

On January 30, 1939, the sixth anniversary of his coming to power, Adolf Hitler stood before the German Reichstag and declared himself a prophet. The near future, he said, would see the plunging of the nations once again into world war, and the annihilation of the Jews in Europe. He then set about making his prophecy come true.

In March 1939, less than six months after British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich announcing “peace in our time” and advising his people to “Go home and get a nice quiet sleep,” the Nazis took Czechoslovakia. In August the Germans concluded a non-aggression

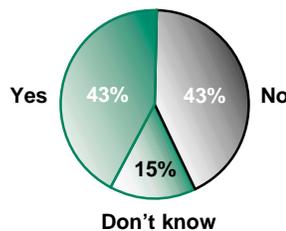
pact with the Soviets, and on September 1 they invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany.

In the United States, the public clung as long as they could to the rapidly diminishing hope that the worst would not happen, or at least, if it did, that it would somehow keep from touching them. Meanwhile, as Europe fell under the shadow of tyranny, they grappled with questions of their own about the meaning of the freedoms they themselves would soon be called upon to defend.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

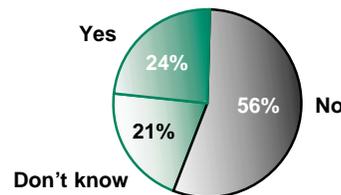
## Uneasy Sleep

**Question:** Do you think that in the next 50 years Germany is likely to be a serious threat to the peace of the United States?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 5-10, 1939.

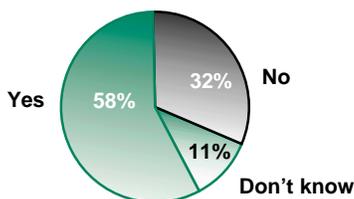
**Question:** Do you think that in the next 50 years Japan is likely to be a serious threat to the peace of the United States?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 5-10, 1939.

## Troubling Memories

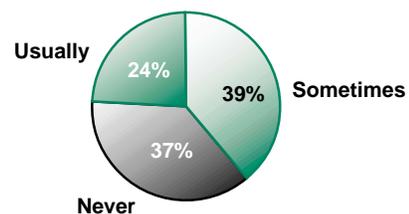
**Question:** Do you think the United States made a mistake in entering the last World War?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 20-25, 1939.

## A Reassuring Voice

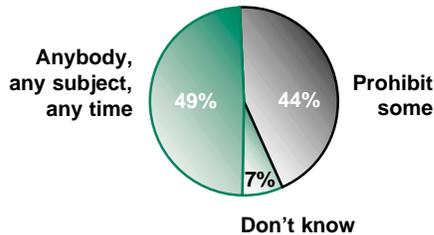
**Question:** Do you listen to President (Franklin) Roosevelt's fireside chats over the radio?



**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, January 1939.

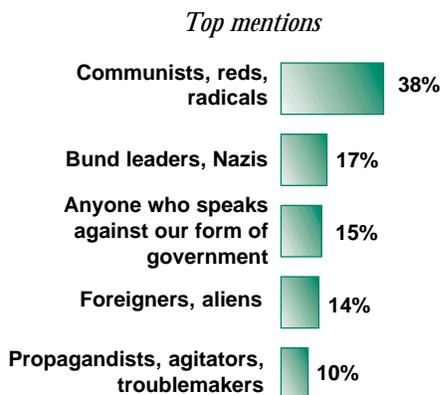
# Where Freedom Meets Fear

**Question:** Do you think that in America anybody should be allowed to speak on any subject anytime he wants to, or do you think there are times free speech should be prohibited or certain subjects or speakers prohibited?



**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, December 1939.

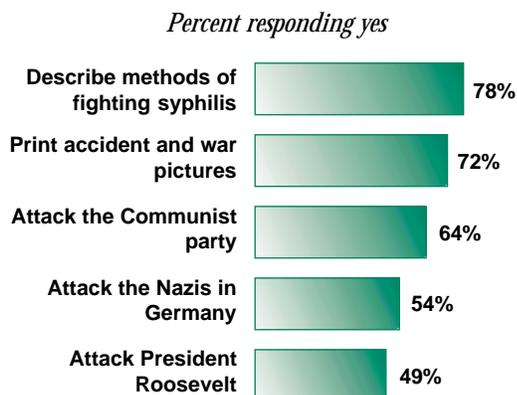
**Question:** What speakers [should not be allowed free speech]?



**Note:** Responses of those who said in America some free speech should be prohibited. Multiple responses were allowed.

**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, December 1939.

**Question:** Do you believe that newspapers and magazines should be allowed to...?



**Note:** Other responses were "Print divorce hearings," 37%; "Print a fine painting of a nude," 36%; and "Print a speech attacking a public official without printing his reply," 12%.

**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, August 1939.

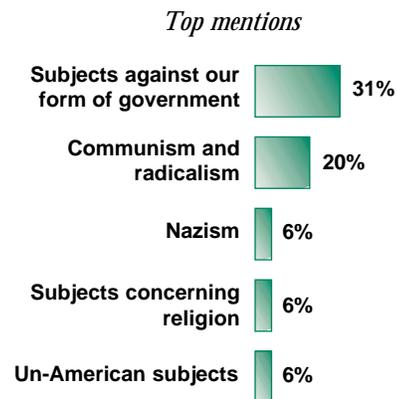
**Question:** What times [should free speech be prohibited]?



**Note:** Responses of those who said in America some free speech should be prohibited. Multiple responses were allowed.

**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, December 1939.

**Question:** What subjects [should people not be allowed to speak on]?

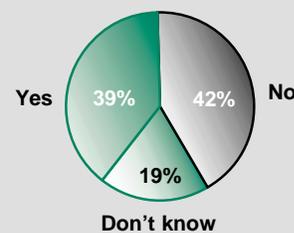


**Note:** Responses of those who said in America some free speech should be prohibited. Multiple responses were allowed.

**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for *Fortune*, December 1939.

## Fit to be Free?

**Question:** Do you think that the majority of the people in this country are usually correct in their ideas on important questions?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 19-25, 1939.