

3558

Def. Doc. No. 1778

STATEMENT

I am Widar Bagge, a citizen of the Kingdom of Sweden and presently Swedish Minister to Egypt.

I was from January, 1937, to September 1945, Swedish Minister to Japan. In this capacity I had conversations with Japanese nationals regarding peace treaties. I had a Japanese friend named Bunshiro SUZUKI whom I had known for a long time and in whom I had great confidence. He was not a politician but had excellent connections in the political world and was very well informed. We sometimes discussed the political situation and one day in the middle of September, 1944, he said he had important news. He then outlined a plan to obtain peace and mentioned the concessions that Japan would be prepared to make. He told me that Prince Kanoye was behind this feeler and that he, Mr. SUZUKI, was acting as go-between. He then outlined the plan to obtain peace and mentioned the concessions that Japan would be prepared to make. The main feature was that all territories conquered during the war would be returned. Even the possibility of giving up Manchukuo might be taken into consideration. Mr. SUZUKI told me that Prince Kanoye and a group of men around him were responsible for this plan which they wanted me to forward to the Swedish government with the request that through Swedish channels a feeler should be made in London. It was considered that it might be somewhat easier to find understanding for such a plan in Great Britain than in the United States. Of course, I reported everything to Stockholm.

During the following months I often met my friend and discussed with him the political situation and the peace problem. I heard from him and from many other sources that at this moment the allied request for unconditional surrender was one of the greatest obstacles to peace. Even those Japanese who would be inclined to surrender could not think of such a decision as long as they did not know to some extent what the nation might be exposed to. If it was to be feared the Emperor would be treated with insult or that the Japanese national pride would be humiliated, then I was told that everybody thought it preferable to continue the war and fight to the bitter end. I had conversations with Mr. Mamoru SHIGEMITSU shortly before he resigned as Foreign Minister of the KOISO Cabinet on April 7, 1945, before I left for Sweden on

April 13, 1945. It was known that I was returning to Europe and I was told that it was that fact that decided the Foreign Minister to take up the peace question with me. Mr. SHIGEMITSU sent an old friend of mine, Mr. Tadashi SAKAYA, former Japanese Minister to Helsingfors, to see me. I gathered from my conversation with him that the purpose of sending him was to get a preliminary impression on the peace problem and to probe my sincerity. Few days after my talk with Mr. SAKAYA I was asked to come and see Mr. SHIGEMITSU himself. He was in fact very frank. He did not conceal his opinion about the war situation but said that he thought it rather bad. He blamed the military clique and said that now it was for the Japanese diplomats to try to get the country out of the war. He spoke at length about the Emperor as a peace-loving man who had always been against the war. He said that he himself, as well as most of the members of the Japanese diplomatic service, had been against the war from the beginning. He requested me very earnestly to do whatever I could in order to find out the possibilities of obtaining peace for Japan, i.e., a negotiated peace. He asked me to collaborate for this purpose with Mr. Suemasa OKAMOTO, Japanese Minister to Stockholm, who was then to report to Tokyo. From my conversation with Mr. SHIGEMITSU, I retained a vivid memory of his express earnest desire which I believe to have been sincere to do everything in his power to end the war as soon as possible, even at great sacrifice to his country.

A few days later Mr. SAKAYA again came to see me at the Swedish Legation. He told me that the peace question was very urgent and that Mr. SHIGEMITSU hoped I would leave as soon as possible and go straight to Stockholm to take the matter up with my government.

The resignation of the KOISO Cabinet a few days later came very unexpectedly, of which Mr. SHIGEMITSU was Foreign Minister. Mr. Shigenori TOGO accepted the portfolio as Foreign Minister and the next day the same emissary as before called on me to say that Mr. TOGO had been informed of the conversations between Mr. SHIGEMITSU and myself and that he took the same attitude to the peace question.

After I arrived in Sweden in May, 1945, while still Minister to Japan, I went to see Mr. OKAMOTO. I asked him whether he had received any confidential telegrams about efforts to negotiate peace and I told him that I had several serious talks with Mr. SHIGEMITSU as Foreign Minister before leaving Japan. I told him that Mr. SHIGEMITSU had been very frank and had asked me to make

Def. Doc. No. 1778

a peace feeler. Mr. OKAMOTO replied that this was a very serious matter but that he had not heard anything about it. I told him that Mr. SHIGEMITSU had resigned just before I left Tokyo, that Mr. TOGO had succeeded him, and I asked Mr. OKAMOTO to make inquiries as to whether or not I should continue my work on this peace effort. Mr. OKAMOTO said that he would send a telegram.

About two weeks later we met again and he told me that he had just received a telegram from Mr. TOGO, stating that since this had been a matter handled by the former Cabinet, it would require some investigation which would take some time before Mr. OKAMOTO would be informed definitely. Both Mr. OKAMOTO and I were very disappointed because of this reply. I remember, however, that at the time when Mr. TOGO took over the portfolio as Foreign Minister it was mentioned in Tokyo as an important point to his credit that he had a strong position in Moscow since the time he was Japanese Ambassador there. Later on it has also become known that he had preferred to put in his peace efforts in Moscow.

Finally, I wish to mention that soon after my return to Stockholm in May, 1945, I had the occasion, in the presence of the Swedish Foreign Minister, Gunther, to have a long talk with the American Ambassador, Mr. Herschel V. Johnson. I then related my conversations with Mr. SHIGEMITSU and gave a comprehensive account of the whole peace problem against the background of my experience in the Far East.

I hereby swear that the foregoing statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Signed) W. Bagge.
Widar Bagge.

KINGDOM OF EGYPT)
CITY OF CAIRO) SS:
EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Subscribed and Sworn before, me, this 10th day of May, 1947.

(Signed) _____
Ralph Miller
Consul of the United States
of America