

● PSF

FRANCE: St. Pierre-Miquelon

PSF: France (St. Pierre-Miquelon folder)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

*file
secret*

January 11, 1942.

Memorandum for the President

In the absence of communications from the Consul at St. Pierre, which have been temporarily suspended, the following limited information with respect to the Consultative Council at St. Pierre has, however, been obtained: The present occupants have apparently appointed two Councilors and two have remained who were appointed by the previous Administrator. The seven other Councilors are the elected members. The present Acting Administrator is Flag-Lieutenant Savery, a young aide-de-camp of Admiral Muselier.

C.H.

file
PSF - France
St. Pierre-Miquelon

January 10, 1942

AMERICAN CONSUL

SAINT PIERRE-MIQUELON.

Your 2, January 9, 2 p.m.

With regard to Admiral Muselier's annoyance at the alleged reference to the QUOTE so-called Free French UNQUOTE, you may wish to inform him that he has been erroneously informed regarding this expression which referred in fact to the QUOTE three so-called Free French ships UNQUOTE.

As the Free French Commissioner in Washington was told on December 29, when this Government was informed of the occupation of Saint Pierre-Miquelon, it was slow to believe and hence to ^{state} ~~charge~~ that the ships were actually Free French ships in the absence of certainty that they were and in view of the assurances which this Government had been given by Admiral Muselier and which had been communicated to it by the Canadian Government.

The phrase was used to avoid designation of the ships as those of the Free French and should not be construed as any intention to reflect upon the Free French movement.

851. A.O1/45

Eu:SR:TMT

Jan 9

The misunderstanding and misinterpretation of just what has occurred in connection with the St. Pierre-Miquelon incident illustrates the ease with which confusion can be created with regard to international affairs especially when many of the essentials are not known. A few of the basic points indicating the course of the St. Pierre-Miquelon affair up to the date of ~~the~~ seizure by the Free French organization and thereafter would be helpful to a better understanding.

Needless to say, every person in the State Department is and has been wholly sympathetic and friendly to every human being on the planet who is supporting the united resistance to the Tripartite group. This includes the Free French organization.

The State Department has supported all acts of the Government to get equipment and other needed supplies to the Free French in Central Africa; it has at all times maintained uniformly friendly relations with the Free French organization. We have followed the same policy toward all the people of France except the pro-Hitler group which we have opposed in season and out. Everyone felt that way.

As regards our course and attitude toward France, it met with no criticism on the part of the Governments
of

of Great Britain and Canada. At the same time the continuance of our important relations with the Vichy Government has during the past months been and continues to be steadily urged and supported by the British Government. There has been at every stage entirely agreeable relations and a spirit of cooperative effort between the Governments of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

Prior to the seizure of these islands some days ago, the main question of interest in this connection to Great Britain, Canada and the United States related to potential dangers to shipping from the operation of a wireless station or stations originally installed to benefit French fishing vessels off the Great Banks of Newfoundland. While the British and the Canadians were thus interested in this single question, the United States Government was not only equally interested with Canada and Great Britain in this matter but was at the same time confronted with numerous other important related questions.

First, the whole doctrine and policy of the Habana Conference of 1940, designed to protect the peace and
safety

safety of territory everywhere in the Western Hemisphere, obligated us to oppose the use of force to seize any such territory, and thus imposed on us duties and responsibilities of the most important nature towards all nations in this hemisphere. In these circumstances approach was made to this Government to find some method of dealing with the radio stations on the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. The suggestions ranged all the way from a proposal that a friendly approach be made to the appropriate French officials for an amicable arrangement safeguarding the radio stations against possible use injurious to American, British or Canadian shipping, to suggestions for extreme measures of an arbitrary nature.

Second, consideration had to be given to the method already worked out by the Government of the United States for peaceful and orderly relations with all European colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere and particularly in respect of the French islands in the Caribbean. This involved delicate understandings and arrangements which involved not only Vichy but also French North and West Africa, and even in important ways the people of continental France.

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To control the radio stations on the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, this Government advocated from the beginning a friendly approach and arrangement for a friendly settlement - a step which it believed and still believes should be feasible and would be adequate to secure all necessary safeguards with respect to these wireless stations. Although there were other suggestions made in conferences from time to time, nothing was done in the way of executing any of them and the consensus of opinion favored the friendly approach.

In the midst of these discussions the seizure and occupation of the islands took place by authority, as it now appears, of the Free French organization. The British have informed this Government that this occupation took place without the knowledge and against the declared wishes of the British Government. We are informed that the Canadian Government had no prior knowledge.

Immediately one or two small groups in this country raised the hue and cry that this Government should in effect abandon its entire structure of policies, responsibilities and obligations relating to the safety and security of this hemisphere under the Habana Agreement and other inter-American commitments. These contentions also called for abandoning the extremely important
relations

relations with France and different parts of the French Empire. This Government was thus called upon to throw overboard its interests, its policies and its pledged word in respect to its inter-American relations and important phases of its European relations by agreeing to the forcible seizure and occupation of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

These were the salient points in the incident up to the stage of seizure and occupation of the islands. For the reasons above set forth and in accordance with its fixed policy, this Government had no choice but to withhold approval of that seizure. This Government at once approached the British, the Canadians and the Government at Vichy and urged a fair arrangement between all the Governments concerned which would safeguard Great Britain, Canada and the United States against danger to their shipping from the operation of the wireless stations in question. Material progress has been made along these lines. This Government has made it clear to the other Governments concerned that it cannot ignore its settled policies, its existing agreements and its treaty obligations, all involving important international phases of the war situation so that it might accept the forcible seizure and indefinite occupation of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

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It must be manifest by this time that the proposal of the Government of the United States for a friendly and amicable arrangement in no wise interferes with the agreeable relations and support in every practical way of the Free French in their common resistance along with ourselves, the British and the Canadians.

A press release by the State Department some days ago which included the words "three so-called Free French ships" has been misconstrued as constituting a reflection on the Free French organization despite the fact that the State Department by many acts has evidenced its support of that group. In fact, solemn statements made to this Government by Free French representatives in Canada just prior to the seizure and occupation of these islands led the State Department to doubt that the ships used in the seizure were acting under authority of the Free French Committee. There was ^{of course} no intention to cast any reflection upon the Free French movement, and taken in their context there is no reason for misconstruction of the words.

The State Department, with the same attitude of full cooperation in every essential way with the British, the Chinese, the Canadians, the Russians, the Australians, the Dutch, the many nations of this hemisphere, the Free French
and

and all others alike who are opposing the Axis group, is entirely satisfied with the course it has pursued although recognizing the impossibility of pursuing any course without difficulty.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 2, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR

ADOLF BERLE:

Regarding your memorandum of
January 27 - St. Pierre and Miquelon -
will you be good enough to get a copy
of the message from Churchill dated
Jan. 23, 1942 from the British Embassy,
as we do not seem to have a copy.

F.D.R.

PSF: France
(St. Pierre-Miquelon folder)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 27, 1942

Memorandum to Miss Grace Tully
Re St. Pierre and Miquelon:

The documents we need are described in a message from Churchill to the President, dated January 23rd, 1942. He says: "I saw General DeGaulle yesterday and after a severe conversation he agreed to the communiqué which I left with you being published by the United States, British and Canadian Governments without any acceptance by us of his proposed secret conditions."

It is this communiqué that we need.

He further understands that he is "to receive final assent of Free French tomorrow when I will immediately telegraph confirmation to you." If he got the assent, there should be a telegraphic confirmation from Churchill to the President, dated January 24th, or thereabouts.

Adolf Berle
Adolf Berle

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 27, 1942

MEMORANDUM

Re: St. Pierre and Miquelon

Mr. President:

Attached, a carbon copy of the draft telegram (unsent), being a proposed instruction to Leahy giving the formula for a settlement with regard to St. Pierre and Miquelon.

We are assuming that you gave the original of this to Prime Minister Churchill.

This is in answer to your request to Secretary Hull yesterday.

adB
Adolf Berle

Attachment

Draft
(Not Sent)
To the President

January 15, 1942.

AMERICAN EMBASSY

VICHY (FRANCE)

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

Your 15, January 5, 7 p. m.

Since receiving your telegram under reference and the more detailed reply submitted through the French High Commissioner at Fort de France, we have given very careful study and consideration, in consultation with the British and the Canadian Government, to the situation created by the occupation of St. Pierre-Miquelon, which was accomplished without the consent or knowledge of any of these three Governments. With a view to reaching a solution satisfactory to the Governments concerned, and with the concurrence of the British and Canadian Governments, we have worked out the following formula:

QUOTE Suggested arrangement with regard to St. Pierre-Miquelon:

1. The Islands are French and will remain French.
2. To avoid any potential threat to the shipping of the Governments concerned, the use of the wireless stations

stations on the Islands will be subject to supervision and control by observers appointed by the American and Canadian Governments and attached to their respective consulates.

3. The Islands shall be neutralized and demilitarized and shall be considered out of the war.

4. The present Administrator shall be withdrawn for the period of the war; the appointment of an Administrator shall be withheld for the same period, and the administration of the Islands shall be left in the hands of the Consultative Council.

5. All armed forces will be withdrawn.

6. The Canadian and American Governments agree and undertake to continue economic assistance to the inhabitants of the Islands and the respective consuls of those countries will confer with the local authorities as to the nature of the assistance to be given. Arrangements are being made both to continue the supplies from the United States and Canada on which the Islands are dependent and also to provide for the seasonal supply of fish to the French inhabitants of Martinique. END QUOTE

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This formula is in conformity with the commitments given by this Government.

We fully realize the concern and anxiety of the French Government in maintaining the integrity of its colonial possessions. We feel that the formula submitted, with its guarantee that the Islands shall remain French, with its assurance that the present Consultative Council shall administer the Islands in accordance with the desires of the population and with the undertaking to continue economic assistance to St. Pierre-Miquelon, will fully safeguard the French Government's concern about these Islands during the war.

You should see Marshal Pétain at the earliest possible moment and impress upon him the importance of reaching a solution along these lines which maintains the purely French tradition of these Islands for the future. You may further explain to him that this formula represents the greatest degree of agreement which it has been possible to obtain and that we are convinced that if accepted by the Marshal and his Government

Government it will go far to preserve the basis for an understanding between this Government and the people of France. You may, in your discretion, further point out that time is of the essence, since the longer the matter remains in its present status, the more likely it is to become crystallized and the more difficult it will be to bring about a satisfactory solution.

Until we receive an expression of opinion from the French Government regarding this formula, the matter will not be discussed with Admiral Robert.

S:CH:TMT:NNB