

August 2, 1940

AN OUTLINE OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTER MATSUOKA  
AND GERMAN AMBASSADOR OTT

Foreign Minister MATSUOKA invited German Ambassador OTT and they had a conversation between 5 and 6.40 PM on August 1, 1940, the gist of which is as follows:

MATSUOKA: "I informed you the other day that no talking would be necessary between Japan and Germany, nor you and me. My feeling, however, is just as you know, and as I mentioned it the other day, I am neither pro-German nor pro-British, but, so to speak, pro-Japanese. So that I dare to oppose the fact of leaving our destiny to any foreign country or foreigner. But I think that Fuehrer HITLER and Foreign Minister of the Reich must know the fact as well as Your Excellency knows it, that I am one of the proposers and originators of the Japanese-German Anti-Comintern pact. Later, when the problem of the Japanese-German Military Alliance occurred, you saw my attitude and I think it is unnecessary to explain neither my feeling nor my standpoint for Germany and Italy repeatedly. As you may find out easily, both the government and the people have inclined to strengthen the power of the Axis, but it is not decided yet in the cabinet council. I cannot persuade Premier KONOE and other members of the cabinet, unless I know at least the outline of Germany's intention or attitude to the thought I embrace before it will be carried out. In other words, I am very anxious to know what the German attitude is on my point of view, or I am sorry to say that I can hardly carry it out."

OTT: "It may be natural but I want to know what Japan is going to do. Without knowing it concretely, I think Berlin can not answer you".

MATSUOKA: "I hate, as you know, to use diplomatic or suggestive terms and I may express my thought freely. Japan is intending to establish a new order of Greater East Asia, as made already public by the Japanese Government, in a circle of Japan, Manchoukuo and China including the South Seas, and wishes the liberation and freedom of all nations and races in the sphere, and thus is planning to increase their mutual and common profit aiming at co-prosperity. Speaking in the other way, I oppose subjugation and exploitation. I object to them even if made by Japan. Of course, some Japanese may be planning to subjugate and exploit these regions, but they are taught to do so by some Europeans and Americans, and so, they are those influenced by America and Europe. I oppose absolutely these means whether they might be done by Japanese or European and American powers. I have determined to resist and dispute if Japan would dare to commit such deeds. There are fairly many Japanese who have the same opinion as mine, that is, to wish all the people to get mutual and common advantages and to attain mutual prosperity. Japan does not refuse to have these regions entered by Europeans and Americans, nor will expel them from the sphere. I believe this very principle will bring immediately a large profit to Americans and Europeans too. You may have some doubt in what I said, surveying the present China Incident superficially, but if enough time is given, Japan will realize surely this idea as well in China."

"Now, as I believe, Japan can manage by herself in what concerns China, and I didn't question Germany about it. But I would like to know what attitude Germany will assume towards the aforesaid Japanese ideal or course on the South Seas? What will Germany want to gain in the South Seas? And what does Germany want and what can it do as regards Russo-Japanese relations? As for the American-Japanese relations, I always think the future world civilization will belong to the Pacific civilization in which, I believe, both Japan and America will play great roles, and so the relation between both countries is an important matter affecting a serious influence on tomorrow's human beings. I wish to know what Germany wishes to do toward what she can do and what she requests of America or Japan from this overall viewpoint. But, excepting this for the present, as it is a too large and too distant a problem I want to know what Germany wishes to do towards America and what she can do for the sake of Japan in the present situation in the relation between Japan and America which you well know".

OTT: "It is quite natural of your opinion, but I want to know, first of all, of your meaning of the bounds of the South Seas".

MATSUOKA: " In my personal opinion, I include as far as Siam for the present in the sphere, but it may be extended by and by in the future according to any change of circumstances."

OTT: "This is my personal opinion too. As to the South Seas, Germany has three big viewpoints. Germany is now in the war against Great Britain, but there is a possibility of developing into a war against whole British Empire (war of destroying the British Empire) in the future. The South Seas, for Germany, must be seen from this point of view. This is (1) Germany must consider what should be done for her, with the South Seas, when the war develops to such conditions, (2) just what things and how much should be necessary to be required, (3) after all, the problem depends upon the German attitude of how to settle and how to keep her with Japan and the South Seas. Looking from such a broad standpoint at the war against Britain, the China Incident is simply an incident, isn't it? And I think, too, apart from this worldwide confusion and movement, the China Incident cannot be solved. Don't you think so?"

MATSUOKA: " I think I can agree with the last part of your personal opinions, and once sent a discourse of that fact to a magazine. At present, as you know, most of our people regard the China Incident as one of the most urgent matters to be settled. I, as Foreign Minister, cannot help considering the opinion of our people. The China Incident forms a part of the worldwide confusion indeed. However, it is the grave question for Japan to dispose of."

OTT: " How does Japan intend to settle China?"

MATSUOKA: " To knock CHIANG KAI-SHEK down completely is intended".

(The Ambassador seemed a little startled.)

OTT: "It must be a means; but are there not any possibilities of consulting with CHIANG? I think it is a wise means to consult with him."

MATSUOKA: "I do not entirely refuse to confer with CHIANG, but there is no other means than to knock him down because of the Japanese characteristic viewpoint. I think, at present, he has to be subjugated thoroughly. Of course, means of arms is not the only one. At any rate, however, I believe that Japan, by her power alone, is able to settle the China Incident."

OTT: "But, in managing the China Incident, I think Japan should lay emphasis in taking Soviet-Russia as a reasonably grave problem. From the point of view of Soviet-German relation, Soviet Russia does not seem to be dangerous to Germany any more".

MATSUOKA: "I have also the same perception. Perhaps, one of the important motives, at least, which made HITLER, the "Kampf-fuehrer", determine to intrude like the wind into Denmark, Belgium and Netherlands or to carry out the lightning operation on the field of Flanders, might have been that he had apprehended inconstant movements of STALIN which were unable to be foreseen in the morning how they would be in the evening. (The Ambassador nodded.) When the German Army entered Paris, I thought HITLER conquered STALIN. On that instant, I concluded that Germany needed no longer to worry about the Soviet-Russia."

OTT: "So did I. If Japan wishes, Germany will offer good offices of Japan and the Soviet Russia and I think it is clever to open negotiation between Japan and the Soviet-Russia. As far as I believe, HITLER has no intention to have dispute with the Soviet-Russia and Germany can do without dispute. As for the American problems, Germany does not think the United States would participate in the war. At this moment I hope you would pay special attention to the fact that Germany does not intend to dispute with America in the future, but, rather, wants to come into mutual understanding which is believed to be possible. In short, the German main interests in the Western hemisphere lie in South and Central America. In order to trade with South America and to develop economically, friendly relation must be contracted with the United States. Moreover, trade and other economical relations with the United States herself must be promoted. If the relation of Japan with America (South and North) is the same as that, the interests are also the same as in Germany and Japan must assume the similar attitude toward the United States as Germany does. If such is the case, Germany will be able to offer good offices to Japan to restore and promote close and friendly relationship with America".

MATSUOKA: "As for the United States, South and Central America or Canada, the problem is entirely economic for Japan; especially Japan has recently taken the policy to promote commerce with Central and South America

and wishes to develop enterprises there. Therefore, in this respect, Japan is placed in the same position and has the same idea as Germany. However, in the newspapers these last two or three days there is news stating as if the Americans are in a high passion to participate into the war. What is your opinion about it?

OTT: "Germany has collected authentic information about the United States; so it is groundless that the Americans are in a high passion to participate into the war. Recently President ROOSEVELT has been brought to bay. I think Your Excellency has read the interview of Fuehrer HITLER with WIEGAND; from Germany's point of view, the reason why HITLER has given him an interview was that, as the American people are getting still more opposed to the policy of the President who wishes to have the United States participated into the war and to keep away of the President's policy, HITLER has given an interview to an American pressman with the view of enlarging the gap between the President and American people. The relation between Germany and the United States is not necessarily deteriorated; it will be rather improved.

MATSUOKA: "By the way, regarding your request through Mr. X bearing on (1) transportation of goods through Manchoukuo, Siberia and Soviet Russia to Germany, (2) the earliest settlement of the Germans' damages in China, (3) the control of anti-German articles in newspapers written in English, at today's cabinet council, all the ministers concerned decided to meet your wishes in principle. And so, you needn't to go back to Berlin. However, 'Red Tape' is inevitable in every country and there may be delay in bringing it into effect, and I wish you will understand that. I will manage for myself the items (1) and (2) especiall (1) and, as to (3), my under-officials have entered into consultation with those of other ministers concerned."

Ambassador OTT has brought the German Memorandum bearing on those three cases and handed it over to MATSUOKA and at the same time another memorandum concerning Japanese officials in American continent who hesitate to give certificates to the German nationals who have no connection with German military to repatriate to Germany and asked MATSUOKA to take friendly measures. MATSUOKA replied that he would soon take measures to do his best by conferring with fellow members of the cabinet, especially with the Minister of Communications and also give instruction to the authorities concerned abroad.

Furthermore, in reference to the Italian Mission, Ambassador OTT said: "I am displeased with this Mission, as I firmly believe that it has been sent by Japan to alienate Germany from Italy. It is quite natural that Ambassador SATO, who has been thought unfriendly towards Germany, should not be treated well in Germany, when he dropped in there on his return from Italy". MATSUOKA said that he himself heard such a rumor but he did not believe it and that he laughed it away ridiculous when he heard that rumor. But OTT did not seem to be convinced of MATSUOKA's denial.

And Ambassador OTT said "Since I have arrived here as Ambassador to Japan, what I had felt has been entirely unpleasant. Until now KASUMI-GASEKI has disregarded Germany and never given settlements to the question German Embassy had turned over. For some of them, even a reply has not been given. This may be sufficient reason to be called back home by my government. And you have never given me the chance to see you except on business and I have been treated inferior to British and the United States Ambassadors; I take this for an unendurable insult. In spite of such conditions the German Government has still a little hope in me and has not called me back home till to-day".

Furthermore MATSUOKA said to OTT that he told Ambassador HENRI the Japanese request for French Indo-China which is absolutely necessary and urgent matter for the military operations in the borderland of French Indo-China and as he supposed that the French Government might refer this matter to the German Government, he asked OTT to cable to the German Government to persuade the French Government to accept the Japanese request without hesitation in that case, or if not referred, to send the intention of the German Government to the French Government.

Ambassador OTT replied that he would soon telegraph so.

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Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, Hayashi Kaoru, hereby certify that I am officially connected with the Japanese Government in the following capacity: Chief of the Archives Section, Japanese Foreign Office and that as such official I have custody of the document hereto attached consisting of 12 pages, dated August 2, 1940, and described as follows: Outline of the conversation on August 1, 1940, between Foreign Minister MATSUOKA and German Ambassador OTT.

I further certify that the attached record and document is an official document of the Japanese Government, and that it is part of the official archives and files of the following named ministry or department (specifying also the file number or citation, if any, or any other official designation of the regular location of the document in the archives or files):

Foreign Ministry

Signed at Tokyo on this

6th day of September, 1946.

/s/ K. Hayashi  
Signature of Official

SEAL

Witness: /s/ Nagaharu Odo

Official Capacity

Statement of Official Procurement

I, Richard H. Larsh, hereby certify that I am associated with the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, and that the above described document was obtained by me from the above signed official of the Japanese Government in the conduct of my official business.

Signed at Tokyo on this

6th day of Sept., 1946.

/s/ Richard H. Larsh  
NAME

Witness: /s/ J. A. Curtis  
2d Lt.

Investigator, IPS  
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