

No. 2267

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(Translation)
(Strictly confidential)

The Problem of the Conclusion of a Japanese-German Political Convention (Dated July 24, 1936)

The Soviet Union, with her colossal armaments in the Far East, is menacing Japan. Meanwhile, she has solidified her standpoint by concluding treaties of mutual aid with France, Czechoslovakia and Outer Mongolia respectively and by backing the Communist activities in China, wherethrough increasing the menace to Japan.

Therefore, in order to ensure the existence of Japan and smoothly carry out our policy towards the continent, it is urgently necessary to make common cause with some other nation to check the Soviet Union. And it is considered proper as well as easy to choose Germany as the object of our approaches for the present, for both Japan and Germany stand on similar standpoints as regards their respective international situations -- above all, as regards their respective relations with the Soviet Union. Moreover, their reciprocal relations have taken, recently, an extremely favourable turn. Their national feelings are now so enhanced that some concrete step or other to decide their mutual connection must be taken.

However, there are two points which demand our precaution, in realizing the coalition between Japan and Germany.

(1) It is needless to say that the coalition should be so designed as to obtain the greatest possible effect in checking the Soviet Union. Whereas it is simultaneously requested that the coalition should not stimulate the Soviet Union unduly, and that the efforts in realizing it should not lead up to a war against her. Though Germany's relations with the Soviet Union are comparatively simple, Japan's relations with her are, far from being simple, much complicated and delicate. Japan borders directly on the Soviet Union, and holds many concessions in the latter's territories. Besides, there are multitudinous questions pending between the two nations. Accordingly, it would cause not a little disadvantage, direct or indirect, on the part of Japan, if she unduly stimulates the Soviet Union.

(2) The second point to be fully cautious of is that the Japanese-German coalition should not unduly set the Western Powers, especially Britain, at unrest. The Anglo-Japanese relations are by no means friendly at present, owing to the existing discrepancy of views concerning the Chinese problems and the economical questions. However, it is quite necessary, in order to improve the international situation of Japan, to cultivate the friendship of Britain, at least not to clash head on with her, who holds involved interests and great influence all over the world. And such is, indeed, the keynote of the Japanese foreign policy for the present.

In view of the Russian menace with her colossal armaments in the Far East, the unsatisfactory progress of the Anglo-Japanese conversations and the present stage of the Berlin negotiations for a Japanese-German coalition, Japan must be very cautious lest the

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import of the political agreement which she is going to conclude with Germany should stimulate Britain unduly. Meanwhile, we are requested to take positive steps toward the readjustment of the Anglo-Japanese relations, through making an agreement with Britain that Japan and Britain should have a frank consultation with each other with the object of cooperating as far as possible in settling important problems common to both countries.

Unofficial conversations were made, recently, at Berlin, in absolute secrecy, among the Japanese Ambassador to Germany, a military attache to the Japanese Embassy at Berlin, and German Ambassador without portfolio Joachim von Ribbentrop, in an attempt to realize the political coalition between Japan and Germany. In accordance with the result of these conversations, Germany has submitted to the Japanese Government a tentative plan of an anti-Comintern pact and a secret political agreement which is to be annexed to it. Our criticism of the submitted plan, from the Japanese point of view, especially from the above referred standpoint is as follows:

I. The Anti-Comintern Pact.

If we conclude this kind of pact exclusively between Japan and Germany, in such a form as was suggested by the German Government the substance of the pact, when disclosed, would naturally stimulate the Soviet Union. Moreover, there is a danger that it might be used as the material of some malignant propoganda, resulting in serious disadvantage on the part of Japan.

Accordingly, it is essential strictly to limit the scope of the agreement within such substantial necessity that Japan and Germany exchange information of the Communist activities and opinions about the counter-measures of each other.

II. Annexed Political Agreement

a. Article 1.

The first article declares that both Japan and Germany will not take any such measure as would place the Soviet Union in an advantageous situation. It is, therefore, simply of negative import, and does not, in itself, put much restraint on either of the two participant nations. However, its accompanying influence needs to be taken into due consideration.

Accordingly, it would be proper to change the original conditional "in case either of the two nations be subjected to a menace or an attack", which covers too wide a scope, as "in case either be subjected to, or menaced with, an unprovoked attack."

Besides, it is not desirable that this provision plainly name the Soviet Union. It would be safer, in order to observe secrecy as well, to alter it as "a third state", with an understanding that "a third state" means the Soviet Union.

Further, it is hoped that the provision: "In the above-stated case, the Governments of the both participant states should hold a frank consultation with each other" be inserted as the second item of the first article.

b. Article II.

The second article of the original draft is hoped to be struck out. It is necessary to give sufficient explanation concerning the problems now pending between Japan and the Soviet Union in order to convince the German Government how it is impossible to deal with the matter uniformly as the German draft suggests. And it is necessary again to make sure of the German intentions to handle the Rapallo Treaty and the Berlin Neutrality Treaty so as to accord with the spirit of the present pact, by way of precaution lest disproportion of obligation should be caused in the future between Japan and Germany.

While thus proceeding with the negotiations with Germany along the lines so far expounded, Japan should start negotiations with Britain as well. It is desired to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible, beginning with whichever is better under way.

The plan on which the negotiations with Britain should be based is expounded below. Once the agreement is reached, a firm resolution on the part of Japan will be demanded, not only to abstain from such acts as are against the spirit of the agreement, but to give assurance to Britain at the least that her concessions in China will be respected and that the pledge will be observed.

In short, the undesirable effect that these pacts may have on Britain in case we be compelled to disclose the substance of the pacts, could be prevented, provided that the draft be properly amended and some positive steps be taken to readjust the relations with Britain, in view of the recent tense situation of the Russo-Japanese relations and the peculiarity of the relations between Japan and Britain. If so, the Russo-Japanese relations also will sustain little damage, and the international status of Japan will be ensured.

The Government of the Japanese Empire and the Government of the British Empire, desiring to strengthen the friendly relations subsisting between the two countries and thereby contribute to the establishment of the world peace, have made an agreement as below.

(1) The Government of the Japanese Empire and the Government of the British Empire should carry on frank deliberation with each other with the object of cooperating with regard to important problems common to both countries.

(2) This document shall remain in force for the period of five years from the day of signing.

In faith whereof, the undersigned representatives, having been duly authorized for that purpose by the governments of the respective countries, have signed this document.

Done in duplicate in the city of London, this ____th of _____, one thousand nine hundred and thirty ____.

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Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, HAYASHI, Kaoru, Chief of the Archives Section, Japanese Foreign Office, hereby certify that the document hereto attached in Japanese consisting of 8 pages and entitled "Problem of Concluding a Political Agreement between Japan and Germany (July 24, 1936)" is an exact and true copy of an official document of the Japanese Foreign Office.

Certified at Tokyo,

on this 23rd day of January 1947.

/s/ HAYASHI, K.

Witness: Nagaharu Odo