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FRANCE.

July 15, 1940.

CONFIDENTIAL.

France

SECTION 1.

[C 7824/9/17]

Copy No. 036A

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell

(No. 1161.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, July 15, 1940.

THE French Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this afternoon at his own request.

2. The Marquis de Castellane told me that he had just received a telegram from his Government to the effect that they were in agreement with the suggestion that His Majesty's Government should be represented in France by an unofficial agent in the same way that they would be represented in London by M. Paul Morand. He thought this was a hopeful feature.

3. He then gave me a note from the French Government in answer to my communication of the 9th July (a copy of which is enclosed, Annex A), together with a copy of a telegram from Vichy (Annex B).

4. I said that I should like to have time to consider both these documents. As regards the French Government's note, I would express no opinion immediately beyond saying that I did not suppose that they would expect His Majesty's Government to accept all the argumentation contained in it. So far as the telegram was concerned, I expressed doubt whether any useful purpose would be served by further argument on the particular point which it raised. My impression was that the facts as known to your Excellency at the time differed from those now stated by the French Government. You had left Bordeaux because you had at the time no reason to be sure that the Germans would not be in occupation of the city, before the armistice was signed. No specific instructions had been sent to your Excellency to leave Bordeaux, but there were general instructions to all our representatives to the effect that they should, if possible, avoid falling into enemy hands. In coming away, your Excellency had acted fully within your discretion. As I had already pointed out, however, your departure had never been intended to imply a rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries. I asked M. de Castellane to pass this information on to his Government; and he said that he would certainly do so.

5. He then said, with reference to the French Government's note, that he considered as particularly interesting the passage in the Prime Minister's speech of yesterday in which he stated that, as long as the French warships still in French ports all over the world made no attempt to return to ports controlled by Germany or Italy, His Majesty's Government would not molest them in any way. He felt that it would be well to report this to the French Government; and he asked whether there was anything which I could add to what the Prime Minister had said.

6. I told M. de Castellane that the Prime Minister's words represented precisely the policy of His Majesty's Government and that I had nothing to add to them. In reply to an enquiry as to whether it was true that His Majesty's Government had advised the French authorities in North Africa of these facts, I said that the Cabinet had decided, several days before the Prime Minister made his speech, to convey a notification to the French admiral at Alexandria on the same lines. His Majesty's Government had not wished to make a formal communication through the French Embassy before the Prime Minister made his speech, but at the same time they did not want the French Government not to receive any message. I went on to say that, while His Majesty's Government fully appreciated the French Government's point of view, we still hoped that the French Government and people would understand our point of view, so that means might be found to bring to a conclusion a phase of events which had been as painful to us as it was to them. M. de Castellane himself, I felt, must know that there was no desire in any section of opinion in this country to make

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