

*Not used**39*PROPOSED MEETING OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT AND
PRIME MINISTER KONOYE

Ten days later Prime Minister Konoye of Japan sent to President Roosevelt a message which was delivered by the Japanese Ambassador on August 28, 1941, urging that a meeting between President Roosevelt and himself be arranged as soon as possible for a frank exchange of views. The Prime Minister said in this message that the idea of continuing preliminary informal conversations and of having their conclusion confirmed by the responsible heads of the two Governments did not meet the need of the existing situation, which was developing swiftly and which might produce unforeseen contingencies; that he considered it, therefore, of urgent necessity that the heads of the two Governments meet first to discuss from a broad standpoint all important problems between Japan and the United States covering the entire Pacific area.

Accompanying the Prime Minister's message was a statement by the Japanese Government giving assurances that Japan was seeking a program for the Pacific area consistent with the principles to which the United States Government had long been committed. However, the statement contained qualifications to the following effect: The Japanese Government was prepared to withdraw its troops from Indochina "as soon as the China incident is settled or a just peace is established in East Asia"; Japan would take no military action against the Soviet Union so long as the Soviet Union remained faithful to the Soviet-Japanese neutrality treaty and did "not menace Japan or Manchukuo or take any action contrary to the spirit of the said treaty"; the Japanese Government had no intention of using, "without provocation", military force against any neighboring nation.

In a conversation with Secretary Hull on the same day, Ambassador Nomura said that the Prime Minister would probably proceed to the proposed meeting in a Japanese warship and would probably be assisted by a staff of officials from the Foreign Office, the Army, the Navy, and the Japanese Embassy at Washington. The Ambassador thought that the inclusion of

Japanese Army and Navy representatives would be "especially beneficial in view of the responsibility which they would share for the settlement reached". He said his Government was very anxious that the meeting be held at the earliest possible moment in view of the efforts of a "third country" and "fifth-columnists in Japan" to disturb Japanese-American relations.

In the same conversation Secretary Hull pointed out to the Ambassador the desirability of reaching an agreement in principle on the main issues prior to a meeting of President Roosevelt and the Japanese Prime Minister. He said that should such a meeting be a failure the consequences would be serious and that, therefore, its purpose should be the ratification of essential points agreed upon in advance.

In a reply of September 3 to the Prime Minister's message President Roosevelt stated that he was very desirous of collaborating with the Prime Minister; that he could not avoid taking cognizance of indications in some quarters of Japan of concepts which seemed capable of raising obstacles to successful collaboration between the President and the Prime Minister; that in these circumstances precaution should be taken toward insuring that the proposed meeting prove a success, by endeavoring to enter immediately upon preliminary discussions of the fundamental and essential questions on which agreement was sought; that these questions involved practical application of the principles fundamental to the achievement and maintenance of peace. The President repeated the four principles regarded by this Government as the foundation upon which relations between nations should properly rest: respect for the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of each and all nations; support of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; support of the principle of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity; non-disturbance of the status quo in the Pacific except as the status quo might be altered by peaceful means.

On September 6 Ambassador Crew reported by telegram that Prime Minister Konoye had said that from the beginning of the informal conversations in Washington he had had the warmest support of the responsible Japanese Army and Navy leaders. The Prime Minister also said that the Minister of War had agreed to have a full general accompany the Prime Minister to the conference;

that the Navy had agreed to send a full admiral; and that the Army and Navy vice Chiefs of Staff and other high officers who were in full sympathy with the Prime Minister's aims would also go.

In considering the Japanese proposal for a meeting between President Roosevelt and the Japanese Prime Minister this Government took into consideration that during the exploratory conversations up to this time Japan had evidenced an intention to continue its program of aggression and domination in the Far East. This Government had in mind that the Prime Minister, Prince Konoye, who would attend the meeting, had headed the Japanese Government in 1937 when Japan attacked China; that he had proclaimed and given publicity to the basic principles which the Japanese Government presumably would insist upon in any peace agreement with China; that the Japanese Government had shown in the "treaty" which Japan had concluded in November 1940 with the Japanese puppet regime at Nanking how it proposed to apply these principles. This "treaty" contained provisions that Japan should, "in order to carry out the defence against communistic activities through collaboration of the two countries, station required forces in specified areas of Mengchiang and of Kother China for the necessary duration"; that China should "recognize that Japan may, in accordance with previous practices or in order to preserve the common interests of the two countries, station for a required duration its naval units and vessels in specified areas within the territory of the Republic of China"; that "while considering the requirements of China, the Government of the Republic of China shall afford positive and full facilities to Japan and Japanese subjects" with respect to the utilization of resources.

This Government also had in mind that the military element in Japan, which would be heavily represented at the proposed conference, had been responsible for carrying on Japan's program of aggression since 1931 and that the Japanese military leaders had caused the Japanese Government to maintain in the conversations a rigid attitude and position.

Furthermore, if the proposed meeting accomplished no more than the endorsement of general principles, the Japanese Government would be free to make its own interpretation of these principles in their actual application. If the meeting ended without agreement the Japanese military leaders would be in a position to represent to their country that the United States was responsible for the failure of the meeting.

In view of all these factors, this Government could not but feel that there was scant hope that the Japanese Government could be persuaded to undergo a change of attitude and that in any case it was essential to determine in advance of a meeting between the responsible heads of the two Governments whether there was in fact any basis for agreement.

JAPANESE PROPOSAL OF SEPTEMBER 6

On September 6, 1941 the Japanese Ambassador handed to the Secretary of State a revised proposal. In that proposal it was stated that: 1. Japan would not make any military advances from French Indochina against any adjoining areas, and likewise would not, "without any justifiable reason", resort to military action against any regions lying south of Japan. 2. The attitudes of Japan and the United States toward the European war would be "decided by the concepts of protection and self-defense, and, in case the United States should participate in the European war, the interpretation and execution of the Tripartite Pact by Japan shall be independently decided". (The Japanese Ambassador said that the formulae contained in points 1 and 2 represented the maximum that Japan could offer at that time.) 3. Japan would "endeavor to bring about the rehabilitation of general and normal relationship between Japan and China, upon the realization of which Japan is ready to withdraw its armed forces from China as soon as possible in accordance with the agreements between Japan and China". 4. The economic activities of the United States in China would "not be restricted so long as pursued on an equitable basis". 5. Japanese activities in the southwestern Pacific area would be carried on by peaceful means and in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination in international commerce, and Japan would cooperate

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in the production and procurement by the United States of needed natural resources in the said area. 6. Japan would take measures necessary for the resumption of normal trade relations between Japan and the United States. On its part the United States would undertake: to "abstain from any measures and actions which will be prejudicial to the endeavour by Japan concerning the settlement of the China Affair" (Ambassador Grew was informed by the Japanese Foreign Minister that this point referred to United States aid to Chiang Kai-shek); to reciprocate Japan's commitment expressed in point 5 referred to above; to "suspend any military measures" in the Far East and in the southwestern Pacific area; and to reciprocate immediately Japan's commitment expressed in point 6 above.

Some of the Japanese provisions were equivocal and ambiguous and some indicated a disposition by the Japanese Government to narrow down and limit the application of the fundamental principles with which the Japanese professed in the abstract to agree. The revised proposals were much narrower than would have been expected from the assurances given in the statement communicated to President Roosevelt on August 28.

On September 6 Ambassador Grew reported that it had been revealed in his talk with Prince Konoye on that day that the Prime Minister and therefore the Japanese Government wholeheartedly subscribed to the four points considered by the United States Government essential as a basis for satisfactory reconstruction of United States - Japanese relations. These had been set out in President Roosevelt's reply of September 3 to the Prime Minister's message. However, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs informed Ambassador Grew some time later that although Prince Konoye had "in principle" accepted the four points, the Prime Minister had indicated that some adjustment would be required in applying them to actual conditions.

Throughout September 1941 the Japanese Government continued to urge upon the United States an early meeting between the President and the Japanese Prime Minister. On September 23 the Japanese Ambassador told Secretary Hull that such a meeting would have a psychological effect in Japan by setting Japan on a new course; that it would counteract the influence of pro-Axis

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elements in Japan and provide support for the elements desiring peaceful relations with the United States. During conversation with Secretary Hull on September 29 the Ambassador said that if the proposed meeting should not take place it might be difficult for the Konoys regime to stay in office and that if it fell it was likely to be followed by a less moderate government. The Ambassador handed to Secretary Hull a paper expressing the views of the Japanese Government on the proposed meeting. In this it was stated that the meeting "would mark an epochal turn for good in Japanese-American relations"; that should the meeting not take place there might never be another opportunity and the repercussions might be "most unfortunate". It stated that the ship to carry the Prime Minister was ready; that his suite, including a full general and a full admiral, had been privately appointed; that the party was prepared to depart at any moment. Finally, it stated that any further delay in arranging for the meeting would put the Japanese Government in a "very delicate position" and again emphasized that there was urgent necessity for holding the meeting at the earliest possible date.

The reply of the United States to the Japanese proposal of September 6, 1941 was contained in a statement made by Secretary Hull to the Japanese Ambassador on October 2. After reviewing the progress of the course of the conversations thus far, the Secretary stated that a clear-cut manifestation of Japan's intention in regard to the withdrawal of Japanese troops from China and French Indochina would be most helpful in making known Japan's peaceful intentions and Japan's desire to follow courses calculated to establish a sound basis for future stability and progress in the Pacific area. The Secretary said that the United States Government had welcomed the suggestion for a meeting of the heads of the two Governments, but while desiring to proceed with arrangements as soon as possible, felt that clarification of certain principles was necessary to insure the success of the meeting. He remarked that from what the Japanese Government had indicated, it contemplated a program in which the basic principles put forward by the United States would in their application be circumscribed by qualifications and exceptions. Secretary Hull asked whether, in view of these circumstances, the

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Japanese Government felt that the proposed meeting would be likely to contribute to the advancement of the high purposes which the two Governments mutually had in mind. He reported the view of the United States that renewed consideration of the fundamental principles would be helpful in seeking a meeting of minds on the essential questions and laying a firm foundation for the meeting.

The Japanese Ambassador, after reading this statement, expressed the fear that his Government would be disappointed, because of its earnest desire to hold the meeting. Secretary Hull replied that we had no desire to cause any delay but felt there should be a meeting of minds on the essential points before the meeting between the President and the Prime Minister was held.

The conversations between the Secretary of State and the Japanese Ambassador at Washington continued, but the issues between the Governments appeared no nearer settlement. The chief questions on which agreement seemed impossible were Japanese obligations to Germany and Italy under the Tripartite Pact; the question of adherence by Japan to a basic course of peace; and the terms of settlement of the conflict between Japan and China, particularly the matter of the evacuation of Japanese troops from China. In regard to the last point this Government throughout the negotiations maintained that any settlement involving China must provide fully for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country; otherwise there would be no prospect of stable peace in the Pacific area. With reference to the Tripartite Pact, there was implicit throughout the discussions a Japanese threat that if the United States should become involved in war with Germany the Japanese Government, in accordance with the terms of the pact, would make war on the United States.

Excerpt from "Peace and War"
Official publication
Department of State, U. S. A.
Pages 124-130