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INQUIRY - Annex A - Records and
Extracts of Interviews on Military
and Related Subjects

Cathay Hotel
Shanghai, March 22, 1932

RECORD OF INTERVIEWS with MR. MATSUOKA
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF JAPAN

Lord Lytton: "I understand, from conversations with the Japanese Government at Tokyo, that Japan's aims in Manchuria concern both political and economic matters. Can you tell me to which of these two categories your Government attaches the more importance in this connection?"

Mr. Matsuoka: "We have in Manchuria both political and strategic interests."

Lord Lytton: "The Japanese Government has until now always declared that it regarded Manchuria as part of China. What special rights does Japan wish to acquire in order to render her position in that country safe?"

Mr. Matsuoka: "Although a part of Chinese territory, Manchuria's relations with China proper are still of a rather peculiar character. Manchuria is really not a part of China, but a kind of private State -- an appanage of the Manchu Dynasty."

Lord Lytton: "In any case, it has since become a part of Chinese territory."

Mr. Matsuoka: "Yes, since the fall of the Dynasty; but it is still virtually independent and has never been within the full administration of the National Government. Such was the state of affairs during the days of Chang Tso Lin, and if the Independent Government adopted a similar policy to that of the latter this would mean no more than a difference in name."

Lord Lytton: "To me the presence of the Japanese Army makes a fundamental difference. Do you believe that after the withdrawal of that army the government could be maintained?"

Matsuoka: I am going to answer quite frankly, and giving my personal opinion. Even Chang Tso Lin was unable to maintain his rule without the help of Japan. It is well known everywhere that even he would have been overthrown if Japan had completely withdrawn. It does not make a very great difference whether Japanese help is given to Henry Pu Yi now instead of Chang Tso-Lin even though the former may now be getting helped in a more positive way. Japanese influence

prevents Manchuria from falling into civil strife. If Japan were to withdraw from Manchuria, Russia would immediately step in. During the last few years China has made many attempts to drive Japan out; but her success in this respect would only lead to fresh aggression on the part of Russia and to a new Russo-Japanese War. Without Japan's help Manchuria would have fallen into the same state that China is in nowadays. I have studied during my whole life the situation on the Far Eastern Continent and have come to the conclusion that one has now to choose between two alternatives: Is China on the way to construction or is she on the way to disintegration? As far as I can see everything points to the latter alternative, and nothing to the former. I must add that Soviet Russia is now encroaching considerably upon Inner Mongolia and displaying great activity there and even in the heart of China itself. The part of China now in the hands of the Communists is six times as large as the whole of Japan. Two years ago it was not more than four times as big. It is almost impossible to know the state of affairs in this area unless one gets one's information from Moscow and from Russian newspapers. The National Government and Chiang Kai-shek are completely helpless there. Russia could take Chinese Turkestan with Tachkent whenever she liked, and no power in the World - not even the League of Nations - could do anything to prevent her. Tachkent is now the central point of Communist propaganda for India. Russia has linked up this town, by means of a new railway, to the Trans-Siberian Railway, and is now able to reach Tachkent in two days, whereas it takes 40 days to get there from Tientsin. Russia even signed a contract with a Belgian firm on September 22d, 1918 in respect of the so-called "Highland Railway" which was to lead from Urumtsi to the coast somewhere in the neighborhood of Haichow - that is to say, face to face with Korea and constituting a very great menace to Japan. This railway would cut the Chinese Empire in two, which is my reason for believing that China is on the way to disintegration.

Personally I have no hostile intentions in regard to China. During seven out of the last ten years, I and Mr. Yamamoto, Vice President of the South Manchuria Railway, have done everything in our power to establish good relations with China. We even went so far as to hush up everything connected with the accident to Chang Tso-lin in 1928. We were fairly successful

in establishing good relations with China. We were even accused of weakness by our own people. However, since my departure two and a half years ago, matters had grown worse. The Chinese no longer hide their desire to ruin the South Manchuria Railway, together with all other foreign railways on Chinese soil. It is possible that, in the heat of retaliation, we have sometimes gone too far; but Manchuria is now an independent State. Matters have now reached such a stage that it is "beyond my wits" to conceive a compromise to which both parties would agree. We shall have to force Pu Yi to act.

Mr. Lytton: "I would like to recall the present juridical position as set forth in the Council Resolutions of September 30th and December 10th. You know that we are instructed to report immediately whether or not the engagements embodied in those Resolutions are being carried out. There is no question of forcing Henry Pu Yi to do anything. But please tell me what, in your opinion, would happen if the Japanese troops withdraw."

Mr. Matsuoka: "The result would be complete chaos. Japan is the key for maintaining peace. If she withdraws, this may provoke chaos in the whole of Eastern Asia. We owe it to our country to maintain order in Manchuria. The position of Japan is very much like that of France in Europe, save that France is more fortunate in that she has Allies, whereas Japan has not."

Lord Lytton: "You have the same number of allies, namely the Members of the League of Nations."

Mr. Matsuoka: "I may confess that many thinkers in Japan contemplate Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations -- although with the greatest regret -- and her alone assuring order in the east of Asia. I hope that the League will appreciate the position, and understand better what should be done."

Lord Lytton: "I am grateful to you for having put the situation to me much more directly. We all thoroughly appreciate Japan's anxiety, and that is why we should like to discuss what Japan needs. If it were possible for China to maintain order and prevent Russian encroachments, would Japan's economic interests then be satisfied?"

Mr. Matsuoka: "The Chinese never have kept order. Manchuria is a virtually independent State, more or less helped by Japan. Japan even gave support to

Chang Tso-lin in the form of arms and money when he was on the point of being defeated by Wu Pei-fu, and also on other occasions. Still, the Government of Chang Tso-lin had been relatively strong; consequently, Japan's help is much more necessary now, and the form of Government to which that help is given does not matter very greatly. I may tell you that I have no great faith in Fu Yi. It may happen that he will be forced to retire and that Japan will find it necessary to take matters in hand."

Lord Lytton: "Please tell me something about the other leading personalities."

Mr. Matsuoka: "They are all local personalities. At the time of the formation of the new Government, the Japanese residents prevented numbers of Chinese politicians who were out to further their own private ends from streaming into the country, and these residents supported the election of local personalities."

Mr. Matsuoka: "They are all local personalities. At the time of the formation of the new Government, the Japanese residents prevented numbers of Chinese politicians who were out to further their own private ends from streaming into the country, and these residents supported the election of local personalities. For instance, the Governor of Mukden Province has held the same post since 1918. When the trouble broke out in September last, he was kept in a house within the Railway Zone, and was not forced, but simply persuaded, to retain his post. The Governor of Kirin Province, General Hsi Hsin, was a Manchu General and had been Chief of Staff of General Chang Tsueh-liang. General Ho-Chan-shan was a Chinese Mohammedan and is now Governor of Heilunskiang Province, and, in addition, Minister of War. But even Japan could not uphold Henry Fu Yi under all circumstances. However, there still persists in China a curious sentiment, difficult for any foreigner to understand. It is a kind of vision to many Chinese that some time a Manchu Emperor will come back to save the country. I myself once had a visit from Princess Chu, whose father had escaped from Peking at the time of the Revolution and had died at Port Arthur. I could not help experiencing a certain feeling of reverence at being thus visited by a member of the old Imperial Family - and this is precisely what a great number of Chinese still feel. Naturally the present leaders and the younger people will openly deny this, but it is nevertheless the case."

Lord Lytton: "May I come back once more to the question of economic interests? If there existed in Manchuria a Government strong enough to keep the country in

order without Japanese help, what would Japan expect from that Government beyond the protection of Japanese residents?

Mr. Matsuoka: "We would be satisfied if we could attend to our economic interests (but naturally on the basis of the existing treaties) and we would require the cooperation of the Government in certain strategic questions."

Lord Lytton: "I am now thinking more particularly of railway matters. I learned in Japan that you wanted the Manchurian Administration to limit itself in its railway policy."

Mr. Matsuoka: "I wish first to define the position. China wanted to ruin the South Manchuria Railway by means of an encircling network of railway lines."

Lord Lytton: "The position of the South Manchuria Railway is of course quite anomalous. It is a treaty right won by war. Would it be correct to interpret your wishes by stating that China is not allowed to build competitive railways?"

Mr. Matsuoka: "This was agreed upon at Peking and in the 1915 Treaty. That is really the basis."

Lord Lytton: "Do you think it consistent with the term of 'Sovereignty' to forbid people from exercising certain sovereign rights?"

Mr. Matsuoka: "The difficulty is partly met by agreements between the South Manchuria Railway and China in respect of certain railway lines. On the other hand, the real problem is that the Kuomintang Government and Party wish to ruin foreign railways in the same way as they wish to abolish Unequal Treaties."

Lord Lytton: "Still, the question is different, because, with Unequal Treaties the Powers wanted to protect, and only to protect, their own nationals, whereas, in the railway question Japan has in mind certain strategic interests."