

Minutes of the  
War Committee of the Cabinet  
October 22nd, 1941.

SECRET

Ottawa, October 22nd, 1941.

CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

A meeting of the War Committee of the Cabinet was held in the Privy Council Chamber, on Wednesday, October the 22nd, at 3.00 p.m.

There were present the following members:

The Minister of Mines and Resources  
(Mr. Crerar),  
The Minister of National Defence for Air  
and Associate Minister of National  
Defence (Mr. Power),  
The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley),  
The Minister of Munitions and Supply  
(Mr. Howe).

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

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In the absence of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Mines and Resources acted as Chairman.

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Measures to be taken in the event of war with Japan

1. The Secretary stated that the Committee had already given general approval to the report of the Inter-departmental Committee on measures to be taken in the event of war with Japan, subject to there being no objection on the part of the Defence Services. Defence Council had subsequently expressed the concurrence of the Services.

The Department of External Affairs had pointed out, however, that the Committee should decide expressly whether the receipt of the "war telegram" (notifying Canada of the outbreak of war between the United Kingdom and Japan) was to be taken as the signal for certain actions recommended in the report, or whether such actions should be deferred until Canada formally entered the war. The specific questions were:

Upon the receipt of the "war telegram" -

Defence (Mr. Power),  
The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley),  
The Minister of Munitions and Supply  
(Mr. Howe).

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

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Upon the receipt of the "war telegram" -

(a) should the Canadian Armed Forces, and, in particular, the Canadian Navy, be ordered to engage the Japanese?

(b) should communications with Japan be terminated?

(c) should the R.C.M. Police intern (but not technically as "enemy aliens") the small

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number of Japanese who, in their opinion, should be interned for cause?

(d) should the Japanese Legation and Consulate be closed?

(See External Affairs memorandum of October 21st, 1941.)

2. The Associate Minister of National Defence observed that it was altogether likely that hostilities would commence without any formal declaration of war, possibly by a Japanese attack on Vladivostock.

3. Mr. Heeney reported that the Prime Minister had expressed his views on the questions raised by External Affairs: receipt of the "war telegram" should not be taken as the signal for Canadian Forces to engage the Japanese, unless they were attacked; termination of communications would depend on their nature; the R.C.M. Police should proceed with internments; the Japanese Legation and Consulate should be closed if Canadian offices were closed in Tokyo.

4. After some discussion, the Committee agreed that, upon the outbreak of war between the United Kingdom and Japan:

(a) Canadian Forces should not be given orders to engage the Japanese, unless they were attacked; the government would, at the time, decide upon the orders to be given;

(b) there should be no arbitrary and automatic suspension of communications with Japan; the code and cypher privileges of the Japanese Legation might be withdrawn;

(c) the R.C.M. Police should proceed with the internment of such Japanese as they thought should be interned for cause; and

(d) it would probably be thought expedient to close the Japanese Legation and Consulate in Canada without awaiting similar action in respect of the Canadian Legation in Tokyo; this question should await decision in the event.