

There were also present:

The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Robertson),

The Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary of the War Committee (Mr. Heeney).

RELATIONS WITH THE VICHY GOVERNMENT

1. THE PRIME MINISTER read a telegram sent the previous day to the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth governments, in anticipation of a breach of relations between Vichy and the United States, as a result of the landing of American forces in French North Africa.

As an alternative to breaking off diplomatic relations, it had been suggested that an appropriate and helpful alternative course would be refusal to recognize the Vichy government as the government of France, on the ground that it had ceased to have any effective independent existence.

The Canadian Minister in Washington had been instructed to communicate this view to the U.S. Secretary of State.

(External Affairs telegrams, 246 to Dominions Office, 206 to Canadian High Commissioner, Canberra, etc., November 8, 1942; also teletype EX-2838 to Canadian Minister, Washington, November 9, 1942).[†]

2. MR. KING said that, following word that the Vichy government had, in fact, broken off diplomatic relations with the United States, further consideration had been given to the course which should be taken by the Canadian government.

The distinction between a severance of relations with the Vichy government and withdrawal of recognition of that government as the *de jure* government of France was of fundamental importance. The latter course would avoid the danger of a declaration of war by a recognized legal government of France, and, at the same time strengthen existing opposition to the collaborationist policies of Vichy.

The U.K. government had felt that any initiative in this sense should be taken by Canada, in consultation with the United States.

Mr. McCarthy had, this afternoon, communicated personally with Mr. Hull; and the President, to whom Mr. King had spoken this evening, by telephone, had felt that the course suggested, on the part of Canada, would be altogether appropriate and helpful in the circumstances.

3. MR. KING then read a draft statement, the contents of which it was proposed to communicate immediately to the French Minister, and, thereafter, to the press; it read as follows:

“The fact that the men who have been in nominal control of the Government of France have ordered the armed forces of France to offer resistance to military forces of the United Nations sent to assist in the liberation of France from Nazi domination makes it perfectly clear that there no longer exists in France a government that has any effective independent existence — in other words, that there no longer exists in France a legal or constitutional government in any sense representative of the French people, but only a German puppet government.