

Letter, FDR to Winston Churchill, March 18, 1942. FDR and Winston Churchill maintained an extensive correspondence during the war. In this letter, FDR acknowledges the Allies' difficult military situation, criticizes press coverage of the war, and makes several strategic and diplomatic proposals. He closes with personal advice to his friend to find time for rejuvenation amid the stresses of wartime.

Box
March 18, 1942.

Dear Winston:-

I am sure you know that I have been thinking a lot about your troubles during the past month. We might as well admit the difficult military side of the problems; and you have the additional burdens which your delightful unwritten Constitution puts your form of government into in war times just as much as in peace time. Seriously, the American written Constitution, with its four year term, saves the unfortunate person at the top a vast number of headaches.

Next in order is that delightful god, which we worship in common, called "The Freedom of the Press". Neither one of us is much plagued by the news stories which, on the whole, are not so bad. But literally we are both menaced by the so-called interpretative comment by a handful or two of gentlemen who cannot get politics out of their heads in the worst crisis, who have little background and less knowledge, and who undertake to lead public opinion on that basis.

My own press -- the worst of it -- the McCormack-Patterson people, the Hearst papers and the Scripps-Howard chain -- are persistently magnifying relatively unimportant domestic matters and subtly suggesting that the American role is to defend Hawaii, our east and west coasts, do the turtle act, and wait until somebody attacks our home shores. Curiously enough these survivors of isolationism are not attacking me personally except to reiterate that I am dreadfully over-burdened, or that I am my own strategist, operating without benefit of military or naval advice. It is the same old story. You are familiar with it.

Here is a thought from this amateur strategist. There is no use giving a single further thought to Singapore or the Dutch Indies. They are gone. Australia must be held and, as I telegraphed you, we are willing to undertake that. India must be held and you must do that; but, frankly, I do not worry so much about that problem as many others do. The Japanese may land on the seacoast west of Burma. They may bombard Calcutta. But I do not visualize that they can

get enough troops to make more than a few dents on the borders -- and I think you can hold Ceylon. I hope you can get more submarines out there -- more valuable than an inferior surface fleet.

I hope you will definitely reinforce the Near East more greatly than at present. You must hold Egypt, the Canal, Syria, Iran and the route to the Caucasus.

Finally, I expect to send you in a few days a more definite plan for a joint attack in Europe itself.

By the time you get this you will have been advised of my talk with Litvinov, and I expect a reply from Stalin shortly. I know you will not mind my being brutally frank when I tell you that I think I can personally handle Stalin better than either your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so.

My Navy has been definitely slack in preparing for this submarine war off our coast. As I need not tell you, most Naval officers have declined in the past to think in terms of any vessel of less than two thousand tons. You learned the lesson two years ago. We still have to learn it. By May first I expect to get a pretty good coastal patrol working from Newfoundland to Florida and through the West Indies. I have begged, borrowed and stolen every vessel of every description over eighty feet long -- and I have made this a separate command with the responsibility in Admiral Andrews.

I know you will keep up your optimism and your grand driving force, but I know you will not mind if I tell you that you ought to take a leaf out of my notebook. Once a month I go to Hyde Park for four days, crawl into a hole and pull the hole in after me. I am called on the telephone only if something of really great importance occurs. I wish you would try it, and I wish you would lay a few bricks or paint another picture.

Give my warm regards to Mrs. Churchill. I wish much that my wife and I could see her.

As ever yours,

The Honorable
Winston S. Churchill,
Prime Minister of England,
London,
England.

P.S. Winant is here. I think
he is really a most
understanding person.