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1941 June 20

Message to Congress re the Sinking of the "Robin Moor"
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STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

I am under the necessity of bringing to the attention of the Congress the ruthless sinking by a German submarine on May 21 of an American ship, the Robin Moor, in the South Atlantic Ocean 25° 40’ West, 60° 10’ North while the vessel was on the high seas en route to South Africa.

According to the formal depositions of survivors the vessel was sunk within 30 minutes from the time of the first warning given by the Commander of the submarine to an officer of the Robin Moor.

The submarine did not display its flag, and the Commander did not announce its nationality.

The Robin Moor was sunk without provision for the safety of the passengers and crew.

It was sunk despite the fact that its American nationality was admittedly known to the Commander of the submarine and that its nationality was likewise clearly indicated by the flag and other markings.

The sinking of this American ship by a German submarine flagrantly violated the right of United States vessels freely to navigate the seas subject only to a belligerent right accepted under international law. This belligerent right, as is known to the German Government, does not include the right deliberately to sink a merchant vessel, leaving the passengers and crew to the mercies of the elements. On the contrary the belligerent is required to place the passengers and crew in places of safety.

The passengers and crew of the Robin Moor were left adrift in small lifeboats from approximately two to three weeks when they were accidentally discovered and rescued by friendly vessels. This tragic rescue does not lessen the brutality of casting the boats adrift in midocean.

The total disregard shown for the most elementary principles of international law and of humanity brands the sinking of the Robin Moor as the act of an international outlaw.

The Government of the United States holds Germany responsible for the outrageous and indefensible sinking of the Robin Moor. Full reparation for the losses and damages suffered by American nationals will be expected from the German Government.

Our Government believes that freedom from cruelty and inhuman treatment is a natural right. It is not a grace to be given or withheld at the will of those temporarily in a position to exert force over defenseless people.
Here this incident capable of being regarded apart from
a more general background, its implications might be less serious --
but it must be interpreted in the light of a declared and actively
pursued policy of frightfulness and intimidation which has been
used by the German Reich as an instrument of international policy.

The present leaders of the German Reich have not hazi-
tated to engage in acts of cruelty and many other forms of terror
against the innocent and the helpless in other countries, apparently
in the belief that methods of terrorism will lead to a state of af-
fairs permitting the German Reich to exact acquiescence from the
nations victimized.

This Government can only assume that the Government
of the German Reich hopes through the commission of such in-
fanous acts of cruelty to helpless and innocent men, women and
children to intimidate the United States and other nations into
a course of non-resistance to German plans for universal con-
quest -- a conquest based upon lawlessness and terror on land
and piracy on the sea.

Such methods are fully in keeping with the methods of
terrorism hitherto employed by the present leaders of the German
Reich in the policy which they have pursued towards many other
nations subsequently victimized.

The Government of the German Reich may however be as-
sured that the United States will neither be intimidated nor
will it acquiesce in the plans for world domination which the
present leaders of Germany may have.

We are warranted in considering whether the case of the
Robin Moos is not a step in a campaign against the United States
analogous to campaigns against other nations. We cannot place
reliance on official declarations to the contrary.

Like statements, declarations, and even solemn pledges
have been forthcoming in respect of many nations, commencing with
the statement that the Government of the German Reich considered
its territorial aspirations satisfied when it seized Austria by
force. Next we have that the Government of the German Reich continues
to plan further conquest and domination is convincing, and, indeed,
scarcely disputed.

Viewed in the light of the circumstances the sinking of the
Robin Moos becomes a disclosure of policy as well as an example of
method. Heretofore, lawless acts of violence have been preludes to
schemes of land conquest. This one appears to be a first step in
assertion of the supreme purpose of the German Reich to seize control
of the high seas, the conquest of Great Britain being an indispensable
part of that seizure.

It's general purpose would appear to be to drive American
commerce from the ocean wherever such commerce was considered a dis-
advantage to German designs; and its specific purpose would appear to
be interruption of our trade with all friendly countries.

We must take it that notice has now been served upon us that
no American ship or cargo on any of the seven seas can consider it-
self immune from acts of piracy. Notice is served on us, in effect,
that the German Reich proposes so to intimidate the United States that
we would be dissuaded from carrying out our chosen policy of helping
Britain to survive.

In brief, we must take the sinking of the Robin Moos as a
warning to the United States not to resist the Nazi movement of world
conquest. It is a warning that the United States may use the high seas
of the world only with Nazi consent.

Now we to yield on this we would inevitably submit to world
domination at the hands of the present leaders of the German Reich.

No are not yielding and we do not propose to yield.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,
June 20, 1941.
TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

I am under the necessity of bringing to the attention of the Congress the ruthless sinking by a German submarine on May 21 of an American ship, the Robin Moor, in the South Atlantic Ocean (25° 40' West, 6° 10' North) while the vessel was on the high seas en route to South Africa.

According to the formal depositions of survivors the vessel was sunk within 30 minutes from the time of the first warning given by the Commander of the submarine to an officer of the Robin Moor. The submarine did not display its flag, and the Commander did not announce its nationality. The Robin Moor was sunk without provision for the safety of the passengers and crew. It was sunk despite the fact that its American nationality was admittedly known to the Commander of the submarine and that its nationality was likewise clearly indicated by the flag and other markings. It was sunk despite the fact that an examination of the ship's manifest would have shown that
the Robin Moor was not carrying any munitions of war.

The sinking of this American ship by a German submarine flagrantly violated the right of United States vessels freely to navigate the seas subject only to certain belligerent rights as accepted under international law. These belligerent rights, as is known to the German Government, do not include the right deliberately to sink a merchant vessel, leaving the passengers and crew to the mercies of the elements. On the contrary, of these rights the belligerent is required to place the passengers and crew in places of safety.

The passengers and crew of the Robin Moor were left afloat in small lifeboats from approximately two to three weeks when they were accidentally discovered and rescued by friendly vessels. The total disregard shown for the most elementary principles of international law and of humanity brands the sinking of the Robin Moor as the act of an international outlaw.

The Government of the United States holds Germany responsible for the outrageous and indefensible sinking of
the Robin Moor. For full present to the German
Government that full reparation for the losses and
* damages suffered by American nationals*

The Government believes that freedom from cruelty
is a natural right. It is not a grace to be given
or withheld at the will of those temporarily in a position
to exert force over defenceless people, depending on consid-
erations of policy.

Were this incident capable of being regarded apart
from a more general background, its implications might
be less serious, but it must be interpreted in the light
of a declared and actively pursued policy of frightful-
ness and intimidation which has been used by the German
Reich as an instrument of international policy. The

present leaders of the German Reich have not hesitated to
engage in acts of cruelty against the innocent and the
helpless in other countries, apparently in the belief that
methods of terrorism will lead to a state of affairs per-
mitting the German Reich to exact acquiescence from the

nations
nations victimized.

This Government can only assume that the Government of the German Reich hopes through the commission of such infamous acts of cruelty to helpless and innocent men, women and children to intimidate the United States and other nations into a course of non-resistance to German plans for universal conquest—a conquest based upon lawlessness and terror on land and piracy on the sea.

Such methods are fully in keeping with the methods of terrorism hitherto employed by the present leaders of the German Reich in the policy which they have pursued towards many other nations subsequently victimized.

The Government of the German Reich may however be assured that the United States will neither be intimidated nor will it acquiesce in the plans for world domination which the present leaders of Germany may have.

We are warranted in considering whether the case of the Robin Moor is not a step in a campaign against the United States analogous to campaigns against other nations. We cannot place reliance on official declarations to the contrary.
contrary. Like statements, declarations, and even solemn
pledges have been forthcoming in respect of many nations,
commencing with the statement that the Government of the
German Reich considered its territorial aspirations satisfied
when it seized Austria by force. Evidence that the
Government of the German Reich continues to plan further
conquest and domination is convincing, and, indeed, scarcely
disputed.

Viewed in the light of the circumstances the sinking
of the Robin Moor becomes a disclosure of policy as well
as an example of method. Heretofore, lawless acts of
violence have been preludes to schemes of land conquest.
This one appears to be a first step in assertion of the
supreme purpose of the German Reich to seize control of
the high seas, the conquest of Great Britain being an in-
dispensable prelude that seizure. Its general purpose
would appear to be to drive American commerce from the
ocean wherever such commerce was considered a disadvantage
to German designs; and its specific purpose would appear
to be interruption of our trade with friendly countries.
In conclusion.

We must take it that notice has now been served upon us that no American ship or cargo on any of the seven seas can consider itself immune from acts of piracy. In brief, we must take the sinking of the Robin Moor as a warning to the United States to be prepared to resist any movement of world conquest, even upon the adjacent high seas, still less to do so by aiding Great Britain.

Were we to yield on this we would inevitably yield world domination to the hands of the present leaders of the German Reich.

The United States will undertake whatever measures it considers necessary to prevent this attempt at control of the high seas, and thereby to protect the security of the American people and to safeguard the defense of the Western Hemisphere.

We are not yielding and we do not propose to yield.
Notice is hereby given, that the German Reich intends to destroy Britain in order to eliminate all
Notice is served on us, in effect, that the German Reich proposes so to intimidate the United States that we would be dissuaded from carrying out our chosen policy of helping Britain to survive.