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XIII. German "Blockade" Announcement

(New York Times, August 18, 1940)

The text of the German declaration announcing a "total blockade" of Britain (August 17, 1940):

Since the outbreak of war, England to an ever increasing extent has violated international rules of war conduct. It began by proclaiming foodstuffs as contraband, which is in contrast to the most primitive laws of humanity. Just as in the World War, German women and children were to be hit thereby.

Then followed a declaration that all goods of German origin were contraband, including goods in neutral possession and which were exported from Germany in neutral ships.

Illegal arming of British merchantmen for the purpose of using these vessels as an aggressive weapon against German submarines was the next measure, followed by misuse of neutral flags, etc.

Germany replied to this: First, by shifting her trade to the east and by considerably increasing her imports of foodstuffs and raw materials from European and Asiatic economic sectors, by securing for German economics enormous quantities of raw materials of all kinds in European countries freed from the enemy. Second, by sinking 5,000,000 gross register tons of merchant space by the German Navy and Air Force.

To this must be added 1,500,000 tons of cargo space which was rendered useless by heavy damages by air attacks. This makes, together, 6,500,000 tons.

"MORE AND MORE BRUTAL"

Recognizing to an ever increasing extent the uselessness of her naval warfare, which conflicts with all rules of international laws, England then took resort to methods which became more and more brutal.

Laying of drifting mines, open and camouflaged use of merchantmen for war actions, using of fishing vessels as submarine traps, Churchill's announcement in Parliament of May 9, 1940, that in the Skagerrak all German merchant ships would be sunk at day time and all vessels, without regard to nationality, at night time are all on the same line. The heaviest blow, however, was given by England to shipping of third States by the following measures:

England has, first, seized by force merchant ships of Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France in order to replace at least partly her own gigantic tonnage losses. Since then England compels owners and crews of these vessels to work for her. Second, England tries with all the means at her disposal to enforce her control on all neutral shipping.

Thus England of late blockaded by mines, illegally and completely, the region between Greenland and England and certain regions around Southern England, forcing neutral shipping to enter British control harbors. England arbitrarily intercepts also vessels of nations like Japan, the Soviet Union and Sweden, which are not at all taking part in the European war.

Moreover, she now attempts forcing upon neutral shipping the notorious "navicert system." She treats as prizes those ships without navicert. By this means England tries to make serviceable for her own war aims all neutral merchant shipping.

As regards the sea region around England, normal trade traffic is no longer going on there as a result of ever-increasing fighting actions of the air and naval forces of the two belligerents. Sea routes and actions, moreover, are nowadays prescribed to neutral shipping by mines, outpost vessels, air patrols, British coastal batteries, etc. Other neutral vessels are mostly forced to run in convoys of British warships.

Therefore there can be no talk any more today of free shipping. Developments, moreover, show that neutral shipping, as far as it today still is running to England, is subject to all dangers of warlike actions and that it, in view of all these things, is being misused directly or indirectly for doing service for England.

England herself has thus, by her measures completely defying international law, made all waters around her isles a zone of military operations, a circumstance which would forbid any genuinely neutral ship from entering these waters.

A further deterrent for neutral ships and sailors should be the fact that under the constantly growing pressure of the German armed forces England of late has been quite openly overstepping even the last boundaries of decent warfare.

Thus Mr. Churchill announced a few days ago that unarmed German salvage planes, protected by the sign of the Red Cross, which were rescuing German and enemy airmen in distress at sea, would from now on be shot down by England.

This cynical incitement to murder, which is symptomatic of the desperate mood at present of the British rulers in view of imminent defeat, has been promptly followed by the British air force. During recent air fights two German Red Cross planes trying to rescue wounded British airmen were shot down by the British.

Germany has watched these developments with careful attention for months in the hope that common sense might, after all, deter the present British rulers from continuing this criminal course of warfare. This hope was in vain, however. England rejected the Fuehrer's latest appeal.

WILL "RETALIATE IN KIND"

The Reich Government, therefore, has now decided to retaliate in kind and to employ armed forces with the same ruthlessness against shipping around England.

On September 26 the British Government through Mr. Chamberlain who then was Premier declared: Germany is a beleaguered fortress and it is therefore quite legal and humane to cut off the German people from all vitally important supplies. This means in other words: The present British rulers regard it as a matter of course and as quite legal, if they had their will, to expose German women and children to a death of starvation as in the World War.

The Fuehrer's policy, which gave German economic access to food imports from large parts of the world, and the securing of large raw material reserves, thanks to a unique

series of victories of our armies, frustrated the British plans, however. The present rulers of England know this. They nevertheless do not dare to admit complete failure for their policy to their own people, but are proclaiming war to the last.

In view of this self-destructive British attitude the Reich Government establishes the fact that not Germany, but the British Isles, is the beleaguered fortress today.

The unsuccessful British attempt to starve German women and children, through a hunger blockade, is answered by Germany with the complete blockade of the British Isles, here proclaimed.

Germany is convinced that, with the announcement of the total blockade of the British Isles, a further decisive step has been taken toward termination of the war and removal of the guilty people at present in power in Britain. The supreme command of the German armed forces will make the utmost use of the favorable strategic situation offered by German domination of the Continental coasts from Biscay up to the North Cape.

“ACTS IN EUROPE’S INTERESTS”

Germany thus acts in the interests of the whole of Europe for, after it has been realized in London that starving out Germany is impossible, Britain tries to extend the hunger war to other European countries like Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal. Britain even tries to cut off from overseas supplies countries which have nothing whatever to do with the war like Japan, Soviet Russia, etc., under the pretext that Germany might possibly profit from such imports.

The rapid forcing of England to her knees, and the removal of the people at present in power in London, is consequently the foremost task for the sake of the whole of Europe and other neutral countries concerned. While some countries like the United States and Argentina long ago have declared the waters surrounding the British Isles a war zone and have forbidden their ships, airplanes and citizens to enter these dangerous zones, other countries have not yet taken the same step.

Germany, having repeatedly warned these States not to send their ships into the waters around the British Isles, has now again requested, in a note, these governments to forbid their ships from entering the Anglo-German war zones. It is in the interest of these States themselves to accede this German request as soon as possible.

The Reich Government wishes to emphasize the following fact: The naval war in the waters around the British Isles is in full progress.

The whole area has been mined.

German planes attack every vessel. Any neutral ship which in the future enters these waters is liable to be destroyed.

DECLINES ALL RESPONSIBILITY

The Reich Government in the future declines all responsibility without exception for damages suffered by ships or injuries to persons in these waters. By keeping their ships completely away from the British Isles neutrals on their part will help to avoid complications and end the war soon.

It will thus, moreover, be made more difficult for Mr. Churchill and other men like him to create in the future any new so-called *Athenia* case; in other words to let ships of a third State be sunk by British U-boats and then blame Germany for the sinking in the hope of inciting public opinion in the third State concerned sufficiently to drive it into a war against Germany.

Germany is convinced that she does a service of historic importance not only to Europe but also to all neutral countries in the world by finally removing the present system of British piracy.