

(D) WAR DEVELOPMENTS

1. BRITISH ACTION AGAINST FRENCH FLEET, PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH OF JULY 5, 1940

Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King (Prime Minister): "Mr. Speaker, although the ultimate situation remains obscure, and the present relations between the government of the United Kingdom and the French government at Bordeaux have not yet been clarified, I feel that I should say a few words at this time. Members of the house will have appreciated the feelings of Mr. Churchill when they read his speech delivered in the British house yesterday. Nothing could have brought home more clearly the tragic irony and agony of war, than the grim obligation placed upon the British navy to prevent the French fleet from falling into the hands of Germany and Italy.

Nothing can be gained by a recital of the events which led up to the seizures, the sinkings, and the conflict between ancient allies and friends. The proposals made by the British emissary to the French admiral at Oran would seem at this time and distance to have contained within them an honourable and bloodless solution. Fate decreed otherwise. No one can blame the French admiral and his gallant sailors for loyal obedience to their government, however precarious its powers, however shackled its decisions. Equally, no fair-minded men knowing the attitudes and minds of the German and Italian dictators and their record of promises made, and promises broken, could expect the government of the United Kingdom to imperil the security of the British Isles and the Dominions by allowing the French fleet to pass into the control of the enemy. Wednesday's action cannot be regarded as directed against France. Rather was it action against ships that already, for all practical purposes, were German and Italian instruments of war.

I am sure that it is the prayer of the people of Canada who owe so much to the memory of France, that the French people will recognize that if the Bordeaux government acted under the compulsion of the conqueror, the British navy acted equally under the compulsion of its great responsibility for the preservation of the liberties of the world. In no country has the calamity of France received more understanding sympathy than in Canada. The plight of the French people and the destitution that has overtaken its millions of refugees have filled us with profound sorrow. It is our faith that although the might of a ruthless machine has for a time, but we believe for a time only, overwhelmed the power of France, nothing can vanquish the soul of that great nation.

Whatever may have happened, or whatever may come to pass, Canadians of all races and classes know in their hearts that there is only