

X-17950

In spite of what Hitler's propoganda Bureau has invented, and in spite of what any American obstruction organization may prefer to believe, I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer Greer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.

Our destroyer, at the time, was in waters which the Government of the United States had had declared to be waters of self-defense—surrounding outposts of American protection in the Atlantic.

Four other vessels sunk or attacked flew the American flag and were clearly identifiable. Two ships were warships of the American Navy. In the fifth case, the vessel sunk clearly carried the flag of Panama.

It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of the seas for themselves.

And it must be explained again and again to people who like to think of the United States Navy as an invincible protection, that this can be true only if the British Navy survives. ~~That~~ That is simple arithmetic.

If the world outside the Americas falls under Axis domination, the shipbuilding facilities which the Axis powers would then possess in all of Europe, in the British Isles and in the Far East would be much greater than all the Americas—not only greater, but two or three times greater.

It is of course clear that Hitler has begun his campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international law and humanity.

~~And I am sure that even now the Nazis are waiting to see whether the United States will by silence give them the green light to go ahead on this path of destruction.~~

The Nazi danger to our western world has long ceased to be a mere possibility. The danger is here now—not only from a military enemy but from an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, ~~through~~ all religion.

We have sought no shooting war with Hitler. We do not seek it now. But neither do we want peace so much, that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our naval and merchant ships while they are on legitimate business.

When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him. These Nazi submarines and raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag—symbols of our independence, our freedom and our very life.

The time for active defense is now.

In the waters which we deem necessary for our defense, American naval vessels and American planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow—first.

Let this warning be clear. From now on, if German or Italian vessels of war enter the waters, the protection of which is necessary for American defense, they do so at their own peril.

The sole responsibility rests upon Germany. There will be no shooting unless Germany continues to seek it.

And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty, conscious of the righteousness of what they do, they will—with Divine help and guidance—stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty and their freedom.

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