

*Mr.
of
Ital
Dep*

COPY

~~SECRET~~

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

~~STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL~~

Date: September 3, 1941

SUBJECT: U.S. - JAPANESE RELATIONS

PARTICIPANTS: THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY OF STATE HULL AND THE
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR, ADMIRAL KICHISABURO NOMURA

At the request of the President, the Japanese Ambassador called at the White House this afternoon. The President proceeded at once to read the written oral statement (copy attached) which had been prepared in reply to the communication recently sent to the President by the Japanese Prime Minister. He emphasized certain points as he read. He particularly emphasized the fact that he appreciated the difficulties of Prince Konoye in connection with the Japanese internal situation, but he added that he has difficulties here which he hopes that Prince Konoye and his Government would appreciate. The President referred to his recent conversations with Prime Minister Churchill, especially that portion relating to plebiscites at the end of the war as the best means of settling many differences and as the soundest policy of dealing with conditions existing between different races. He cited several instances existing at the end of the World War, which were effectively dealt with by plebiscites.

The President then proceeded to read his letter to Prime Minister Konoye, a copy of which is hereto attached. The Ambassador inquired if the President was still favorable to a conference and the President replied that he was, but that it was very important to settle a number of these questions beforehand, if the success of the conference was to be safeguarded to the extent warranted by the holding of such a meeting. It was also emphasized that if and when we had secured sufficient assurances from the Japanese Government that it stands earnestly for all of the principles which this Government has been proclaiming as applicable to the Pacific area, it would be necessary for us to discuss the matter fully with the British, the Chinese and the Dutch, since there is no other way to effect a suitable peaceful settlement for the Pacific area; that any settlement must be on a basis that will restore confidence and friendliness among the nations concerned; in no other way can a suitable economic structure be rebuilt for that area. The Ambassador seemed to appreciate this viewpoint. Both the President and I repeatedly emphasized the necessity for his Government to clarify its position on the question of abandoning a policy of force and

T

conquest and on three fundamental questions concerning which difficulties had been encountered in our discussion of the Japanese proposal of May twelfth and the discussion of which we had not pursued after the Japanese went into Indochina. The Ambassador said that Prince Konoye, while preferring to go to Hawaii, would be disposed to go to any place in the Pacific where there was suitable anchorage.

The Ambassador then proceeded to say that he had a despatch from Tokyo referring to the fact that certain elements of opposition to the proposals of the Prime Minister existed and were active in their opposition. He said that the Government, however, is determined to overcome such opposition. He stated that a meeting between the President and the Prime Minister would enable Japan to overcome these disagreements at home and that the opposition would gradually get in line with the Government. He said that Konoye thinks that he and the President can discuss the three questions which were left untouched when the Japanese went into Indochina in July, mainly the question relating to the complete evacuation of Japanese troops from China, the question of non-discrimination in commerce, et cetera, et cetera, and the Tripartite Pact.

It was made clear to the Ambassador that several days should be consumed by his Government both in clarifying and stating strongly its position on the principles already referred to and their application so far as China is concerned, and also that their Government should by word and act in every way possible devote some time at once to the education and organization of public opinion in support of the proposals for a peaceful settlement, as already set forth.

G.H.

~~SECRET~~

ORAL STATEMENTSTRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Reference is made to the proposal of the Japanese Government communicated on August 28, 1941, by the Japanese Ambassador to the President of the United States that there be held as soon as possible a meeting between the responsible heads of the Government of Japan and of the Government of the United States to discuss important problems between Japan and the United States covering the entire Pacific area in an endeavor to save the situation and to the reply of the President of the United States, in which the President assured the Prime Minister of the readiness of the Government of the United States to move as rapidly as possible toward the consummation of arrangements for such a meeting and suggested that there be held preliminary discussion of important questions that would come up for consideration in the meeting. In further explanation of the view of the Government of the United States in regard to the suggestion under reference observations are offered, as follows:

On April 16, at the outset of the informal and exploratory conversations which were entered into by the Secretary of State with the Japanese Ambassador, the Secretary of State referred to four fundamental principles which this Government regards as the foundation upon which all relations between nations should properly rest. These four fundamental principles are as follows:

1. Respect for the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of each and all nations.
2. Support of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.
3. Support of the principle of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity.
4. Non-disturbance of the status quo in the Pacific except as the status quo may be altered by peaceful means.

In the subsequent conversations the Secretary of State endeavored to make it clear that in the opinion of the Government of the United States Japan stood to gain more from adherence to courses in harmony with these principles than from any other course, as Japan would thus best be assured access to the raw materials and markets which Japan needs and ways would be opened for mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States and other countries, and that only upon the basis of these principles could an agreement be reached which would be effective in establishing stability and peace in the Pacific area.

The Government of the United States notes with satisfaction that in the statement marked "Strictly Confidential" which was communicated by the Japanese Ambassador to the President of the United States on August 28 there were given specific assurances of Japan's peaceful intentions and assurances that Japan desires and seeks a program for the Pacific area consistent with the principles to which the Government of the United States has long been committed and which were set forth in detail in the informal conversations already referred to. The Government of the United States understands that the assurances which the Japanese Government has given in that statement exclude any policy which would seek political expansion or the acquisition of economic rights, advantages or preferences by force.

The Government of the United States is very desirous of collaborating in efforts to make effective in practice the principles to which the Japanese Government has made reference. The Government of the United States believes that it is all-important that preliminary precautions be taken to insure the success of any efforts which the Governments of Japan and of the United States might make to collaborate toward a peaceful settlement. It will be recalled that in the course of the conversations to which reference has already been made, the Secretary of State on June 21, 1941, handed the Japanese Ambassador a document marked "Oral, Unofficial and Without Commitment" which contained a redraft of the Japanese Government's proposal of May 12, 1941. It will be recalled further that in oral discussion of this draft it was found that there were certain fundamental questions with respect to which there were divergences of view between the two Governments, and which remained unreconciled at the time the conversations were interrupted in July. The Government of the United States desires to facilitate progress toward a conclusive discussion, but believes that a community of view and a clear agreement upon the points above-mentioned are essential to any satisfactory settlement of Pacific questions. It therefore seeks an indication of the present attitude of the Japanese Government with regard to the fundamental questions under reference.

It goes without saying that each Government in reaching decisions on policy must take into account the internal situation in its own country and the attitude of public opinion therein. The Government of Japan will surely recognize that the Government of the United States could not enter into any agreement which would not be in harmony with the principles in which the American people — in fact all nations that prefer peaceful methods to methods of force — believe.

The Government of the United States would be glad to have the reply of the Japanese Government on the matters above set forth.

~~SECRET~~

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN, FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

I have read with appreciation Your Excellency's message of August 27, which was delivered to me by Admiral Nomura.

I have noted with satisfaction the sentiments expressed by you in regard to the solicitude of Japan for the maintenance of the peace of the Pacific and Japan's desire to improve Japanese-American relations.

I fully share the desire expressed by you in these regards, and I wish to assure you that the Government of the United States, recognizing the swiftly-moving character of world events, is prepared to proceed as rapidly as possible toward the consummation of arrangements for a meeting at which you and I can exchange views and endeavor to bring about an adjustment in the relations between our two countries.

In the statement which accompanied your letter to me reference was made to the principles to which the Government of the United States has long been committed and it was declared that the Japanese Government "considers these principles and the practical application thereof, in the friendliest manner possible, are the prime requisites of a true peace and should be applied not only in the Pacific area but throughout the entire world" and that "such a program has long been desired and sought by Japan itself."

I am very desirous of collaborating with you in efforts to make these principles effective in practice. Because of my deep interest in this matter I find it necessary that I constantly observe and take account of developments both in my own country and in Japan which have a bearing upon problems of relations between our two countries. At this particular moment I cannot avoid taking cognizance of indications of the existence in some quarters in Japan of concepts which, if widely entertained, would seem capable of raising obstacles to successful collaboration between you and me along the line which I am sure we both earnestly desire to follow. Under these circumstances, I feel constrained to suggest, in the belief that you will share my view, that it would seem highly desirable that we take precaution, toward ensuring that our proposed meeting shall prove a success, by endeavoring to enter immediately upon preliminary discussion of the fundamental and essential questions on which we seek agreement. The questions which I have in mind for such preliminary discussions involve practical application of the principles fundamental to achievement and maintenance of peace which are mentioned with more of specification in the statement accompanying your letter. I hope that you will look favorably upon this suggestion.

~~SECRET~~