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COMMUNICATIONS FROM JAPAN

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Binder No. 1

March 11, 1937 to May 5, 1939



RECEIVED
THE FOREIGN SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
1938 JUN 17 PM 1 04



AMERICAN EMBASSY

Tokyo, May 31, 1938.

NO. 2976

SUBJECT: SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS.



Grade		In U.S.A.	
For			ONI MID

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O.N.I. *after* M.I.D.
efl



761.94/1047

The Honorable
Secretary of State
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to observe that although reports of increased military activities along the Manchurian-Siberian border and at Vladivostok have been seeping through, from time to time during the past few weeks, from sources of varying reliability, and that to observers at Harbin the situation appears to be increasingly threatening,* Soviet-Japanese relations appear to be at present in about the same state of quiescence as they were at the writing of the Embassy's last

FILED
JUN 24 1938

*Despatch No. 59 of May 14, 1938 from Harbin.

last despatch on the subject*, with no greater or no less likelihood of an immediate outbreak of hostilities than existed ten weeks ago.

Frontier and other irritating incidents continue to occur and the usual protests are made; on March 28 last the Japanese Ambassador at Moscow, Mr. Shigemitsu, made strong representations to the Soviet Government protesting against the continued assistance extended by the Soviet Government to the Chiang Kai-shek régime and the press release concerning these representations stated that it was estimated that up to that date the Soviets had furnished 500 airplanes and about 200 pilots and mechanics to China. Foreign Commissar Litvinov is reported to have replied that Soviet Russia was not alone in selling arms to China, that the Soviet Government has sent no individuals to China for the purpose of engaging in warfare and that Japan has not protested against volunteers from other countries. To this Ambassador Shigemitsu is said to have replied that under the Soviet system no such things as volunteers can exist; furthermore, that no individuals can leave Soviet territory without the knowledge and permission of the Government. All these facts have, of course, been duly reported in the press here and there have been a few editorials on the subject of Soviet Russia's insincerity in meeting the Japanese protests and representations; but, on the whole, there has been an obvious tendency to "play down" the question of Soviet relations in the Japanese press - a tendency which has been in evidence here ever since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese hostilities.

The

12769* Despatch No. 2820 of March 18, 1938.

8177 Chinese
Japan in Manchukuo

The negotiations which are in progress for the purpose of settling many of the troublesome questions outstanding between the two countries, such as the release of a Soviet mail plane held in "Manchukuo", the release of two Soviet ships held in Japan, the release of several Japanese vessels and crews held by the Soviets, the payment of the last installment on the Chinese Eastern Railway, the resumption of parcel post service between the two countries, the consideration of Japanese petitions relating to the North Saghalien concessions, the retention of certain Japanese Consulates ordered closed by the Soviet authorities, etc., are making little, if any, progress but there is nothing new in such a state of affairs. Relations between these two countries have been during recent years governed by a mutual policy of retaliation and counter-retaliation, threat and counter-threat, and a constant jockeying for position interspersed with bluff and truculence with no disposition, however, to let matters get out of hand to such an extent that they would lead to hostilities.

There is undoubtedly a group within the military, and possibly a group outside the military, which feels that war with Soviet Russia is inevitable and that after the China situation is well in hand and before the military forces are demobilized it will be desirable to settle with Russia. There is, however, no evidence at present to support the belief that even the extremist group feels that the time is yet ripe for such a move; in fact the evidence would tend to point in the opposite direction. The April defeat of the Japanese forces at Taierchwang and the recent effort expended by the Japanese in taking Hsuehow showed

the

the military that the Chinese question cannot be solved, so far its military aspects are concerned, by an economy of either troops or equipment and that the Chinese campaign will require more attention than, perhaps, was at first estimated. If the Japanese intend to push on to Hankow, as it now appears likely that they will do, and even to Canton, it is obvious that their military resources will be taxed to an increasingly greater extent. As the campaign progresses they will, therefore, be less and less able to spare the necessary troops to guard the Manchurian-Siberian frontier, and much less to undertake an offensive against Soviet Russia.

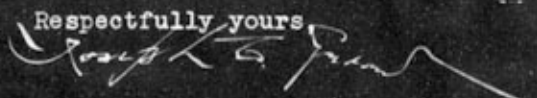
Manchuria has been used to some extent somewhat in the manner of a reservoir into which troops have been poured from Japan through Korea and elsewhere and from which troops have been drawn off into North China. The level of this reservoir has varied in height to an extent corresponding roughly to the number of Soviet troops maintained on the other side of the frontier. As the Soviets have increased these troops, so has the level of Japanese troops in Manchuria been increased, for defensive purposes. However, it is not reasonable to infer that Japan will undertake an offensive against the Soviets, that they will attack unless attacked, until such time as Japan can confront her opponent with a greater number of troops. And with the present increased effort to the southward taxing the Japanese resources to a greater extent than at any time since the beginning of the North China campaign, it does not appeal to common sense that they should choose this moment, or the near future, to assume the additional burden of an offensive against Russia.

The opinion is accordingly advanced that the state of tension which appears to be noticeable in Manchuria may be due to a possible increase in the number of troops in that area merely to offset the increase noted of Soviet troops in Siberia, rather than to preparations on the part of the Japanese to launch an attack upon the Russians at this time when a realization of the seriousness of the China situation is becoming increasingly evident in Japan.

The foregoing opinion is of course predicated upon the supposition that an outbreak of hostilities with Soviet Russia would depend not upon the initiative of the Soviets but of the Japanese.

The Soviet Ambassador, Mr. Mikhail Slavutsky, who assumed the duties of his office only in September, 1937, has announced his resignation and will leave Tokyo on June 6. He took formal leave of the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hirota, on May 24, and upon that occasion Mr. Hirota is reported by the press to have said: "We regret exceedingly your departure at this time when so many issues are pending between Japan and Soviet Russia".

Respectfully yours,



Joseph C. Grew.

710
ESC:s

Copy to Ambassador Johnson.
Copy to Embassy, Moscow.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

1-1886

FROM

ML

This message must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

Tokyo

Dated September 6, 1938

Rec'd 6:39 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

DIVISION OF
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

SEP 7 1938

Department of State

DIVISION OF

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

SEP 6 1938

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

582, September 6, 4 p. m.

I learn on reliable authority that the German Ambassador recently called together the leading members of the German community in Tokyo and advised them "to be ready for anything". The implication, as reflecting the European situation, is obvious but I have no means of evaluating the report except that one of my more conservative and substantial colleagues, who told me of the German Ambassador's action, has cabled it to his government as reliable and ^{significant} ~~important~~.

GREW

ALC

~~(//) apparent omission~~

760F.62/659

SEP 9 1938

FILED

CDG

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

EG

A portion of this message must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. SEP 20 1938

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State,

Washington.

609, September 20, 6 p.m.

(GRAY) Our 608, September 19, 4 p.m.

One. With regard to the statement given out by the Foreign Office on September 14, which the Embassy assumes was published in the United States, a translation prepared by the Embassy of the pertinent passage in the Japanese text reads that in connection with the Sudeten problem Japan "is prepared to resist the mechanisms of the Comintern in cooperation with Germany and Italy and in accordance with the spirit of the anti-Comintern pact", whereas the official English translation given out simultaneously by the Foreign Office states that Japan "is prepared as ever to join forces with Germany and Italy for fighting against red operations in accordance with the spirit of the anti-Comintern Agreement". The discrepancy in the tone if not in the phraseology of the two versions is obvious.

Two. CONFIDENTIAL. My British colleague yesterday called the English version to the attention of the Vice Minister

Tokyo

Dated September 20, 1938

Rec'd 10:45 a.m.

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in strict confidence

Division of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

SEP 20 1938

760F. 62/924

SEP 23 1938

FILED
GDD

-2- #609, September 20, 6 p.m. from Tokyo

Minister for Foreign Affairs who denied categorically that this should be interpreted as meaning that if the Czechoslovak crisis should lead to war, Japan intended to align herself with Germany and Italy. The intention of the statement was to show that Japan as a party to the anti-Comintern Pact was concerned in combating the Comintern activities which the Japanese Government believed to be largely responsible for present difficulties in Czechoslovakia. The Vice Minister said that the statement referred to Comintern activities only and that it would be quite wrong to give it a wider interpretation.

Three. With regard to the press report of a statement allegedly given out by the Japanese Ambassador in Rome on September 16, the Vice Minister said that no (repeat no) instruction to that effect has been sent to the Japanese Embassy in Rome and that no (repeat no) report of such a step had been received from the Embassy. (END GRAY).

76194
Four. STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. My British colleague has informed his Government that in the event of war in Europe he does not believe that Japan will attack Soviet Russia, at least not immediately, but will await developments, meanwhile intensifying Japanese operations in China with

EDA - 3 - #609m September 20, 6 p.m. from Tokyo

with greater ruthlessness against foreign interests.

Five. Craigie believes that in case of war in Europe, Japan will carefully watch the attitude of the United States because the development which Japan would most fear would be combined action of the United States, Great Britain and Soviet Russia against her which would spell her ruin. Craigie entered a long plea during our talk today that we "keep Japan guessing" upon uncertainty as to possible action by the United States would exert a powerful restraint on Japanese depredations against foreign interests in China.

Six. With regard to Japan's current interference with British interests in China, the Vice Minister acknowledged that this was due not only to the present anti-British wave of feeling in Japan but also to the intrinsic military difficulties in complying with British desiderata.

Seven. Craigie expects to pursue his series of interviews with the Minister for Foreign Affairs later this week.

GREW

KLP

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

1-1336

IC
This message must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

Secretary of State,
Washington.

626, September 27, 9 p.m.

Our 609, September 20, 6 p.m., crisis in Europe.

One. Unlike Italy, which apparently is issuing repeated if equivocal expressions of intention to take the part of Germany in the event of a general war in Europe, Japan has made no public or other authoritative declaration of her position. Although there is some desire by extreme reactionary and other irresponsible popular elements for military alignment by Japan with Germany, the predominant feeling is one of strong hope that not only will Japan avoid becoming involved but that a general conflagration may be avoided. The evident anxiety of the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs in his conversations with my British colleague to discourage assumption of Japanese military alignment with Germany is, we believe, reflective of such hope.

Two. It is impossible at this time to make any estimate of Japanese attitude in a situation which may have developed in

FROM

Tokyo

Dated September 27, 1938

Rec'd 1:10 p.m.

appropria
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in confidence

Paraphrased Sept 28, 1938

Division of

FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

SEP 27 1938

Department of State

rm

VAA

760F.62/1156

626

FILED

SEP 28 1938

*mt
242 94*

-2- #626, September 27, 9 p.m. from Tokyo

in Europe beyond the opening gambit. It is our opinion that in the circumstances predicated Japan will take no initiative toward, or alternatively will try to avoid, becoming involved. We base our conclusions on the following considerations: (a) As a corollary to the fundamental Japanese policy of seeking to eliminate Occidental political influence from the Far East, there has been since 1931 steady withdrawal by Japan from participation in the affairs of Europe; (b) with a declining export trade, Japan has thus far been able to finance purchase of munitions for the conflict with China and of other necessary primary commodities only by resort to drastic trade control. Even if Japan were to remain neutral, the worldwide economic dislocations which must inevitably follow an outbreak of a general European war would add immeasurably to her difficulties, first, in maintaining her overseas markets and second, in procuring munitions and raw materials. There is very grave doubt whether in such circumstances she could afford to lose, by joining Germany, her British, French and possibly other markets and sources of supply. There is some optimistic speculation over the possibility of Japan benefitting by decrease of

of

-3- #626, September 27, 9 p.m. from Tokyo

of European goods in world markets, but the question arises whether Japan has the resources necessary to exploit such opportunity.

Three. It is reasonable to believe that Japan in her present position would prefer to a general war in Europe a continuation of the conditions of unrest which have prevailed there for some years - conditions which have prevented Great Britain especially from active intervention in the Far East.

Four. In the event of war actually breaking out, I propose as on my own initiative to inquire of the Minister for Foreign Affairs with regard to the attitude and (*) of the Japanese Government, provided the Department does not cable disapproval of such a step.

GREW

GW:CSB

(*) Omission

of paraphrase
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in confidence. E.F.L.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

EG

This message must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

Tokyo

Dated September 28, 1938

FROM

Rec'd 1 p.m.
paraphrased Sept 29 1938

Secretary of State

Washington

FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
SEP 29 1938
Department of State

631, September 28, 9 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL

Our 609, September 20, 6 p.m.

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
SEP 29 1938

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

One. In conversation today the Vice Minister
for Foreign Affairs told my British colleague that
there had been no change in the attitude of the
Japanese Government towards a possible conflict in
Europe since their interview on September 19, but
acknowledged that the Government was under great
and increasing pressure from reactionary elements
and especially from the various patriotic societies,
now being consolidated and incited under the leader-
ship of Toyama, to join Germany and Italy actively
in war, should war occur. The Vice Minister said
that the principal basis for this movement was the
strong anti-British feeling in Japan engendered by
the supposition that Great Britain's support of Chiang
Kai Shek is largely responsible for the latter's

continued

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GDC

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OCT 5 - 1938

-2- #631, September 28, 9 p.m. from Tokyo

continued resistance to Japanese arms. The Vice Minister acknowledged that this supposition was a misconception of the facts but said that the theory generally existed none the less.

Two. Craigie and Horinouchi were in agreement that some substantial gesture indicative of Anglo-Japanese friendship might serve to improve the atmosphere although it does not appear that any concrete proposals were discussed or advanced.

Three. The proposal of the Foreign Minister, reported in our 633, September 28, midnight, might however be regarded as pertinent.

Four. Craigie considers that the publicity to be given by the Foreign Office expressing the full agreement of the Japanese Government with the action taken by the President in the controversy between Germany and Czechoslovakia (see our 630, September 28, 6 p.m.) will be very helpful as placing the Japanese Government's attitude squarely on record. The Vice Minister, in referring to my demarche to the Minister this afternoon, told Craigie that the reason for the hesitancy of the Japanese Government to accede to our Government's proposal that it take
action

-3- #631, September 28, 9 p.m. from Tokyo

action similar to that of the President was the feeling that being engaged in hostilities itself, it might be embarrassing for Japan to issue such an appeal to other nations.

GREW

KLP



RECEIVED
THE FOREIGN SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1938 OCT 21 AM 11 57

No. 3306.

AMERICAN EMBASSY

Tokyo, October 6, 1938.

SUBJECT: THE ATTITUDE OF JAPAN WITH REGARD TO THE RECENT
CRISIS IN EUROPE.

For Distribution Check		Yes	No
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Ser	In U.S.A.	☒	

ONI-MID (separated)

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DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OCT 21 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Copy in FE
DIVISION OF
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
OCT 24 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Sir:

In my telegram 626, September 27, 9 p.m. I had the honor to present our analysis of the attitude of Japan with regard to the war which was then apparently impending in Europe. I stated that there were reactionary elements among the Japanese populace which were actively agitating for the giving of military support by Japan to Germany, but I expressed the opinion that the predominant feeling in this country was one of hope that not only would Japan avoid

760F.62/1740

GDC

NOV 1 1938

avoid becoming involved in any general conflagration in Europe but that the calamity itself could be prevented. When, as a result of the agreement reached at Munich by the heads of government of Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, the immediate likelihood of war was removed, certain of my colleagues believed that the predominant reaction of Japan to this development was one of profound disappointment. Happily, there did not eventuate that catastrophic conclusion to the prolonged efforts of the statesmen of Europe to find a peaceful settlement of the issue between Germany and Czechoslovakia which alone could have brought forth an authoritative expression of the position of the Japanese Government; and I fervently hope that there will never arise any occasion or need for clarification of Japan's position in this respect. However, as the alignments among the nations of Europe and the tension between the rival camps have not yet been entirely dissolved or relaxed, a discussion of the question whether a general war in Europe would be welcomed by Japan may be of something more than academic interest.

In my telegram under reference, the first consideration on which was based our conclusion that Japan desired for Europe a peaceful issue out of all its difficulties is the policy which the Japanese Government has consistently pursued since 1931, of withdrawal from participation in the affairs of Europe. This consideration was mentioned first for the reason that it has a fairly extended historical background.

background.

The inclusion of Japan among the Principal Allied and Associated Powers in the war against the Central European Powers, which gave Japan a voice in the settlement of a number of European problems of not even the most remote concern to Japan, gratified the aspirations of the Japanese people to be numbered among the great Powers. It was flattering to be given a permanent seat in the Council of the League of Nations and to have a voice in such matters as, for example, the final disposition of Bessarabia. However, that outburst of chauvinism and nationalism -- the conflict with China in Manchuria -- was also a manifestation of a policy which had long been agitated in Japan, of eliminating Occidental influences from the Far East. It was obvious that practical considerations, notably the limited economic and military resources of Japan, attached to the cry of "East Asia for the Japanese" the corollary that Japan could not undertake to oust European influence from the Far East and at the same time continue to participate in the management of the affairs of Europe, with all the risks and hazards which that involved. Judgment pronounced on Japan by the League of Nations in February 1933 gave further impetus to the retreat from Europe, and by 1936 Japan found itself in a state of complete political isolation. True, in 1936 she concluded an agreement with Germany ostensibly to combat the spread of communism and in the following year associated herself also with Italy by a similar instrument. It is recalled that the Japanese Minister

Minister for Foreign Affairs stated, with reference to the Convention with Germany, that one of the purposes in concluding that agreement was to open a way for Japan to escape from the isolation which encompassed her and to proceed by gradual stages toward the development of more friendly relations with the other great Powers. It might therefore be reasonable to assume that Japan had found occasion to regret her withdrawal from Europe. However, it is unlikely that such an assumption contains the whole truth or even a large portion of the truth. There exists today, as there has existed for some years past, a section of the Japanese people which regrets, and even regrets bitterly, the chain of events which began with the Japanese military occupation of Manchuria in 1931, and which yearns for the "good old days" when Japan was a member in good standing of the family of nations. Nevertheless, even this element realizes that Japan will not of its own accord retrace its steps, and that the road back cannot be by way of the anti-Comintern Pact. Nor is there any warrant whatever for assuming that the Army has any intention of becoming embroiled in troubles in Europe under anything short of the most compelling reasons. The fact that the economic dislocations which would follow the outbreak of war in Europe was cited by us as one of the reasons for Japanese hope that the crisis in Europe would be successfully surmounted, may perhaps be queried by those who remember that the World War brought about a period of unprecedented prosperity in Japan. However, it must be remembered that Japan today is not in the same position that she was in 1914 and subsequent years.

In

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In

In 1914-18 the diversion of the industrial and economic resources of Europe to the production of munitions and the blockading of the Central European Powers resulted in a virtual vacuum in world markets for manufactured articles. Whereas a large part of the merchant marine of the combatants was either inactive or engaged in the carrying of troops and munitions, the Japanese merchant marine, which even in those days was of substantial size, was left free for the development and expansion of Japan's commerce. The war was a god-sent hope which Japan exploited to the limits of its resources, then unencumbered by the exigencies of the conduct of military operations. Today, however, Japan is engaged in China in hostilities over a front line of more than one thousand miles, she has about 1,300,000 men under arms, her financial and economic structure is being preserved only by recourse to trade, fiscal, industrial and other control measures of the most drastic character, while a substantial portion of her merchant shipping is being used to munition her forces in China. In the unfavorable circumstances existing today only an incorrigible optimist would believe that it would be possible for Japan, were a general war to break out in Europe, even to maintain her diminished export trade to a point necessary for the purchase of the most essential commodities, to say nothing of having the industrial and financial reserves essential for replacement in world markets of goods which had thus far been supplied by Europe. Now, in these circumstances, it would

would be possible for Japan to deprive herself completely, first of British Empire markets and next of other markets beyond the effective sphere of influence of the Japanese Navy, without there resulting a collapse of her economic structure, it is difficult to see.

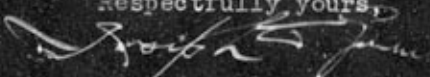
There is a third, and perhaps the most important, consideration of all. When our telegram under reference was being prepared it was not known that, along with ultra-nationalistic private organizations which placarded the streets of Tokyo with demands that Japan take advantage of war in Europe to move against Soviet Russia, a substantial feeling existed in the Army that Japan should take advantage of an opportunity which might never again occur to settle once and for all its account with that country. Several responsible Japanese officials have recently informed us in confidence that, if a general war had broken out in Europe, it would have been impossible for the Japanese Government to have continued successfully to resist such demand; that with Japan allied with Germany and possibly with Italy against Great Britain, France, and Soviet Russia, the entry into the war of the United States on the side of the democratic Powers would have been a virtual certainty; and that with the United States also in arms against Japan there could have been but one conclusion -- and that a disastrous one for Japan.

There no doubt exists among uneducated Japanese, and even among some of those Japanese who are in a position to have an intelligent perception of the situation, a feeling of disappointment that the final conference at Munich did
not

not prove abortive, and thus have made it impossible for the democratic Powers of Europe, especially Great Britain, to intervene forcibly in the Far East. Although a conflagration in Europe would have given Japan a completely free hand in China, I cannot believe that the trend of events involving Japan which would have been started with inevitable certainty by a war in Europe and which might well have ultimately concluded in the collapse of the Japanese Empire, was not clearly apparent to those elements and individuals who are now formulating the policies of this country.

1-3/ There are enclosed memoranda of conversations which I had with my British colleague when the subject of the Japanese attitude toward the situation in Europe was discussed. I think it will be clear from the various statements made to Sir Robert Craigie by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs that it was not the desire of the Japanese Government that there should prevail the belief that Japan would necessarily give military support to Germany in the event of a war in Europe.

Respectfully yours,



Joseph G. Grew.

Enclosures:

1. Copy of memorandum of conversation - Mr. Grew - The British Ambassador, September 19, 1938.
2. Copy of a memorandum of conversation - Mr. Grew - The British Ambassador, September 20, 1938.
3. Copy of memorandum of conversation - Mr. Grew - The British Ambassador, September 28, 1938.

800.

END:r

Conversation

September 19, 1938.

The American Ambassador, Mr. Crew, with
the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Craigie.

Subject: Anglo-Japanese Relations.

74194
The British Ambassador told me today that, carrying on their series of conversations, the Minister for Foreign Affairs received him towards the end of last week and reiterated his previous observation that Japanese concessions to Great Britain in China would be impossible until Great Britain deserted Chiang Kai-shek and ceased to aid him. While Sir Robert Craigie admitted that British moral sympathy lay with Chiang Kai-shek, he pointed out that little material assistance had been afforded him and that Germany and other nations had supplied him to a much greater extent with arms and munitions. Furthermore, with reference to the Japanese grievances against the British Navy, which the Minister had mentioned at their last interview, Sir Robert pointed out that these did not necessarily represent the attitude of the British Government since they chiefly concerned individual acts by officers and men. Sir Robert Craigie asked for a more detailed list of these grievances which the Minister agreed to furnish him. Nothing favorable resulted from a renewed discussion of Sir Robert Craigie's five points.

When asked by the Foreign Minister whether he was now in a position to give assurances as to the intention of Great Britain to cooperate in future with Japan in China, Sir Robert made the reply that it was obviously impossible to give future assurances until current difficulties were settled.

It

It is noted by Sir Robert Craigie in his analysis of the situation that the attitude of the Japanese Government toward Great Britain underwent a marked change toward the end of July at about the time of Ambassador Ott's return from Berlin, and it is Sir Robert Craigie's belief that although adverse statements of representatives of the British Government in Parliament may have influenced the issue, messages from the German Government conveyed by General Ott contained a forewarning of the European crisis and tended to increase Japan's resistance.

Sir Robert Craigie's attention was called by me to a press report concerning assurances given by the Japanese Ambassador in Rome to the Italian Government of Japan's support of Italy and Germany should war be declared. Sir Robert Craigie proposes to discuss with the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs this report and also a similar statement made by the spokesman of the Foreign Office in Tokyo last week and will inform me tomorrow concerning this.

Sir Robert Craigie went on to expatiate at length on the great importance to British and American interests in China of maintaining Chiang Kai-shek in the picture, especially in case of a European war, expressing his belief that perhaps a decisive effect would be exerted by even a comparatively nominal subsidy from Great Britain and the United States. I explained once again to Sir Robert Craigie the position of the American Government in this respect.

Confidential

Conversation

September 20, 1938.

The American Ambassador, Mr. Grew, with
the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Craigie.

Subject: European Situation.

With regard to the statement given out by the Foreign Office on September 14, which the Embassy assumes was published in the United States, a translation prepared by the Embassy of the pertinent passage in the Japanese text reads that in connection with the Sudeten problem Japan "is prepared to resist the machinations of the Comintern in cooperation with Germany and Italy and in accordance with the spirit of the Anti-Comintern Pact", whereas the official English translation given out simultaneously by the Foreign Office states that Japan "is prepared as ever to join forces with Germany and Italy for fighting against Red operations in accordance with the spirit of the Anti-Comintern Agreement." The discrepancy in the tone if not in the phraseology of the two versions is obvious.

With regard to this discrepancy in the two texts of the announcement, Sir Robert Craigie is inclined to believe that while the original Japanese text may have been approved by the Minister himself the English translation was probably drawn up by the connivance of some of the younger officials in the Foreign Office very likely spurred on by certain officials in the German Embassy. Sir Robert asked me whether I thought Tsuchiya, the English interpreter in our conversations with the Foreign Minister, was entirely reliable. I said that my own impression of Tsuchiya was favorable and I thought that he was probably straight. However, I was accustomed to taking no chances on errors in interpreting in my important interviews
with

with General Ugaki and I therefore had the habit of writing out in advance everything that I was going to say and leaving the text informally with the Minister as a record of our conversation. It was thus impossible for mistakes to be made. Sir Robert said that he agreed with my estimate of Tsuchiya, that he himself now was accustomed to taking Mr. Sawbridge, one of his language officers, to his interviews, ostensibly on the ground of "helping" Tsuchiya. Sir Robert said there had recently been a case where in an interview with the Foreign Minister he had protested against the "harsh and provocative conduct" of the Japanese military in China which Tsuchiya had interpreted to the Minister. Later in the day Sir Robert received a call from the Foreign Office saying the Minister would be glad to learn just what actions of the Japanese military Sir Robert had in mind in protesting against their "monstrous conduct". Sir Robert said that clearly showed how easily mistakes could occur in interpretation and it was obvious that Tsuchiya had not tried to distort his meaning because it was Tsuchiya himself who made the inquiry by telephone afterwards.

Sir Robert Craigie does not believe that in the event of war in Europe Japan will attack Soviet Russia, at least not immediately, and has so informed his Government. He believes that Japan will await developments, meanwhile carrying on more intense operations in China in which foreign interests will have less consideration.

It is Sir Robert Craigie's belief that in the event of war in Europe, Japan will watch carefully the American Government's attitude since Japan would fear most the possibility

of

of combined action of the United States, Great Britain, and Soviet Russia against her. Sir Robert Craigie in our talk today made a long plea that the United States keep Japan guessing since the resulting uncertainty as to our action would be a powerful restraint against the injury to foreign interests in China by Japan.

The Vice Minister acknowledged to Sir Robert Craigie that Japan's current interference with British interests in China was due to certain basic military difficulties in complying with British desiderata as well as to the present anti-British feeling in Japan.

Sir Robert Craigie expects to continue later this week his series of interviews with the Foreign Minister.

Conversation.

September 28, 1938.

The American Ambassador, Mr. Grew, with the
British Ambassador, Sir Robert Craigie.

Subject: European Situation.

The British Ambassador called upon me this evening and informed me that in a conversation today the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs had told him that Japan's attitude towards a possible conflict in Europe had not changed since their interview on September 19, although he acknowledged that great and increasing pressure was being exerted on the Government from reactionary elements and various patriotic societies under the leadership of Toyama to join Germany and Italy actively in the event of war. The principal basis for this movement, according to the Vice Minister, was said to be the strong anti-British feeling in Japan caused by Great Britain's alleged support of Chiang Kai-shek which is claimed to be responsible for the latter's continued resistance. Although it was admitted by the Vice Minister that this supposition was a misconception of the facts, none the less he said that the theory generally existed.

Sir Robert said that both he and the Vice Minister agreed that the atmosphere might be improved by some substantial gesture indicative of Anglo-Japanese friendship.

Sir Robert Craigie is of the opinion that the publicity to be given by the Foreign Office expressing the Japanese Government's full agreement with the President's action in
the

the controversy between Germany and Czechoslovakia will help greatly to place the Japanese Government's attitude squarely on record. The Vice Minister told Sir Robert Craigie, in referring to my démarche to the Minister this afternoon, that the Japanese Government had hesitated to accede to our Government's proposal because of the feeling that it might be embarrassing for Japan to issue such an appeal to other nations since it was engaged in hostilities itself.

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DIVISION OF

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

OCT 14 1938

TOKYO

ULPAN MINE

Dated October 10, 1938

FROM

Rec'd 7:30 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

COPIES SENT TO
O.N.I. AND M.I.D.

in strict confidence

655, October 10, midnight.

Our 626, September 27, 9 p.m.

One. We have substantial confirmation of the accuracy of our analysis of the official Japanese attitude toward war in Europe which seemed inevitable two weeks ago, and we believe that such attitude remains unchanged even though it is obvious that over the short haul such a war would give Japan freedom from European intervention in China. However, the apparent success with which Chamberlain is exploiting the momentum given by the Munich agreement to his policy of appeasement is being noted here with concern. The possibility of the Far East being brought by the European powers within the compass of a plan for assuring a general peace is under discussion, one leading paper today suggesting the likelihood that a move with such end in view may be made by Britain and France jointly with Germany and Italy in the event of the present Anglo-Italian conversations and projected French-Italian conversations ending in friendly arrangements.

Two. The Department will appreciate that the scarcity

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OCT 18 1938

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--2--655 from Tokyo..

here of any but tendentious or otherwise unreliable news with regard to European developments makes it difficult for us to place in accurate perspective Japanese discussions of the nature above indicated. As stated in my previous telegram on this subject, Japan would have preferred to a European war the continuation in that area of conditions of unrest and alarm. We assume that, whereas the trend in Europe is definitely favorable, progress has not yet been made to a point where definite thought is being given to the Far East. If that assumption is correct, Japanese anticipation at this early date of possible European intervention in the Far East would appear to betray absence of confidence in continued support from Fascist countries and a state of nervousness over the future hitherto not apparent. It may be significant in this connection that much prominence is being given to reported assurances received from Poland and Peru that these countries will not apply economic sanctions against Japan.

793.94
Three. The increased vigor shown in the last few days in the Japanese offensive on Hankow may be due, as is suggested by one paper today, to desire to reach that objective in anticipation of European developments referred to in paragraph one above.

Repeated to Canton for Chungking.

GRE

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

OCT 15 1938

MJD

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FROM

Tokyo

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Dated October 12, 1938.

Rec'd. 7:45 a. m.

This telegram must be
closely paraphrased
before being communicated
to anyone. (C)

of paraphrase
COPIES SENT TO
O.N.I. AND M.I.D.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

661, October 12, 4 p. m.

CONFIDENTIAL.



My British colleague yesterday in his conversation with the Vice Minister referred to a recent press interview in which the Prime Minister had advocated the strengthening of the anti-Comintern Pact. Craigie said he had heard from reliable sources that great pressure is being brought to bear on the Japanese Government to conclude actual alliances with Germany and Italy. If this were done, the move could only be interpreted as hostile to Great Britain and as dividing the world still further into hostile camps. So long as the Pact was aimed exclusively against the Comintern, Great Britain could have no good grounds for protests, but formal alliances with the totalitarian states would be quite a different matter. Craigie elaborated on the unfortunate effect which such alliances would exert on the current efforts to ensure peace in Europe.

It was noticeable that Horinouchi made no denial of the report.

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OCT 19 1938

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MJD -2- No. 661, October 12, 4 p. m. from Tokyo

report. Craigie believes that the German Ambassador returned from Berlin in the summer with definite instructions to strengthen the anti-Comintern Pact and that he is bringing steady pressure to bear on the Japanese Government.

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WWC

CSB

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



JR
This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

FROM Tokyo

Dated November 2, 1938

Rec'd 10:38 a.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

741.94
700, November 2, 6 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.



One. My British colleague told me today that last summer an inter-departmental conference took place in London for the purpose of considering possible methods of retaliation against Japan as pressure to relieve Japanese encroachments on British interests in China. Three specific methods were discussed:

(a) A resort to the same petty tactics employed by the Japanese in placing difficulties in the way of British trade and shipping through discriminatory delays and other not illegal annoyances.

(b) Partial denunciation of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of commerce and navigation of 1911 by rendering it inapplicable to certain outlying possessions such as Singapore;

(c) Total denunciation of the treaty.

Two. Craigie and the British Ambassador in China were respectively instructed to study this question and to report their recommendations after consulting the British

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CONFIDENTIAL

-2- #700, November 2, 6 p.m., from Tokyo.

British Consuls in Japan and China.

Three. A paraphrase of Craigie's telegraphic report to London which was sent some ten days ago follows:

"RETALIATION.

The opinion has been reached, after careful consideration with the senior members of my staff, that no advantage would be gained by the gradual execution of a policy of reprisals working up from petty annoyances to denunciation but that the decision should first be made whether we are prepared to accept all the consequences of denunciation and if so prepared a denunciation in toto (underlined) should be made after fair warning to Japan. The merit of this course is that it is justifiable on the principle that most favored nation treatment cannot continually be accorded to a country which does not fulfill its treaty obligations (i.e. Nine Power Treaty), and thus it is consonant with the recent note of the United States.

I still stand by the view, however, with regard to the consequences of denunciation, that reaction would be very serious and I venture to express the view that the letter to the Departments of August 23rd somewhat underestimates the risks. As stated in paragraph six of that

-3- #700, November 2, 6 p.m., from Tokyo.

that letter, I agree that the Japanese Government would be reluctant to add to their international complications but it is my opinion that in their present mood they might even take the risk of becoming embroiled with us if a step which would in effect be indistinguishable from sanctions were to be taken by us. Evidence of their present temper is the expedition to South China.

I doubt, however, if there is necessity of running this risk. Since denunciation cannot come into effect for a year, no practical results can be expected before the beginning of 1940. Although we cannot possibly say what the situation here will be then, the evidence before me makes it difficult to see whether China or Japan was nearer to financial exhaustion even before the Japanese expedition to South China. Since, by this expedition, the Japanese have so greatly extended their commitments, it is difficult to avoid the deduction that the pace at which Japanese resources must now steadily diminish will render unnecessary any effort on our part (at the sacrifice at best of friendship after the war) to hasten the end before 1940 at all events. At the same time as we continue to maintain our condemnation of Japan's aggression and observe

CORRECTED PAGE FOUR

-4- #700, November 2, 6 p.m., from Tokyo.

observe the terms of the League resolution, I presume that our object is to maintain friendly relations with both belligerents without giving justification to either when peace comes for making claims that the other has been unduly favored by us. I should prefer if my diagnosis is correct to put up with the temporary losses which British interests have suffered in China (many I understand have in fact not done so badly during the crisis) in order that during the peace negotiations and afterwards we may play our part. We can do this only if we do not leave a lasting grievance with the Japanese as we did with the Italians".

GREW

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



AMERICAN EMBASSY

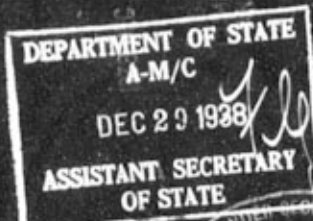
No. 3502

Tokyo, December 2, 1938

SUBJECT: BERLIN-ROME-TOKYO AXIS.

DEC 17 AM 11 12

RECORDS



The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington

Sir:

There has recently been a marked renewal of activities along the lines of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis and evidence of a strengthening of the relations between Japan and the states with totalitarian or authoritarian forms of government--Soviet Russia always excepted. These activities are, of course, somewhat seasonal, as the month of November marks the

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the anniversaries of the anti-comintern pacts with Germany and with Italy, but this fact alone would not account for Japan's increasingly strong swing toward those and other non-democratic states.

Celebrations here began on November 6, which marked the first anniversary of the Italo-German-Japanese anti-comintern pact, and ended on November 25, the second anniversary of the conclusion of the German-Japanese anti-comintern pact, with the signature, in Tokyo, of a cultural convention with Germany. This pact, which is similar to one signed at Rome on November 23 between Germany and Italy, consists of a preamble in which the contracting parties express the intention to strengthen "bonds of friendship and mutual confidence" by "deepening their manifold cultural relations", and of four articles which in effect provide for the promotion of relations in the fields of "science and fine arts, music and literature, youth movements, sports, et cetera". The text of the convention, together with the Foreign Office's statement accompanying its publication, as it appeared in the JAPAN ADVERTISER of November 26, is enclosed.

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This convention probably carries no secret clauses but, as remarked in the press (NICHU-NICHU of November 25, 1938), "necessarily pushes the anti-comintern pact another step forward". As stated in the Embassy's telegram reporting its signature,*

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*Embassy's telegram no. 751, November 26, noon.

the convention is obviously a significant indication of the trend toward a closer political association of Japan and Germany and a part of a program to move, pari passu with each other of Great Britain and France, toward a definite Japanese-German political arrangement.

Since the fall of Canton and the Wuhan cities and the advent of Mr. Arita as Foreign Minister it has become evident that Japan's policy and attitude toward the United States, Great Britain, and France with respect to their rights and interests in China have undergone a marked change. Whereas, up to that time, at least the fiction of support of the Nine Power Treaty, the Open Door, and the principle of equality of treatment was maintained by Japan, this has since been dispelled through the adoption by Japan of a policy of creating "a new order in East Asia" which involves the establishment of a Japan-China-"Manchukuo" bloc and a demand for a modification of the principles of the Open Door and equality of opportunity in China. This reorientation in policy toward the powers with interests in China is part and parcel of Japan's broader policy of attempting to create in East Asia a Japan-dominated self-contained economic and political entity similar to the United States, Russia, or the British Empire. It is now the intention of Japan, as revealed by the Foreign Minister in a recent strictly confidential conversation,* to place itself in a position of security

*Embassy's telegram no. 744, November 16, 3 p.m.

security against the possible application of sanctions either by the League of Nations or "by nations inside and outside the League". Adherence to such a policy would logically tend to find Japan on one side and those powers having interests in China, that is, the United States, Great Britain, and France, on the other side. Furthermore, to the extent to which these three countries, which are incidentally the leading democracies, draw closer to one another--not only in respect of East Asia but in other fields, notably Europe--to the same degree is Japan induced to draw closer to the countries opposed to the democracies, namely Italy and Germany, whose interests in China are, incidentally, negligible. Italy and Germany, too, are outside the League of Nations, along with Japan; and those two countries, with their strong navies and air forces, are becoming more and more potentially valuable to Japan as the risk of pressure from Great Britain and France in the East increases with Japan's announced policy of demanding a revision of the principles which have hitherto provided a measure of protection for foreign rights and interests in China.

It is interesting to note how greatly developments in Europe have favored Japan and how recent events there have drawn Japan into what is becoming the anti-democratic camp. While it is true that
the

the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis was founded upon a common anti-communist ideology, and that it outwardly retains the anti-comintern form, events of world importance, based upon a fundamental cleavage in thought between those countries whose interests lie in the direction of maintaining the post-war status quo and those in whose interests it is to alter it, have aligned the anti-comintern states against the democracies. In the Far East it is the democracies whose interests are being threatened in China by Japan. In Europe it is the democracies whose interests have been and are being threatened by Germany and Italy. The Czechoslovak crisis thus provided an ideal moment for the powers who control the destinies of Japan to launch, simultaneously with the establishment of a China Board, a new policy which is developing into a virtual protectorate over all of China with the continued existence, to say nothing of the protection, of the rights and interests of the foreign powers in that area in the hands of the Japanese military.

The results of the Munich Conference were interpreted by Japan as an admission by the democratic states of their inability to match the strength of the Berlin-Rome axis, and this gave further impetus to the policy of strengthening Japan's ties with that axis.

Still another factor in this policy is the growing sympathy on the part of Japan with the nations

in

in Europe having authoritarian forms of government. The China incident has hastened the establishment of the virtually unchallenged supremacy of the military in the government of Japan. Those liberal or civilian elements whose influence may have been felt, at least beneath the surface of things, prior to the outbreak of the hostilities with China, are today reduced to utter impotence, and something closely approaching an authoritarian form of government under the shogunate of the military may be said to have arrived.

Japan's gravitation toward the circle of authoritarian states has for some time been manifest. It will be recalled that in 1936 a cultural pact was signed between Japan and Poland; this closely followed the signature of the anti-comintern pact with Germany and was Japan's second step toward emerging from its political isolation and a bid for solidarity with a country whose policy was anti-Soviet. It is also interesting to note that Poland's form of government then, as now, closely approached the authoritarian form.

It may be added parenthetically that the news that Poland had, on November 26, suddenly decided to extend her non-aggression pact of 1932 with Soviet Russia until 1945, was badly received by the press here and this action was interpreted as Poland's withdrawal from the anti-comintern bloc. In fact,

so much stir was caused in the editorial columns of the local newspapers that the Polish Ambassador, Mr. Thaddeus de Romer, called upon the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs on the following day to reassure him that Poland's action was not to be construed as prejudicial to the friendly relations with Japan.

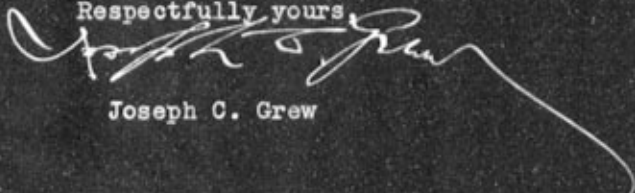
On November 15 a cultural pact was concluded between Japan and Hungary, another state verging on the authoritarian. This pact, incidentally, is reported to take effect upon the same day as the pact with Germany, on November 25.

Japan's association, in varying degrees of intimacy, with the authoritarian states is therefore apparent; this is due somewhat to her sympathy for that particular ideology. The fact, however, that those states, each in its own way, shares some of Japan's own problems is of course the real reason behind this association. Germany and Italy have no axe to grind in the East; they are, moreover, opposed in Europe by the same powers, England and France, as, with the addition of the United States, are opposed by Japan in China. Thus Germany, Italy, and Japan, who were originally drawn together by the common denominator of anti-communism, are now being bound more closely by their common opposition to the so-called democratic states, and this process will probably continue until something occurs in the political field to reverse the circle now in operation.

Such

Such a move might, for instance, be a successful attempt on the part of Great Britain to wean Italy away from the Berlin-Rome axis. At this point, however, we enter the realm of pure speculation.

Respectfully yours



Joseph C. Grew

Enclosure:

Clipping from THE JAPAN ADVERTISER, November 26, 1938.

710

ESC:mg

Copy to Embassy, Rome
Copy to Embassy, Berlin
Copy to Ambassador Johnson
Copy to Embassy, Warsaw

The Japan Advertiser.

Tokyo, Saturday, November 26, 1938.

The text of the agreement follows as translated by the Foreign Office:

"The Imperial Japanese Government and

"The German Government

"Deeply conscious of the fact that the Japanese and German cultures have their true foundations in the intrinsic Japanese spirit on one side and in the German national life on the other side, and that the cultural relations of both countries are to be based thereupon, and

"Being desirous of strengthening more and more the bonds of friendship and mutual confidence so happily connecting both countries already, by deepening their manifold cultural relations and by promoting the mutual knowledge and understanding of both nations have agreed upon the following articles:

"Article I

"The High Contracting States shall strive to put their cultural relations on a firm foundation and shall most closely collaborate with each other in these regards.

"Article II

"In order to attain the aim set forth in the preceding article the high contracting States shall systematically promote their cultural relations in the domains of science and fine arts, music and literature, film and radio, youth movements and sports, et cetera.

"Article III

"The competent authorities of the high contracting States shall decide by mutual agreement the detailed measures necessary for execution of the preceding article.

"Article IV

"The present agreement shall enter into force on the day of its signature. It shall expire 12 months after one of the high contracting States shall have denounced it.

"In witness whereof, the undersigned, duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed the present agreement and affixed thereto their seals.

"Done in duplicate, in Japanese and German original texts, at Tokyo the 15th of November 1938, i.e., the 25th

day of the 11th month of the 13th year of the Showa Period.

"(L.S.) Hachiro Arita, Imperial Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"(L.S.) Eugen Ott, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Germany"

Regarding the agreement, the Foreign Office issued the following statement:

"The cultural relations between Japan and Germany in the domains of medicine, jurisprudence, literature, music, et cetera, have always been particularly close. In the recent past, the general relations of the two countries to each other have become even closer, especially since the conclusion of the anti-Comintern pact. When in September this year the German Government proposed to the Japanese Government the conclusion of an agreement upon which the further consolidation and expansion of their cultural relations should be based, the

Japanese Government gladly accepted the proposal. The conclusion, after a short negotiation, of the agreement on cultural co-operation concluded and put into force today is heartily welcomed as another token of the friendly relations so happily connecting Japan and Germany.

First of Its Kind

"The agreement is the first of its kind put into force by Japan. It clearly affirms in its preamble that the characteristic features of the cultures of both countries shall be the basis of the future co-operation of the two governments in promoting their cultural relations. The agreement itself gives the general principles to be acted upon. Within its scope of the many questions to be taken up, the competent authorities are to come by mutual agreement to determinations on the following points:

- "1. Establishment of committees for cultural work.
- "2. Maintenance and expansion of cultural institutions.
- "3. Recommendation of teachers.
- "4. Facilities for Government students.
- "5. Exchange of professors and students.
- "6. Promotion of friendly relations between organizations of young people.
- "7. Favorable treatment of schools.
- "8. Exchange of books and periodicals.
- "9. Exchange in the realm of art.
- "10. Exchange of films.
- "11. Exchange of broadcasts.
- "12. Exchanges in the field of sport and hygiene."

This was supplemented by the Foreign Office spokesman with the following statement:

"It is a matter for sincere congratulation that the cultural agreement between Japan and Germany for whose conclusion negotiations have been going on for some time between the representatives of the two countries in Tokyo has been signed and gone into effect today. The agreement will not only conduce to drawing still closer the cultural relations between the two nations, but be instrumental in enabling them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of each other.

Ready to Work With All

"Japan has recently severed all relations with the League of Nations. This, however, does not mean that Japan has severed cultural relations with foreign countries or suspended co-operation with them in the cultural field, but on the contrary it is as ready as ever to co-operate in cultural undertakings with those foreign countries in friendly relationship with it, whether they are member States of the League or not.

"The cultural agreement signed between Japan and Germany today is a manifestation of the earnest desire of the Japanese Government for strengthening cultural ties with foreign countries through agreements to be concluded separately on a basis of reciprocity. It is the first of the kind to be put into operation, but we hope that it will be followed by similar pacts to be concluded with as many foreign powers

as possible. For instance, a cultural agreement was already signed between Japan and Hungary on November 15 and is expected to go into effect in the near future, while preparations are under way for concluding a similar agreement with Italy. It is the policy of the Japanese Government to accelerate conclusion of cultural agreements with those foreign Powers which are desirous of so doing.

The keynote of those agreements which are anticipated to be concluded with foreign Powers lies in an exchange and intermixture of Japanese culture, whose essence will be fostered and developed, and the essence of characteristic cultures of various for-

sign countries. The present cultural agreement between Japan and Germany provides for a general policy in cultural co-operation between the two countries under the above-mentioned guiding principle.

"Various fields of activities, stipulated by Article 2 of the present agreement, are only given as examples. Cultural pacts between foreign countries usually have detailed stipulations, but the present agreement between Japan and Germany is rather different in stipulating general provisions for cultural co-operation and leaving room for giving full play to them as occasion demands, while matters of detail shall be discussed and decided on between the competent authorities of the high contracting parties in case of necessity."

The German Ambassador issued the following statement:

"The second anniversary of the anti-Comintern agreement has its significant feature in the conclusion of the agreement on cultural co-operation between Germany and Japan.

"Based upon mutual respect for the true foundations of the cultures of both nations, the new agreement will, I am sure, in addition to the anti-Comintern agreement further consolidate and immensely promote the friendship and collaboration so happily existing already between Germany and Japan."

No. 3616

Tokyo, January 18, 1939

SUBJECT: HUNGARIAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington

Sir:

I have the honor to report that on January 10, 1939, the Hungarian Government extended de jure recognition to "Manchukuo" by means of a note signed by Count Csaky, Hungarian Foreign Minister, addressed to the Premier of "Manchukuo", Chang Ching-hui. This action followed closely upon the heels of the conclusion, on November 15 last, of a cultural pact
between

between Japan and Hungary* and the next move in logical sequence will be the open adherence of Hungary to the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis. Virtually the last step in this direction was taken by Hungary's reported acceptance, on January 31, 1939, of the joint invitation of the German, Japanese, and Italian governments to adhere formally to the anti-Comintern agreement. Thus is another link added to the German-forged chain of totalitarian states which are bound together in a common policy of force with the avowed purpose of blasting their way out of the confines of existing conditions which they believe to be intolerable.

The news of Hungary's action in recognizing "Manchukuo" was received here with due gratification but relatively little comment. One newspaper, the Tokyo NICHU NICHU, remarks editorially, however, that according to recently published figures "Manchukuo"'s foreign trade has increased notably as compared with her pre-independence days and expresses the hope that Hungary, too, by her act of recognition, will gain much benefit economically as well as culturally. "And this we hope," continues the paper, "will prove in time to be a factor for such stubborn nations as England, the United States, etc., to be awakened to the folly of continuing their mistaken policies."

Respectfully yours,

710.

KSC:mg

Copy to Embassy, Rome

Copy to Embassy, Berlin

Copy to Legation, Budapest

Joseph C. Crew



*Embassy's despatch no. 5302, December 2, 1938, page 7.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased before
being communicated to anyone **FROM**
(A)

Tokyo via Shanghai & N.R.

Dated February 20, 1939

Rec'd 6 a.m., 21st.

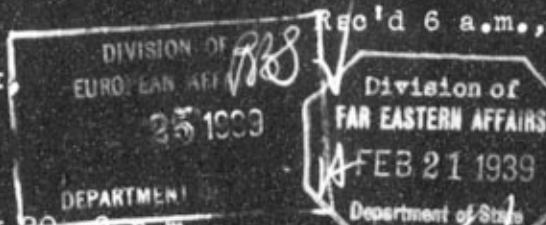
Secretary of State,
Washington.

101, February 20, 9 p.m.

Strictly confidential.

One. In a recent after dinner conversation between
the Minister of Foreign Affairs and my British colleague,
held on the initiative of the former and on the understand-
ing that the views exchanged were to be entirely unofficial,
Arita stated categorically that while a strengthening
of the anti-comintern Pact was now being seriously
studied by the Japanese Government, negotiations on the
subject with other powers had not (repeat not) yet
commenced. In any case there was no question whatever
of Japan assuming any commitments in Europe and the purpose
of any new pact (as of the present pact) would be
protection against anti-Comintern activities.

Two. To Craigie's inquiry whether the proposed pact
would be virtually an alliance against Soviet Russia, the
Minister replied that there existed varying degrees of
understanding with regard to mutual protection but it was
not possible as yet to say whether the new agreement, if
concluded



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-2- #101, February 20, 9 p.m., from Tokyo.

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concluded, would assume the character of an alliance. In any case, however, the British Government could rest assured that it would not (repeat not) be aimed at any British interest. The present state of Soviet Japanese relations was becoming a matter of great and increasing concern to the Japanese Government, particularly with regard to the question of the fisheries, and the communist danger in China also rendered some form of remedial action necessary.

Three. The Minister drew a clear distinction between the Rome-Berlin axis and the anti-Comintern Pact. Whatever the press might say, the Japanese Government had no (repeat no) intention of joining the axis and he believed that confusion of thought on this point was responsible for much of the misapprehension in regard to the anti-Comintern Pact. Even in the ideological field Japan had not those affinities to totalitarian states which appeared to be assumed by the British press. The Japanese system of "kodo" stood halfway between democratic and totalitarian government systems and, although during the present emergency strengthening of state control became necessary, nevertheless in Japan individual liberty would always be preserved to the utmost compatible with national security.

Four.

-3- #101, February 20, 9 p.m., from Tokyo.

Four. When the Minister pointed out that if Japan should abstain from strengthening the pact, Great Britain would hardly be in a position to protect her against Soviet Russia, Craigie replied that this might well be so but that for the reasons already given the remedy sought by Japan was in his opinion worse than the disease.

Five. With regard to the question of peace in China Arita seemed to take kindly to Craigie's personal suggestion that some form of collaboration between say Great Britain, the United States and Germany might ultimately offer the best method but that the strengthening of the pact and the consequent accentuation of division between the two camps would unfortunately render such collaboration more difficult. The Minister, however, observed that as long as Great Britain continued to recognize Chiang Kai Shek as head of the Chinese National Government, it was not clear how Great Britain could at present assist in promoting peace seeing that the state of Japanese public opinion rendered negotiations with Chiang impossible. Craigie replied that the real bar to peace seemed to him to lie in the character of the Japanese conditions of peace and the failure of the Japanese Government to reduce to more specific terms the vague
and

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-4- #101, February 20, 9 p.m., from Tokyo.

and ominous statement of December 22. The Minister, however, said that on this point it was still impossible to be more definite.

Six. Arita recently mentioned this conversation to me on his own initiative and said that he had authorized Craigie to inform me. Code text to Chungking by mail.

GREW

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



AMERICAN EMBASSY

No. 3709

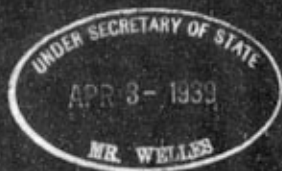
Tokyo, February 27, 1939

SUBJECT: REPORTED JAPANESE-GERMAN-ITALIAN CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING A STRENGTHENING OF POLITICAL RELATIONS THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT.



STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE



The Honorable
The Secretary of State
Washington



Sir:

I had the honor to inform the Department by my telegram no. 73 of February 8, 4 p.m. that, according to several reliable sources, discussions were in process between the Japanese, German and Italian Governments with regard to a projected treaty of alliance between the three countries, and I have in several subsequent telegrams communicated to

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to the Department additional pieces of information as they came to hand. It may not now be premature to attempt to correlate the various facts, some of which might be characterized as "true" while others border strongly on the world of fancy, and to attempt to draw therefrom some reasonable conclusions. I feel that I should preface the discussions which follow with a brief qualifying note, and that is that virtually all the material with which we have had to work thus far has been at best second hand information. The only information from authoritative sources has been of a negative character: those who know have told us only what the projected arrangement is not to be.

Reports that the association of Japan, Germany and Italy through the anti-Comintern Pact was soon to be strengthened have been current here since June, 1938, when Major-General Ott, previously military attache to the German Embassy, was appointed German Ambassador to Japan in the place of Dr. von Dirksen, who was transferred to London. General Ott was ordered to Berlin for consultation, and it was shortly thereafter reported by one of my colleagues who has close contacts with German press correspondents in Tokyo that General Ott, when consulted by his Government, recommended strongly
against

against Germany's making a commitment which would involve rendering military help to Japan in the event of a war between that country and the Soviet Union. Nothing more was heard of the matter until December, last, when a conference took place in Rome between General Oshima, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, and Mr. Shiratori, the Japanese Ambassador to Italy, the former being the generally believed originator of the Japanese-German anti-Comintern Pact of November, 1936, and the latter a clamorous nationalist. The two Ambassadors are supposed to have found no difficulty in agreeing that Japan should definitely align itself with the totalitarian powers and in recommending to Tokyo that the existing three-Power anti-Comintern arrangement should be provided with teeth in the form of a military clause. Parenthetically, Mr. Shiratori, prior to his departure last autumn for his post, was saying to all and sundry that the original arrangement contained a military clause.

Toward the end of last month there were persistent reports being received from Europe by several of my colleagues that the Japanese Ambassadors at Berlin and Rome were insistently pressing

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for a new arrangement which would be tantamount to a military alliance against the Soviet Union; that the Italian Government, although avoiding a definite refusal, did not appear to be greatly interested; and that the German Government had countered with the proposal that the conditions under which the military clause of the proposed treaty would become operative be extended to include war between any one of the parties and Great Britain or France or both. On several occasions, reference was made on the floor of the Lower House and in meetings of the Budget Committee to reports of this character, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated in each instance that there was contemplated a "strengthening of the anti-Comintern Pact" by exchanges of information with regard to the destructive activities of communist agents, and he allowed it to be supposed that nothing in the form of an alliance was contemplated. It was at this point that the British Ambassador at Tokyo, Sir Robert Craigie, who had been informed some weeks previously by his Government of the conversations at Rome and Berlin, called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs to emphasize the adverse effects on Japan, as well as on others, of concluding anything in the form of a military alliance with Germany and Italy.

There

1/ There is enclosed a copy of Sir Robert's account of his conversation with Mr. Arita, which was reported to the Department in my telegram no. 77 of February 8, 8 p.m. One or two features of that conversation are worthy of notice. I observed that Mr. Arita failed to dispose, by a brief denial, of Sir Robert's suggestion that a military alliance was under consideration and in fact permitted Sir Robert to leave with the impression that the conversations with Germany and Italy actually had to do with some such arrangement. In view of later developments hereinafter reported, when Mr. Arita took some pains to clarify the objects of these conversations, I can only assume that his failure to correct my British colleague's suggestion was deliberate. Another feature of the conversation, which I noted with little satisfaction, was the picture painted by Sir Robert of what he conceived to be a possible settlement of the Far Eastern situation -- a settlement envisaging peaceful collaboration by the United States, Great Britain and China with Japan, but with Japan in the position of a "senior partner". In short, I gathered from Sir Robert that a military alliance was definitely under consideration, and that he had in effect proposed,

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as an inducement to Japan to refrain from entering the totalitarian camp, the possibility of American and British recognition of the Japanese claim of long standing to a paramount position in the Far East. I was reluctant, in these circumstances, on my own initiative to accept Sir Robert's suggestion that I make to Mr. Arita an approach substantially similar to that made by my British colleague. It so happened that Mr. Shigeru Yoshida, recently Ambassador at London, and a close friend of Mr. Arita's, called on me, and I asked him to convey to Mr. Arita the thought that it would be well for Japan, which owes its material development so largely to her commercial relations with the United States and the British Empire, to pause and consider those relations before embarking on a military alliance with Germany and Italy.

On February 14 I met the Minister for Foreign Affairs by chance at a social function, and I repeated to him the message which I had previously sent to him through Mr. Yoshida. The conversation was necessarily very brief, but Mr. Arita gave me to understand that the Japanese Government had made no decision as yet, and that Japan's relations with
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the United States especially would be carefully considered before that decision was reached.

Other conversations with Japanese, with the Counselor of the Polish Embassy, and with other diplomatic representatives, also indicated that the conversations with Germany and Italy were still of an exploratory nature and could not as yet be dignified by the term "negotiations".

The position tended to become more clarified with the conversation which Sir Robert had with Mr. Arita, reported in my telegram no. 101 of 2/ February 20, 9 p.m. There is enclosed a copy of Sir Robert's telegram to London describing that conversation. Mr. Arita emphasized that what was sought was "mutual protection" against the Soviet Union alone, and not against Great Britain, but he declined to specify that the arrangement finally agreed upon might not assume the form of an alliance.

On February 21 I received a call from a friendly Japanese, who is a member of the House of Peers. He said that, at the direct instance of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and presumably with a view to allaying concern felt in liberal quarters

quarters over the possibility of Japan's formally entering the totalitarian camp, Mr. Debuchi, formerly Ambassador to the United States, had interpellated the Government during a meeting on February 17 of the Budget Committee of the House of Peers. According to my informant, Mr. Debuchi had directed that the taking of stenographic notes be suspended, and he had then called the attention of the Prime Minister to an official statement issued by the Foreign Office at the time of the conclusion of the anti-Comintern Pact, which emphasized two points: first, that the pact did not aim to form a special international bloc; and, second, that the pact is not aimed at any specific country and its only purpose is to check the activities of the Comintern. According to the informant, the Prime Minister stated definitely that the Japanese Government adheres to those aims.

We are informed by the Counselor of the Polish Embassy that the Polish Ambassador was assured a few days ago by Mr. Arita that no political instrument which contemplated anything more than the combatting of subversive activities by communist agents was envisaged. The Ambassador was told that the present pact provides for exchanges of information with

with regard to communist activities in each of the signatory countries, and that there had been found need also for exchanges of information of activities in third countries. If this statement means anything, it indicates that the Japanese are anxious to have access to the information gathered by Chinese and other German and Italian agents with regard to political and other internal developments in China, but this naturally does not prejudice the possibility of the Japanese having other objectives in view.

From the foregoing account, some not unreasonable conclusions are permissible.

I cannot persuade myself on the basis of information available which can be regarded as reliable that Japan will consent to an unqualified extension to Tokyo of the Rome-Berlin axis, and thus assume the risks which accompany full membership in that camp of involvement in war with Great Britain and possibly with the United States over issues which are either of remote or no interest to Japan, especially when the measure of security which could thus be procured from such allies would be severely restricted.

The withdrawal of Japan from the League of

Nations

Nations was more than a renunciation of the principle of collective security. It was one manifestation of Japanese determination to concentrate her energies and resources on the achievement of long-cherished aspirations to paramountcy in the Far East. The position of Japan at that time of dedicating herself to the task of eliminating occidental political influence from East Asia was a curious one. Largely because of her inclusion among the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, Japan found herself at the end of the Great War with a voice in determining the destinies of Europe. Never before in history had an Asiatic nation had a place in the concert of Europe and shared in decisions which were thereafter to determine for all time the fate of millions of Caucasians. It seemed as though the opportunity had come to translate into actuality the vision of Japan as a world power. Vanity obscured wisdom, and Japan involved herself in problems of not the least concern to her people. One contemplates today with bewilderment the fact that the assent of Japan is all that is necessary for the completion of Rumanian title to Bessarabia. It was obvious that neither did Japan have the political power and prestige nor did she have
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the basis in logic to retain her involvements in Europe and simultaneously to strive to eliminate Western influence from the Far East. Dictated by these circumstances, Japan has liquidated these involvements. The question whether Japan intends again deliberately to assume such involvements at a highly critical time, has, I believe, been answered by the reply of the Prime Minister to Mr. Debuchi.

One point to which I have already alluded - the apparently deliberate desire on the part of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to keep alive if not to cultivate the impression on the part of the British that the conversations with Germany and Italy might possibly result in an alliance - deserves more than passing mention. The feeling is definitely abroad that the initiative in these conversations has been taken by the Japanese; and I think that it is now fairly clear that the conversations revolve primarily around the Soviet Union or communist activities, or both. If that is so, one can explain Mr. Arita's attitude toward my British colleague only by assuming that the Japanese Government hopes to utilize the conversations in bringing about a modification of British attitude with regard to the situation in China: that Japan is giving serious thought to associating herself

herself with the totalitarian states and that, if Great Britain wishes to keep Japan from joining the hostile camp, a settlement over China cannot be indefinitely delayed. It will be noted (see paragraph numbered 2, enclosure no. 1) that my British colleague made reference in his conversation with Mr. Arita to the effect of an alliance on British attitude toward Japan.

Another purpose of a minatory character in the initiation by Japan of these conversations suggests itself, and that relates to Japan's fishery dispute with the Soviet Union. As the fishing season in Siberian waters begins in April, conversations with regard to a new agreement between the Japanese and Soviet Governments have now been resumed. The point cannot be labored, but the suggestion at least is warranted that the creation of an impression that some plan affecting the Soviet Union is on foot might be conceived to affect in Japan's favor the course of these conversations.

In concluding this discussion, I desire again to observe that our thoughts on this matter at this time must perforce be largely speculative.

Respectfully yours,

Joseph C. Grew
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Joseph C. Grew

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Enclosures:
as stated

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L. J.
Copies to Embassy, Moscow, London, Rome and Berlin.

Enclosure no. 1 to despatch
no. 3709 of February 27, 1939
from the Embassy at Tokyo

(Handed by the British Ambassador, Sir Robert
Craigie, to the American Ambassador, Mr. Grew,
February 8, 1939)

Copy of Telegram sent to Foreign Office by
British Ambassador, February 4th 1939.

"I took the occasion of a private and unofficial conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs today to draw attention to the numerous reports which were appearing both in the Diet debates and the Japanese press of an impending strengthening of the anti-Comintern pact. I said that there were even rumours that an actual military alliance was now contemplated between the three Powers and desired to impress on His Excellency (as I had previously done to Prince Konoye and Mr. Horinouchi) that, in the popular mind at least, any such action would appear to be directed as much against Great Britain as against the spread of Communism. As proof of this one had only to recall the popular interpretation of the existing pact which in my opinion was doing more harm to Japan's relations with the democratic Powers than it was to communism. Speaking as from myself I then developed my thesis as follows:

(1) The existing difficulties in Anglo-Japanese relations were great but at least there was still

hope

hope for an ultimate settlement if no irrevocable step were taken meanwhile. If an alliance were now to be concluded, which would be regarded as directed largely against Great Britain, the last hope of friendly settlement might vanish and the two countries left to face each other in sterile economic conflict.

(2) The only sure road to the early establishment of a prosperous and peaceful Far East was for Japan, Great Britain, the United States and China to come together in friendly cooperation, it being obvious that in any such combination Japan would, so far as the Far East was concerned, tend to be the senior partner. Such a position could be achieved without resort to monopolistic and exclusionist practices. The growing community of outlook between Great Britain and the United States could and should be directed into channels favourable to Japan if a less uncompromising turn were to be given to Japanese foreign policy. But all such hopes would be dashed if the alliance plan were to materialise and Japan would find herself faced with an increasingly powerful economic opposition against which neither Germany nor Italy could offer much assistance.

(3) During present hostilities and under conditions
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of today reinsurance with Germany and Italy was to my mind understandable but as a long term policy it could only lead Japan into difficulties and commitments which would long outlive the present "incident".

(4) Argument that recent Anglo-Italian settlement proved that future Anglo-Japanese settlement would not be effected by any present strengthening of anti-Comintern pact was refuted, as was also prevalent belief that entry of Japan into such an alliance would cause Great Britain to moderate her attitude on the China question.

(5) It was for the Japanese Government to consider whether the moment when war psychoses was necessarily prevalent in Japan was the right one to choose for entering into a long-term commitment likely to have the most far reaching consequences. At least let Japan make sure, before she burnt her boats, that there was no better and surer way open to her of bringing peace and prosperity to the Far East and the realisation of what was legitimate in her ambitions.

Minister for Foreign Affairs listened attentively to my observations and said that as he had already stated in the Diet, negotiations were proceeding for a strengthening of the anti-Comintern pact but he declared categorically that up to the present no agreement had been reached on this point. He denied my thesis that present anti-Comintern pact and a fortiori any strengthening of it could

be

be regarded as directed largely against Great Britain, adding that, as Foreign Minister at the time of the conclusion of the original pact with Germany, he had invited the British Government to participate and had been sincerely disappointed at their refusal. I here interjected that much water had passed under the bridge since then; that Italy had since acceded and that the pact had undoubtedly been given an anti-British twist which had probably not been the intention of its authors.

Referring to the question of our existing difficulties in China Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he was only awaiting the end of the present Diet session in order to make certain proposals which he believed would go a long way to improving the position of our interests in China. I replied that this was certainly welcome news but that it must be remembered that our outstanding difficulties in China, important as they were, had to some extent been put in the shade by the ominous statements recently issued by the Japanese Government in regard to the future treatment of foreign interests in China. I therefore thought it essential that, in liquidating the past, we should also keep a sharp eye on the future. On this point Minister for Foreign Affairs merely repeated that he had already done his best to make it clear to me that Japan had no intention of trying to exclude foreign interests from China - quite the contrary.

Reverting

Reverting to my Point 2, Minister for Foreign Affairs enquired why I had omitted Germany and Italy from my list of Powers, adding that it was undesirable to give the impression that we wished to perpetuate in the Far East the system of hostile camps. I said that I had merely mentioned the Powers who unquestionably had the greatest and most permanent interest in reaching a settlement in the Far East but that I felt sure that my Government had not the least wish to exclude any other interested Powers such as Germany and Italy. It was however obvious that if the four Powers primarily concerned could agree, there would be little difficulty in reaching an understanding with the other interested Powers. Minister for Foreign Affairs was inclined to deny that the United States had a greater political and economic concern than Germany but did not seem disposed to press the point.

Finally Mr. Arita promised to treat my observations as strictly confidential and unofficial, adding that he would pass them on to the Prime Minister. He thanked me for having put my point of view so frankly and said he would like to have a further talk with me on this subject in a few days time."

END MESSAGE

Enclosure no. 2 to despatch
no. 3709 of February 27, 1939
from the Embassy at Tokyo

(With the compliments of the British Embassy to the
American Ambassador, Mr. Grew, February 20, 1939)

Copy of telegram sent to Foreign Office
on the 17th February 1939.

Very Confidential.

On initiative of Minister for Foreign Affairs
I had a lengthy conversation with him last night
after dinner, it being understood that the views
exchanged were to be entirely unofficial.

On question of strengthening of anti-Comintern
pact, Minister for Foreign Affairs stated categor-
ically that while matter was now being seriously
studied by the Japanese Government negotiations on
the subject with other Powers had not yet commenced.
The purpose of any new pact (as of present pact)
would be protection against anti-Comintern activities
and there was no question at all of Japan assuming
any commitments in Europe. To my enquiry whether
new pact would be virtually an alliance against
Soviet Russia Mr. Arita replied that there were
varying degrees of understanding for mutual protec-
tion but it was not possible to say yet whether the
new arrangement, if concluded, would assume character
of an alliance. But in any case British Government
could be assured that it would not be aimed at any

British

British interest. Japanese Government were becoming greatly concerned about the state of Russo-Japanese relations, particularly in connexion with the fishery question and some form of remedial action was also necessary in connexion with communist danger in China. Mr. Arita drew a clear distinction between the anti-Comintern pact and the Rome-Berlin axis. Whatever press might say, Japanese Government had no intention of joining the axis and he thought that much of the misapprehension in regard to the anti-Comintern pact was due to confusion of thought on this point. Even in the ideological field Japan had not those affinities to totalitarian States, existence of which British press appeared to assume. Japanese system of "Kodo" stood half way between totalitarian and democratic systems of government and, although strengthening of State control was necessary during present emergency, individual liberty would always be preserved to the utmost extent compatible with national security. On his pointing out that if Japan abstained from strengthening the pact Great Britain would not be in a position to protect her against Soviet aggression, I observed that this might well be so but that in my view the remedy sought by Japan was worse than the disease for the reasons I had already given him fully.

On

On question of peace in China Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed to take kindly to my personal suggestion that best method might ultimately be through some form of collaboration between say Great Britain, United States and Germany and that it would be a pity if such collaboration were to be rendered more difficult through strengthening of pact and consequent accentuation of division between two camps. He stated however that he was not clear in what way Great Britain could at present assist in promoting peace seeing that state of Japanese public opinion made it quite impossible to negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek, whom we however continued to recognise as head of the Chinese National Government. I replied that real bar to peace seemed to me to lie in the character of the Japanese conditions of peace and failure to reduce to more concrete terms the vague and ominous statement of December 22nd, but Mr. Arita stated that it was still impossible to be more definite on this point.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FS

SPECIAL DELIVERY

FROM

Tokyo

Dated March 31, 1939

Rec'd 1:02 p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

COPIES SENT TO
O.N.I. AND M.I.D.

in strict confidence

161, March 31, 8 p.m.

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
APR 7 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Following is a paraphrase of a telegram sent to his Government by the British Ambassador reporting a recent talk with the Minister for Foreign Affairs concerning the strengthening of the anti-Comintern Pact:

"One. I reminded Mr. Arita that at our last interview he had stated that no negotiations had yet started for the strengthening of the anti-Comintern Pact. What was the position today? He replied that negotiations had not started yet and that in any case Japanese Government remained firmly opposed to accepting any commitments or entanglements in Europe. On my pointing out that an alliance directed against U.S.S.R. was likely sooner or later to involve Japan in the very European entanglements to which the country was opposed, Mr. Arita replied that if Great Britain were now to invite Soviet Russia to take part in any combination of powers dangerous repercussion on Anglo-Japanese relations was inevitable. I observed that

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FS 2-No. 161, March 31, 8 p.m. from Tokyo

that it was Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia which had brought Russia into European politics again and that it was useless to blame us for the inevitable effect of this action. Soviet Russia had stood aside at Munich but this had not deterred Germany from tearing up the Munich agreement. The right course for Japan was surely to keep clear of any further commitments at least until the present situation had cleared; otherwise I feared that His Excellency would be committing his country to entanglements which he might live bitterly to regret--entanglements with countries whose political and economic weaknesses and lack of reliability were daily becoming more obvious to the whole world. Mr. Arita adhered to his point that Japan was prepared to combat Communism by all means and in association with powers holding the same views.

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Two. Although Minister for Foreign Affairs was guarded in what he said I was left with the strong impression that Japanese Government have now decided--or virtually decided--to convert the anti-Comintern Pact into an alliance against Soviet Russia. I also learn from him that this project which at one moment seemed to have received its coup de grace has been renovated by the effect on the army of the "irresistible" power displayed by Germany in the Czechoslovak coup."

I am

FS 3-No. 161, March 31, 8 p.m. from Tokyo

I am not yet in a position to substantiate Craigie's impression and information as set forth above in paragraph two nor his belief that the coming negotiations will take place in Tokyo instead of in Berlin but shall follow developments as closely as possible.

CSB

GREW

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

PAP

TOKYO

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

FROM Dated April 20, 1939

Rec'd 10:50 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

APR 26 1939

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

APR 20 1939

Department of State

188, April 20, 5 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. My 186, April 19, 4 p.m.

As opportunity has offered I have been quietly emphasizing to certain trustworthy Japanese whom I could count on to pass my observations on to influential quarters the dangers to which American Japanese relations would be exposed if Japan should associate itself with Germany and Italy in a general alliance (see Department's 33, February 10, 6 p.m.). The position which I took was that, if a general war were to break out in Europe, the likelihood should be discounted of the United States not becoming involved - naturally on the side of Great Britain and France - and that it would be idle to expect that in those circumstances relations of peace could be maintained between the United States and Japan if Japan were aligned with Germany and Italy. The assurances mentioned in my telegram under reference were responsive to the several approaches which I had made along the lines above indicated.

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APR 26 1939

PAP -2- 188, April 20, 3 p.m. from Tokyo

Two. I had a most significant conversation last night with the Minister of the Navy at the dinner which he gave in honor of the officers of the ASTORIA. Admiral Yonai, on his own initiative and to my surprise, opened the conversation by remarking that he understood that I was concerned over the possibility of Japan becoming involved in Europe. He said slowly and with emphasis that "Japanese policy has been decided" and that I had now no longer (repeat no longer) cause for concern. He admitted that there is an element which advocates Fascism for Japan and therefore the linking up of Japan with Germany and Italy but he said that this element has now been "suppressed". He went on to say with some feeling that Japan can never be either a democracy or an authoritarian state but must stand apart from either group although cooperating with both groups toward the maintenance of friendly relations.

Three. I later repeated to Yoshizawa, who also attended the dinner, the statement made to me by Admiral Yonai. Yoshizawa said that he had not known of the decision to which Yonai referred and he assumed that it must have just been taken. He added that he knew that the navy had "the balance of power" between the opposing sides on this important question, and that the frank statement of the

Admiral

PAP -3- 188, April 20, 3 p.m. from Tokyo

Admiral might be regarded as a definite indication of the Japanese Government's intention to refrain from becoming involved in European difficulties. He cautioned me, however, against entering into (?) would necessarily not be formulated some new arrangement for combating communism.

Four. I add a brief outline of other points brought up in my conversation with the Admiral in order to indicate the favorable trend which I believe is about to set in.

Five. Admiral Yonai said that there was being keenly felt the need for restoring good relations with the United States. I told the Admiral frankly that many of the causes for the present state of American feeling against Japan could readily have been avoided and where such causes still exist could readily be eliminated. I referred, for example, to the safeguarding of American properties. He was familiar with this subject and said that the cause for these attacks was being investigated and that effective steps would be taken to correct them. He then passed on to the subject of naval limitation. He said that large navies are "dangerous toys". He regretted that an agreement to limit naval armament is not feasible at the present time but he thought it essential to keep in mind that an agreement must soon be

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PAP -4- 188, April 20, 3 p.m. from Tokyo

reached, as progressive raising of naval requirements by each of the powers in turn could otherwise eventually result only in bankruptcy or a general explosion. He said repeatedly "there must be disarmament".

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Six. I am strongly of the opinion that the visit of the ASTORIA has been an important factor in bringing about the trend which the Admiral's statements reflect.

GREW

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TELEGRAM RECEIVED

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This message must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A)

FROM

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MAY 17 1939
Tokyo
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Dated April 27, 1939

Secretary of State,

Washington.

Division of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
APR 28 1939
Department of State

Rec'd 11:45 a.m.

COPIES SENT TO
O.N.I. AND M.I.D.

in strict confidence

205, April 27, 5 p.m.

My 198, April 24, 10 p.m.

There follows our analysis of present trends of thought in authoritative Japanese circles with regard to reformulation of Japanese foreign policy in the light of the European situation. This analysis represents an attempt to reduce to some form of order information, some of it contradictory, received from various responsible sources.

One. It would be premature to say that there now exists a Cabinet crisis but the position of the Cabinet is one of insecurity. The Minister for Foreign Affairs informed us privately two days ago that although press reports give the impression that the Cabinet is pre-occupied with the question of relations with Germany and Italy the Cabinet is actually discussing a number of other problems both domestic and international. Some of the foreign correspondents are of the opinion that it is the question of entering into a military alliance with Germany

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-2- #205, April 27, 5 p.m. from Tokyo

and Italy which is primarily responsible for the insecurity of the Cabinet; but we believe that there is now little dissension over that point, which, as the Minister of the Navy stated to me, has been decided in the negative. There are other problems making for the insecurity of the Cabinet. These problems, although ^{lying in} ~~recognized by~~ three separate areas, are nevertheless interrelated. They are to be found: first, in Japan itself; second, in China; and third, in Europe.

Two. Of the first we cannot speak with certainty. It appears that the Prime Minister has committed himself with powerful religious and other nationalistic elements (which find their membership among civilians as well as the military) to bring about "national spiritual development". This thought, when divested of well nigh incomprehensible dogmas, can be reduced to the doctrine of revesting the Emperor with temporal power now delegated to various agencies. The Diet, for example, would be done away with. There would then be set up an authoritarian government in which the Emperor would ostensibly at least be dictator. The Prime Minister has already made cautious but veiled public references to "spiritual development" but he now realizes that the aims which he has engaged himself to help bring about are entirely chimerical. Several of our informants

-3- #205, April 27, 5 p.m. from Tokyo

informants believe that the Prime Minister has been caught between the saner elements in the Government and the nationalistic groups initiating this movement and will be obliged to resign. The latter groups incidentally are to be counted among the influential supporters of the proposal to conclude a military alliance with Germany and Italy. These groups, as one informant put it to me, are "better organized" than their opponents.

Three. Although there is no dissent within the Cabinet on China policy the Cabinet is obliged to take cognizance of the growing confusion in business circles and among the intelligent classes with regard to precise Japanese objectives in China. The controlling official view has been that ^(a)China can be won over ultimately to cooperate with Japan against Great Britain and Soviet Russia and ^(b)the United States can be "separated" from Great Britain and induced to take a neutral position; thus leaving Japan free to eliminate Great Britain from the Far East. The liberal group has contended that it is impossible for Japan to drive a wedge between the United States and Great Britain, and the message of the President to Chancellor Hitler, along with the swing in the United States away from isolationism, has acted powerfully to lend authority to that view.

Four.

-4- #205, April 27, 5 p.m. from Tokyo

Four. The Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed to us optimism over the immediate future in Europe, and I believe ^{that} this reflects the predominant view in official Japanese circles. Although an alliance with Germany and Italy does not now appear to be under active consideration, we nevertheless continue to hear of some other arrangement being discussed between the German and Japanese Governments. Some of our sources state that this is the much talked of "strengthening of the anti-Comintern Pact", while others believe that it is to be ostensibly economic in character but with political implications and not to be confused with the Trade Agreement under negotiation since the end of last year. There are certainly indications that conversations are still being carried on with Germany and Italy and these conversations must be expected to continue at least so long as grave concern is felt here over the shape which the anti-aggression arrangement, now under discussion between the British and Soviet Governments, might take. If there should be contracted by the latter Governments anything in the form of an alliance which could be expected to form a springboard for concerted action in the Far East by the democratic powers, there might

-5- #205, April 27, 5 p.m. from Tokyo

might well occur reconsideration of what appears to be at least a tentative decision to keep from making military commitments.

GREW

HPD

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

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This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

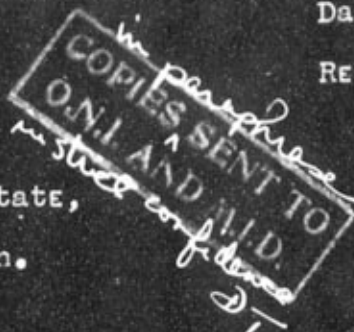
FROM TOKYO

Dated May 5, 1939

Rec'd 2:25 p. m.



Secretary of State,
Washington.



215, May 5, 6 p. m.

Our 205, April 27, 5 p. m. paragraph four.

One. Recent intense activity among high government officials culminated yesterday in a long audience of the Emperor by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the subsequent summoning to the Foreign Office of the German and Italian Ambassadors. While strict secrecy is being preserved as to the decision reached informed sources believe that Japan has refused to enter a military alliance with the totalitarian states which might embroil this country in a general European war and would bind Japan to go to war with Soviet Russia at any time chosen by Germany for an attack. It is believed in some quarters that a formula has been evolved in the nature of a mutual assistance defensive pact against Soviet Russia but that this formula falls short of a general military alliance. It remains to be seen whether the new proposal, whatever, will prove acceptable to Germany and Italy.

Two.

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GML

REB

2-#215, From Tokyo, May 5, 6 p.m.

Two. Am informed unofficially there has recently been a strong recrudescence of pressure brought to bear on Japan by Germany and Italy but that the entire cabinet, with the exception of the Overseas Minister, General Koiso, and the War Minister is opposed to a general alliance. General Itagaki himself is believed to be opposed to such alliance but has been obliged to represent the views of the extremists in and out of the army.

Three. My French colleague accepts as reliable reports that with a view to bringing Japan into the German camp the German Government recently threatened to denounce the anti-Comintern Pact unless Japan consented to implement the commitment for an alliance alleged to have been signed several months ago by General Oshima, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, who thereby exceeded his instructions, and that Japan thereupon proposed some sort of secret agreement but that Germany declined this proposal.

Four. None of the many reports now pervading Tokyo is as yet susceptible of confirmation but I think it is safe to assume that those press correspondents who have cabled to the United States reports that a general alliance has been accepted by Japan have no certain ground for their beliefs.

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