

International Law Studies—Volume 42

International Law Documents

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XXXI. Refuge in Neutral Countries for Axis Leaders

(Dept. of State Bulletin, July 17, 1943, Vol. IX, No. 212)

Statement by the President

On August 21, 1942 I issued a statement to the press in which after referring to the crimes against innocent people committed by the Axis powers I stated:

“The United Nations are going to win this war. When victory has been achieved, it is the purpose of the Government of the United States, as I know it is the purpose of each of the United Nations, to make appropriate use of the information and evidence in respect to these barbaric crimes of the invaders, in Europe and in Asia. It seems only fair that they should have this warning that the time will come when they shall have to stand in courts of law in the very countries which they are now oppressing and answer for their acts.”

On October 7, 1942 I stated that it was “the intention of this Government that the successful close of the war shall include provision for the surrender to the United Nations of war criminals.”

The wheels of justice have turned constantly since those statements were issued and are still turning. There are now rumors that Mussolini and members of his Fascist gang may attempt to take refuge in neutral territory. One day Hitler and his gang and Tojo and his gang will be trying to escape from their countries. I find it difficult to believe that any neutral country would

give asylum to or extend protection to any of them. I can only say that the Government of the United States would regard the action by a neutral government in affording asylum to Axis leaders or their tools as inconsistent with the principles for which the United Nations are fighting and that the United States Government hopes that no neutral government will permit its territory to be used as a place of refuge or otherwise assist such persons in any effort to escape their just deserts.

Instructions to American Diplomatic Representatives in Neutral Countries

The Department of State released to the press at 7:30 p. m., July 31, the following statement:

“The diplomatic representatives of the United States in Stockholm, Ankara, Madrid, Lisbon, Bern, Vatican City, and Buenos Aires have been instructed by the Department of State to bring the President’s statement to the attention of the Governments to which they are accredited.

“The British representatives at the above places and the representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Stockholm and Ankara are making similar representations.”