

International Law Studies – Volume 40

International Law Documents

U.S. Naval War College (Editor)

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XII. British "Blockade" Announcement

(New York Times, August 1, 1940)

The text of the statement by Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare, in the House of Commons (July 30, 1940) follows:

The German occupation of the west European coastline from North Cape to the Pyrenes has greatly changed the conditions of economic war.

The German armies succeeded in overrunning large parts of Western Europe but the overseas imports they require are still barred from seas commanded by the Royal Navy.

Many fewer ships are now engaged in legitimate neutral trade between Europe and the Americas. Moreover, we must control not only shipping approaching the Mediterranean or the North Sea but all shipping crossing the Atlantic.

To apply this control in the old way would mean diverting ships far out of their courses to contraband bases in British waters either in this island or West Africa.

To avoid imposing such grave inconveniences upon shippers, shipowners and crews His Majesty's Government has decided to extend the navicert system to all seaborne goods consigned to any European port as well as to certain Atlantic islands and certain neutral ports of North Africa.

In future ships sailing from a neutral port to any such destination must obtain navicerts for all items of cargo and in addition a ship navicert at the last loading. Any consignment not navicerted and any shipment without a ship navicert will henceforth be liable to seizure by our patrol.

ALSO FOR OUTGOING TRADE

The same rules will apply to outgoing trade. Ships sailing from European ports or certain Atlantic islands or certain neutral ports in North Africa must have certificates of non-enemy origin for all items of their cargoes. Any ship

whose cargo is not fully certificated will be liable to be seized together with all uncertificated items of cargoes.

An Order in Council, giving effect to these changes, will be issued forthwith.

It has been suggested in some quarters that we intend to extend the blockade to certain neutral countries. This is not so. Where supplies can reach such neutrals without risk of falling into the hands of the enemy we shall grant navicerts on such a scale as to allow imports adequate for domestic consumption but not for re-export to other countries. Moreover, it will be the policy of His Majesty's Government not merely to allow such adequate supplies to pass through our controls but also to assist neutral countries to obtain them.

These measures will greatly benefit those engaged in honest neutral trade. Delays in such trade, due to the exercise of our controls, will be much reduced. At the same time a heavy blow will be struck at those who seek to elude our controls and carry supplies either to or from the enemy.

Our friends will be further encouraged and our enemies discomforted by some ingenious provisions which the Minister of Shipping will, I understand, immediately announce.

Finally I would recall that on July 2 I informed the House that contraband control had been extended to French territory under enemy control and that no goods were being allowed to reach the enemy through unoccupied France.

ALL FRANCE UNDER BAN

After a most careful review of all circumstances His Majesty's Government has now decided with regret that in the present circumstances it must treat all metropolitan France as well as Algeria, Tunisia and French Morocco in the same manner for purposes of contraband and enemy export control as enemy controlled territories.

Goods destined for these territories therefore are liable to be seized as contraband and goods originating in or owned by persons in such territories are liable to be placed in prize.

These steps I have now announced are designed to smooth the path of genuine neutral trade while increasing the the strength of our blockade and avoiding unnecessary calls upon the Royal Navy.