

The Economic Club of New York

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Minister of the Netherlands

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May I say, at the outset, that I appear as the representative of a nation which in spite of all reverses is still alive and fighting.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands has signed no armistice either with Germany or Japan nor does it intend to do so. No peace, no armistice is the slogan of every true Dutchman wherever he lives on this earth. For we Dutch are more than ever convinced that the aims, for which we fight, are right.

We retain our faith, Disaster cannot weaken it, reverses cannot shake it, temporary defeats cannot destroy it. That faith means we are in this war till victory.

The present cataclysm is a world-wide war. On its outcome depends the fate of civilization. These are not mere words. Events prove it. I may add that to my mind the history of the world, since the savage Japanese invasion of Manchuria is teaching mankind an unforgettable lesson: namely that in wartime, it is not the fact whether territory is lost or won, which is all-important but that what is paramount, is the manner in which a people and a nation resists aggression and fights for its survival.

If, under ruthless aggression, a people are forced to give up the arts of peace, which they have striven to practice through most of their history, and are compelled to take up the shield of battle, their conduct then reveals their worth, their right to be judged a people entitled to a national existence, and to national survival.

That right is earned -- no matter the odds against them, no matter the territory occupied -- once they fight to their utmost and they continue, even after they are overwhelmed by force of numbers, they continue their resistance in the face of tyrannical oppression and duress. That right is earned when a people hurl their every resource their very life's blood into the struggle.

The civilized world will forever affirm that right. It will affirm it for every nation and every people which is opposing and has opposed German, Italian and Japanese aggression. Aggression has made their cause a righteous and a righteous cause is unbeatable. Let us never forget that the word justice does not appear in the aggressor's vocabulary.

If the freedom-loving nations on this earth continue to be united and continues to develop ever-increasing power to battle the enemies of a free humanity, their victory is assured.

Now, I would like to make a few short remarks about my own country -- its past, its present and its future.

Holland, by tradition and origin, has been a country of free trade. This came about because our people never have been continentally minded, but always have been sea-minded. This, in large measure, means world-minded. For centuries we have, from our relatively small land in Europe, sailed the open sea for trade and we have permitted the world to bring unhindered to our ports the products of its fields, its mines, its forests and its factories.

Trade - not colonization brought us to these shores. The settlement of New Amsterdam was a consequence of our pursuit of trade and not the primary aim. The same can be said about Capetown. Again, we went to the Far East to regain the spice trade from which we had been cut off during our war against Spain. I say this in order to make clear that Dutch expansion in former centuries was one for the sake of commerce and not for political aims.

Therefore, Free Trade was the kernel of our existence and its handmaidens were industry and thrift. Free trade brought us immense benefits which in turn enabled us to make substantial contributions to civilization. The world regarded the Dutch people as progressive and contented. Even though a little nation, we were granted a place in the vanguard of civilization, in the company of the great nations which made up that vanguard.

This life-long trade tradition of the Netherlands, which seemed to insure our peaceful development, finally came to an end. We abandoned it, much to our regret, and for various reasons, many of which defy adequate discussion in a single address. But free trade was doomed,

when forces beyond our control introduced a system of worldwide protection. Let us be frank. Let us substitute for the word “protection” what really came about: National Economic Isolationism.

National Economic Isolationism saw tariff barriers erected trade restricted, the flow of goods and services impeded if not altogether halted. I will not attempt to enumerate all the contributive factors to this state of affairs. One thing, in my opinion, is clear however, namely that whereas in decades preceding the era of national economic isolationism, free trade did not plan and so did not achieve the necessary correlation between producer and consumer, and the protective system moved the world even further away from that goal. Still, that correlation to my mind is essential to bring about better living conditions for the individual and to assure a better world wide distribution system. If this war, which we call a people’s war, is to bring about also a better world in this respect for the benefit of the average citizen, that is consumer, who will have won this war, then the present privations and hardships will have served a great purpose. It seems to me that full credit must be given to the Atlantic Charter for stating that in the post-war reconstruction, international economic policies must be followed which will prevent the return of National Economic Isolationism. I dare say that my government will gladly undertake everything in its power to be helpful in the abolition of national trade barriers in order that international trade may flow freely again. If that policy is to succeed, the Atlantic charter will have to be considered as a charter which derives its name from the place where it was concluded but its execution must not be limited to the Atlantic along but will have to include all other oceans as

well. If the Netherlands in Europe welcomes the elaboration of a system guaranteeing freer commercial intercourse between nations, the same will be the case with regard to the Netherlands Indies. I do not hesitate to state this because when speaking about post-war reconstruction, the defeat of all the totalitarian powers must be accepted as axiomatic; if not, all discussion is useless. Bearing that in mind, there is neither hesitation nor doubt on my part, first that the Japanese sweep over the Netherlands Indies -- tragic as it is, may I say, for the cause of the United Nations -- is only a temporary sweep, and secondly, the Dutch culture and civilization will, at the end of this struggle, reassume its mission for the progress of the people and the islands so long under its stewardship.

The basic principle of the economic stewardship of the Dutch administration in the Netherlands East Indies has been the policy of the open door. In practice, this has meant that all foreigners were allowed to come and to help us in the development of the islands' natural resources. These were not kept nor reserved for Netherlanders alone; they were at the disposal of the entire world. But on one condition: the foreigner had to abide by the principles we had laid down for the welfare of the native population. Everybody was welcome to trade with us for the sake of commerce, but we did not permit trade to be used as a cloak to cover political infiltration.

Time is too short to go into the cultural stewardship of the Dutch in the Indies. We feel, however, that in that respect we have built a record which speaks for itself provided it be studied and not dealt with in a summary way. In this connection, I will not fail to make the following statement:

On March eleventh last an editorial in a local New York newspaper and its counter-part in Washington, D.C. contained the following passage. I quote - the Encyclopedia Britannica, which doesn't go in for extreme language, describes the early - and later - Dutch treatment of the natives as one of extortion and savage tyranny - unquote. I will now proceed to read the complete passage of the Encyclopedia Britannic, Edition 1939, Volume 12, Page 978, right-hand column, from which the editorial has taken the words it put in quotation marks, namely extortion an and savage tyranny. The full passage reads as follows: I quote..."In 1830 Holland had no resources with which to relieve the financial difficulties of the colony. Baron van den Bosen offered to provide the necessary funds. He was Governor-General and colonial minister from 1830 to 1839 - black years in java's history. He resumed the Daendel's policy of extortion and savage tyranny. From a population of some 5,000,000 it is estimated that Holland by forced cultures secured 166,000,000 Pounds Sterling in 12 years. Belief that Dipa Negar would ultimately return to rescue his unhappy compatriots was responsible for more than one rising from 1848 to 1888. In the meanwhile Dutch opinions at home were aroused and in 1854 laws were passed intended to put the whole political and economic administration on a humane and progressive basis, though the reform did not become completely effective till 186."

I publicly denounce this local New York newspaper and its Washington counterpart for having deliberately shortened a quotation for purpose of distortion and misrepresentation to the public.

I may add for the benefit of the public information that ever since the law of 1854, the avowed administration of the Netherlands East Indies has been based on full respect for the native culture, respect for the religion and customs of the native population, for the progress of its welfare and upon its inalienable rights as owners of the soil and its participation in the administration of lastly upon the evolution of the native population towards a gradually increasing participation.

I feel certain that history will prove that we have not erred in laying down those principles and I am also convinced of two more things. First that the permanent appropriation by the Japanese of the vast resources of the Netherlands Indies would prove to be a severe blow to the international economic life and secondly that the Japanese coercive methods of administration will prove to be a retrogression with respect to the development of all standards of native life.

Just as the so called Nazi new order has proved to be unable to build up a sound and healthy economy within the borders of Germany proper and for that reason had to reach across its frontiers in order to try and find in foreign lands the elements with which to make a new attempt for the continuation of a bankrupted economic life, so the economic history of Korea, Manchuria, Indo China, Siam and now most likely the Malay peninsula and the Dutch East Indies have proved or will prove to inability of Japan to build up an Asiatic co-prosperity sphere because the progress and the welfare of the local populations will be completely obliterated. For in the cases of both Germany and Japan it is the principle of a so-called master race which



dominates and that principle is built on enslavement and terror and absolute disregard of human rights.

In my opinion the doctrines of what is commonly called human civilization is in complete opposition to the master race theory. Either human civilization redeems its birthright by the recognition of the sacredness of its duty towards humanity or it leaves to generations to come the enslavement of totalitarianism. Tertium non datur. One of the two will have to perish. It is for the free nations to choose. If they choose the survival of our way of life then the Dutch will not be found wanting. They weren't in the past, they are not at present nor will they be in the future, immaterial whether the issue is political, economical or spiritual. Sir Owen Seaman expressed the deep significance of this hour when he wrote:

“Ye that have faith t look with fearless eyes  
Beyond the tragedy of a world at strife,  
And trust that out of night and death shall rise  
The dawn of ampler life;  
Rejoice, whatever anguish rend your heart,  
That god has given you for a priceless dower,  
To live in these great times and have your part  
In freedom's crowning hour;  
That you may tell your sons who see the light

High in the heavens - their heritage to take -

I saw the powers of Darkness put to flight,

I saw the Morning break.”