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BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

October 30th, 1939.

No. 461.

Sir,

The attention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has been drawn to various allegations published in this country regarding the circumstances in which the British steamship "Athenia" was sunk on September 3rd last, and in particular to a statement made by Mr. Gustav Anderson of Evanston, Illinois, and printed in the "New York Times" of October 23rd. In this statement Mr. Anderson alleged that as a result of his conversations with the Chief Officer of the "Athenia", Mr. B. M. Copland, he had reason to believe that the ship's cargo included a certain number of guns and that it was intended to fit the ship out as a raider on the return journey and that for this purpose her decks had been strengthened. Mr. Anderson furthermore implied in his statement that the "Athenia" had finally been sunk by gunfire from one of His Majesty's ships to prevent her becoming a danger to navigation.

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I have been instructed by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to convey to you on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, a formal assurance that the S. S. "Athenia", on the voyage in the course of which she was sunk, carried no guns, munitions of war or explosives,

either/

The Honourable,

Cordell Hull,

Secretary of State for the United States,

Washington, D. C.

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either as cargo or stores; nor did she carry either bullion or securities. At the time of her sinking the "Athenia" was neither armed nor stiffened to receive armament of any kind, and it was not intended to use the vessel as an armed raider, armed merchant cruiser or in any other offensive capacity at the end of the voyage on which she was sunk. The "Athenia" was not sunk by contact with a British mine, by a British submarine, by gunfire from one of His Majesty's ships or by internal explosion; according to the evidence in the possession of His Majesty's Government she was sunk by a submarine.

I am furthermore instructed to inform you that Chief Officer Copland has sworn in an affidavit that he never discussed with Mr. Gustav Anderson the question whether or not there were guns on board the "Athenia". Mr. Copland's affidavit also contains a sworn statement that there were in point of fact no guns or other munitions carried as cargo in the ship on the voyage in question.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest consideration,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

(SOD) LOTHIAN