

Excerpts From
CONFERENCE ON THE LIMITATION OF ARMAMENT
WASHINGTON

November 12 1921
February 6 1922

Committee on Pacific and Far Eastern Questions
Twenty-Fourth Meeting, Monday, January 23, 1922, 11 A.M.
Columbus Room, Pan American Building

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Present

UNITED STATES: Mr. Hughes, Senator Lodge, Senator Underwood, Mr. Root. Accompanied by Mr. Wright, Mr. MacMurray, Mr. Poole.
BELGIUM: Baron de Cartier. Accompanied by Mr. le Tellier, Mr. Tilmont, Mr. de Warzee.
BRITISH EMPIRE. Mr. Balfour, Sir Auckland Geddes, Sir Robert Borden (for Canada), Senator Pearce (for Australia), Sir John Salmond (for New Zealand), Mr. Sastri (for India). Accompanied by Sir Maurice Hankey, Mr. Lampson, Mr. Bajpai, Sir H. Llewellyn Smith.
CHINA: Mr. Koo, Mr. Sze, Mr. Wang. Accompanied by Mr. Hawking Yen, Mr. Zee, Mr. Koo, Mr. Tyau.
FRANCE; Mr. Jusserand. Accompanied by Mr. Kammerer, Mr. Touzet, Mr. Ponsot, Mr. Garnier.
ITALY: Senator Schanzer, Senator Albertini. Accompanied by Marquis Visconti-Venosta, Count Pagliano.
JAPAN: Admiral Baron Kato, Baron Shidehara, Mr. Hanihara. Accompanied by Mr. Matsudaira, Mr. Saburi, Mr. Kimura, Mr. Sawada.
THE NETHERLANDS: Jonkheer Beelaerts van Blokland, Jonkheer de Beaufort. Accompanied by Jonkheer van Starckenborgh, Mr. de Kat Angelino.
PORTUGAL: Viscount d'Alte, Captain Vasconcellos. The Secretary General. Assisted by Mr. Cresson, Mr. Paul, Mr. Osborne. Interpreter: Mr. Camerlynck.

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BARON SHIDEHARA said that, if the discussion on the Siberian problem was to be proceeded with, it might be of interest for the Committee to know exactly the intentions and aims of Japan in regard to Siberia, and, with the permission of the Chairman and of the Committee, he would make a concise statement in this respect.

He then read as follows:

"The Military expedition of Japan to Siberia was originally undertaken in common accord and in cooperation with the United States in 1918. It was primarily intended to render assistance to the Czecho-Slovak troops who in their homeward journey across Siberia from European Russia found themselves in grave and pressing danger at the hands of hostile forces under German command. The Japanese and American expeditionary forces, together with other Allied troops, fought their way from Vladivostok far into the region of the Amur and the Trans-Baikal Provinces to protect the railway lines which afforded the sole means of transportation of the Czecho-Slovak troops from the interior of Siberia to the port of Vladivostok. Difficulties which the Allied forces had to encounter in their operations in the severe cold winter of Siberia were immense.

"In January, 1920, the United States decided to terminate its military undertaking in Siberia, and ordered the withdrawal of its forces. For some time thereafter, Japanese troops continued alone to carry out the duty of guarding several points along the Trans-Siberian Railway in fulfillment of interallied arrangements, and of affording facilities to the returning Czecho-Slovaks.

"The last column of Czecho-Slovak troops safely embarked from Vladivostok in September, 1920. Ever since then, Japan has been looking forward to an early moment for the withdrawal of her troops from Siberia. The maintenance of such troops in a foreign land is for her a costly and thankless undertaking, and she will be only too happy to be relieved of such responsibility. In fact, the evacuation of the Trans-Baikal and the Amur Provinces was already completed in 1920. The only region which now remains to be evacuated is the southern portion of the Maritime Province around Vladivostok and Nikol'sk.

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"It will be appreciated that for Japan the question of the withdrawal of troops from Siberia is not quite as simple as it was for other Allied Powers. In the first place, there are a considerable number of Japanese residents who had lawfully and under guaranties of treaty established themselves in Siberia long before the Bolshevik eruption, and were there entirely welcomed. In 1917, prior to the joint American-Japanese military enterprise, the number of such residents was already no less than 2717. In the actual situation prevailing there, those Japanese residents can hardly be expected to look for the protection of their lives and property to any other authorities than Japanese troops. Whatever districts those troops have evacuated in the past have fallen into disorder, and practically all Japanese residents have had precipitately to withdraw, to seek for their personal safety. In so withdrawing, they have been obliged to leave behind large portions of their property, abandoned and unprotected, and their homes and places of business have been destroyed. While the hardships and losses thus caused the Japanese in the Trans-Baikal and the Amur Provinces have been serious enough, more extensive damages are likely to follow from the evacuation of Vladivostok in which a larger number of Japanese have always been resident and a greater amount of Japanese capital invested.

"There is another difficulty by which Japan is faced in proceeding to the recall of her troops from the Maritime Province. Due to geographical proximity the general situation in the districts around Vladivostok and Nikolsk is bound to affect the security of the Korean frontier. In particular it is known that these districts have long been the base of Korean conspiracies against Japan. Those hostile Koreans, joining hands with lawless elements in Russia, attempted in 1920 to invade Korea through the Chinese territory of Chientao. They set fire to the Japanese Consulate at Hunchun and committed indiscriminate acts of murder and pillage. At the present time they are under the effective control of Japanese troops stationed in the Maritime Province, but they will no doubt renew the attempt to penetrate into Korea at the first favorable opportunity that may present itself.

"Having regard to these considerations, the Japanese Government have felt bound to exercise precaution in carrying out the contemplated evacuation of the Maritime Province. Should they take hasty action without adequate provision for the future they would be delinquent in their duty of affording protection to a large number of their nationals resident in the districts in question and of maintaining order and security in Korea.

"It should be made clear that no part of the Maritime Province is under Japan's military occupation. Japanese troops are still stationed in the southern portion of that Province, but they have not set up any civil or military administration to displace local authorities. Their activity is confined to measures of self-protection against the menace to their own safety and to the safety of their country and nationals. They are not in occupation of those districts any more than American or other Allied troops could be said to have been in occupation of the places in which they were formerly stationed.

"The Japanese Government are anxious to see an orderly and stable authority speedily reestablished in the Far Eastern possessions of Russia. It was in this spirit that they manifested a keen interest in the patriotic but ill-fated struggle of Admiral Kolchak. They have shown readiness to lend their good offices for prompting the reconciliation of various political groups in Eastern Siberia. But they have carefully refrained from supporting one faction against another. It will be recalled, for instance, that they withheld all assistance from General Rozanov against the revolutionary movements which led to his overthrow in January, 1920. They maintained an attitude of strict neutrality and refused to interfere in these movements, which it would have been quite easy for them to suppress if they had so desired.

"In relation to this policy of non-interference, it may be useful to refer briefly to the past relations between the Japanese authorities and Ataman Semenov, which seem to have been a source of popular misgiving and speculation. It will be remembered that the growing rapprochement between the Germans and the Bolshevik Government in Russia in the early part of 1918 naturally gave rise to apprehensions in the Allied countries that a considerable quantity of munitions supplied by those countries and stored in Vladivostok might be removed by the Bolsheviks to European Russia, for the use of the Germans. Ataman Semenov was then in Siberia and was organizing a movement to check such Bolshevik activities and to preserve order and stability in that region. It was in this situation that

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Japan, as well as some of the Allies, began to give support to the Cossack chief. After a few months, such support by the other Powers was discontinued, but the Japanese were reluctant to abandon their friend, whose efforts in the Allied cause they had originally encouraged, and they maintained for some time their connection with Ataman Semenoff. They had, however, no intention whatever of interfering in the domestic affairs of Russia, and when it was found that the assistance rendered to the Ataman was likely to complicate the internal situation in Siberia, they terminated all relations with him and no support of any kind has since been extended to him by the Japanese authorities.

"The Japanese Government are now seriously considering plans which would justify them in carrying out their decision of the complete withdrawal of Japanese troops from the Maritime Province with reasonable precaution for the security of Japanese residents and of the Korean frontier regions. It is for this purpose that negotiations were opened some time ago at Darien between the Japanese representatives and the agents of the Chita Government.

"Those negotiations at Darien are in no way intended to secure for Japan any right or advantage of an exclusive nature. They have been solely actuated by a desire to adjust some of the more pressing questions with which Japan is confronted in relation to Siberia. They have essentially in view the conclusion of provisional commercial arrangements, the removal of the existing menace to the security of Japan and to the lives and property of Japanese residents in Eastern Siberia, the provision of guaranties for the freedom of lawful undertakings in that region, and the prohibition of Bolshevik propoganda over the Siberian border. Should adequate provisions be arranged on the line indicated, the Japanese Government will at once proceed to the complete withdrawal of Japanese troops from the Maritime Province.

"The occupation of certain points in the Russian Province of Sakhalin is wholly different both in nature and in origin, from the stationing of troops in the Maritime Province. History affords few instances similar to the incident of 1920 at Nikolaievsk, where more than seven hundred Japanese, including women and children, as well as the duly recognized Japanese Consul and his family and his official staff, were cruelly tortured and massacred. No nation worthy of respect will possibly remain forbearing under such a strain of provocation. Nor was it possible for the Japanese Government to disregard the just popular indignation aroused in Japan by the incident. Under the actual condition of things, Japan found no alternative but to occupy, as a measure of reprisal, certain points in the Russian Province of Sakhalin in which the outrage was committed, pending the establishment in Russia of a responsible authority with whom she can communicate in order to obtain due satisfaction.

"Nothing is further from the thought of the Japanese Government than to take advantage of the present helpless condition of Russia for prosecuting selfish designs. Japan recalls with deep gratitude and appreciation the brilliant role which Russia played in the interest of civilization during the earlier stage of the Great War. The Japanese people have shown and will continue to show every sympathetic interest in the efforts of patriotic Russians aspiring to the unity and rehabilitation of their country. The military occupation of the Russian Province of Sakhalin is only a temporary measure, and will naturally come to an end as soon as a satisfactory settlement of the question shall have been arranged with an orderly Russian Government.

"In conclusion, the Japanese Delegation is authorized to declare that it is the fixed and settled policy of Japan to respect the territorial integrity of Russia; and to observe the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of that country, as well as the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in every part of the Russian possessions.