously de- termined" to come into the

Sought War With Hitler

war, Churchill said. "If he were to put the issue of peace or war to Congress, they would debate it for three months. The President had said that he would wage war but not declare it, and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could at- tack the American forces."

Under new arrangements, the Americans were to convoy supplies for Britain as far as Iceland, thus releasing 52 Brit- ish warships for other duties.

The American escorts were or- dered to be aggressive and to range up to 300 miles from the convoys in search of German submarines.

"Everything was to be done to force an 'incident' to jus- tify hostilities," the papers said.

A week later Lord Halifax, British ambassador in Wash- ington, was reinforcing this with a report to the British cabinet that virtually the whole Roosevelt administra- tion was anxious to come into

the war, "and would be re- lieved if some incident, such as the torpedoing of an Ameri- can ship, precipitated this event."

In the following months such incidents did occur. Ger- man submarines were depth- charged by American ships and an American destroyer en- gaged in this act was torpe- doed and sunk. But the Japa- nese attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, removed any need to convince American public opinion.