

could not be done by surprise or without the knowledge of the French naval authorities. The crews kept on board as guards were to be French. As all the French Mediterranean ports in France itself or in Africa were to remain free of any foreign occupation, a considerable number of the French ships were to be required to be based on these unoccupied ports and, what was more, the armistice commissions had the power to base the entire fleet without exception on these ports. Finally a proportion to be determined later of the French ships was to remain armed and to keep its crews complete in order to provide for the security of the French colonies.

His Majesty's Government were in no way ignorant of these arrangements, of which they were kept fully informed. They received the solemn assurance of the Government of the Republic never to accept or to tolerate that their fleet should be turned against Great Britain.

Your Excellency alleges in your letter of the 10th July that His Majesty's Government had only agreed to liberate the French Government from their obligations not to seek a separate peace on condition that the French fleet should be sent in advance to British ports. Your Excellency adds that you referred to this condition in a communication dated the 3rd of this month. In point of fact the French Government are not aware of any British communication dated the 3rd July, other than the text of the ultimatum addressed by the admiral commanding a British squadron to the admiral commanding the French squadron at Mers-el-Kebir. Your Excellency will certainly agree that a document of this nature cannot pass as a normal diplomatic communication. As for the fact itself of the condition which is recalled therein, the French Government formally contest it. In fact, if it is true that this condition—that the French fleet should be sent to British ports—is set forth in two telegrams from your Excellency to Sir Ronald Campbell, dated the 16th June last, it is also true that on the same day His Majesty's Ambassador expressly declared to the French President of the Council of the day that he had instructions to withdraw these two telegrams which were, he said, to be considered as not having been received, and as being replaced by the offers of union of the two States and the two empires. From this formal declaration on the subject of which the French Government and His Majesty's Ambassador expressed themselves very clearly, it is obvious that the request that the French fleet should be sent to British ports before any negotiations for an armistice, was never expressed by His Majesty's Government except in order to be immediately withdrawn.

It transpires from the present account that the Government of the Republic cannot do otherwise than leave to His Majesty's Government the entire responsibility for the breaking off of diplomatic relations, to which it has been compelled to resort by the hostile acts of which the French navy has been and still is the object. The Government of the Republic requires, therefore, before any resumption of diplomatic relations:—

- (a) The return of the warships at Alexandria and in the ports of the United Kingdom with their officers and crews.
- (b) The return of the merchant ships.
- (c) The payment of an indemnity, the sum of which remains to be determined later, for the ships destroyed or damaged at Mers-el-Kebir and at Dakar, as well as for the families of the victims.
- (d) The raising of the blockade at Martinique.
- (e) The guarantee of the British Government to allow henceforth the free navigation of French ships.

For its part the French Government would return to the British Government the British ships at present held by the French navy.

Once these conditions are fulfilled the French Government would be in a position to consider together with the British Government the resumption of diplomatic relations.

Up to the present moment the French Government regret that they can only remain in a situation created by events for which they do not bear the responsibility.

July 15, 1940.