

Excerpts from the Interrogation of MATSUOKA, Yosuke

5 March 1946, Sugama Prison, Tokyo, Japan

Q. Now, on 27 September 1940, you delivered a speech about the Tri-Partite Pact. You advocated the alliance with Germany and Italy as "having the same policy and mental attitude of cooperation with countries which can work with us all over the world in the establishment of a new world order, as the final objective of the YEMUTO (?) race. I attribute the alliance as a tribute to the illustrious virtues of the Emperor."

A. Yes

Q. The Tri-Partite alliance was concluded by Imperial rescript also, wasn't it?

A. Yes. Not concluded, but the edict came out when it was decided to conclude it.

Q. You personally appeared before the emperor and argued in favor of this alliance?

A. I explained.

Q. Did you say that you were opposed or in favor of it?

A. In favor of it. In the preamble of the Tri-Party Pact, the old Japanese tradition idea was included. The universal concordia or universal peace.

Q. But the theory was the Emperor of Japan would be the guiding influence?

A. No, not necessarily. Let each nation have its own place and right to work out its own destiny. That means universal concordia.

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Q. Did you, shortly after entering upon the duties of this office, have a conversation with the then German Ambassador to Japan, whose name was OTT, in which you then invited or welcomed closer cooperation with Germany?

A. Wasn't it General Ott?

Q. Yes, he was ambassador.

A. He called on me at my private house. The Foreign Minister always, when he takes up his office, sees all the ambassadors and ministers.

Q. That I understand, but did you tell Ambassador Ott at that time that you would welcome closer collaboration with Germany for your government? Did you tell him that?

A. Well, not exactly closer cooperation or collaboration. I said the same thing to Mr. Grew and others.

Q. In other words, what you want me to understand now is that what you said was a mere general term of cooperation with nations. You said the same thing to Mr. Grew? You did not especially make a statement to Ott that your government was now ready to enter into closer collaboration with the German Government?

A. No.



Q. Did you inform the then Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, Mr. KURUSU, about this conversation with General Ott, the ambassador?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Shortly after this alleged conversation, did a special emissary of the Hitler Government, one Mr. Stahmer, arrive in Tokyo and call upon you?

A. That is a long time afterwards. I think he called on me the early part of September. I am not exact about the date, but it was the early part.

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A. I see now what you are referring to. As soon as I took up my post, sometime afterward, I think I told General Ott, and also wired out to Kurusu, our ambassador at Berlin, all sorts of questions about Germany, and I was informed that von Ribbentrop and others at Berlin could not quite understand my question, and Stahmer later came out to Tokyo. As to your question, I say no.

Q. What was the nature of the questions you sent to Berlin?

A. I put about the same questions that I put later to Mr. Stahmer: what Germany thinks of America, what the German attitude would be after the war, and questions about Soviet Russia, etc.

Q. Well, what was the principal purpose of the question? What were you seeking to determine?

A. I wanted to know what Germany was then thinking about America, and her relations with America. Then I would determine the course of Japanese actions accordingly.

Q. And that was also true of the Russian situation?

A. Yes.

Q. When Stahmer arrived here, early in September, he called on you?

A. Yes.

Q. There was already a German Ambassador here? General Ott?

A. Stahmer was only Minister Plenipotentiary, without any post.

Q. Did he explain what his mission was?

A. General Ott accompanied him to my residence. I do not exactly recall how he said it, but he came to see the general conditions in Japan, and whether it was possible to conclude a treaty, and I told them to sit down, and I started my questions.

Q. What sort of a treaty did Stahmer want to conclude?

A. I think he wasn't very definite about it. Some close relations with Japan.

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Q. Will you tell us more in detail what this first conversation was, that you had with Stahmer?

A. I will tell you -- of course we spoke for an hour or two, and I don't recall now the details.

Q. You were anxious to make such an alliance, weren't you?

A. No, not particularly. That depended on the German answers. First, I asked Mr. Stahmer what was Germany thinking about America, and her relations with America. Now, I said that Germany was anxious to avoid any clash with America. I said now wait, from whom may I consider those words came from? Stahmer, without hesitation, replied that we might consider these words coming directly from Von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister of Germany. Whereupon I proceeded to question him. The second question was what Germany was thinking of her relations with America after the war. He replied that Germany wished to be on friendly terms with America and it was silly -- I think he said that it was silly -- to think Germany would attack America, that Germany needs after the war the improvement of relations between Germany and America, and peaceful pursuit. I said all right, and then I said this -- that Japan was anxious to improve and readjust the relations between Soviet Russia and Japan, and to get a neutrality treaty or non-aggression treaty. There were two treaties proposed for Japan and Soviet Russia. A non-aggression treaty and a new draft. They were already at the time taking up the matter. I was anxious to conclude one or the other. That is, in a word Japan desires to have a good close relation with Soviet Russia. Now, would it be possible for Germany to use her good offices between Soviet Russia and Japan and help Japan to do so -- to accomplish the end -- and Stahmer said yes. And some sundry things. And in the course of conversation, Stahmer expressed that Germany would also like Japan to end the Chinese thing now. I said Japan is very anxious to end the Chinese thing. And so, that is about the main points. I reported to Premier Konoye and the War Minister and Navy Minister, and after that they told me to proceed with the conversation along that line.

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Q. Can you say what were the principal considerations for this Tri-Party alliance? Why did you enter into this pact?

A. That is very clear in my mind. For many reasons. First, I never disclosed to anyone lest it might leak out and give hint to Germany. I was so dreading from my youthhood that first was to prevent by all means Germany from directing American students of German origin from carrying out anti-Japanese propoganda in America. From my study of your country, I was always afraid that there were among some American students of German origin that had some societies all over the country -- amateur photograph societies, or art societies, or literature societies, etc., but they are all united, and Americans of these German origins could be used by an order from Germany, and I was afraid of this. So one day when it suits Germany, this American students of



German origin might carry out propaganda aiming at an American-Japanese war, and if it was started, I came to the conclusion that we had no means to prevent it. We would be powerless. This had been hanging like a nightmare all through my young days in your country, and in every consideration of relations between America and Japan I never lost sight of this possibility. Now, by coming to closer relations with Hitler, I might prevent that. That is the first consideration. I was so afraid of it that I never disclosed it. Second, I wanted to limit the sphere of the European war, and to prevent its spreading to East Asia. That is second. And third, by coming into closer relations, I might gradually influence Germany to end the war, in cooperation both with America, and America influencing Great Britain. And fourth, that my final aim was from the start to approach America, but in order to do so you have to have some strong stand and approach your country with dignity and some strength. And then some other sundry considerations.

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A. But I must tell you that past the middle of September I was one day almost on the point of breaking off. I had conversations with General Ott and Mr. Stahmer several times, and I was on the point of breaking it off.

Q. What was the understanding with respect to Germany, concerning this Tri-Party alliance? What was her purpose? Did they explain to you why they were now anxious to conclude this pact with Japan?

A. No, they don't say exactly. They said they wanted to come into closer relations with Japan.

Q. And as foreign minister, didn't you inquire into the reason for that sudden desire on the part of Hitler's government?

A. No. I put those questions, and I was satisfied with the answers, and satisfied that this pact would prevent war from spreading.

Q. Now, you visited Berlin, didn't you, and talked with Ribbentrop and Hitler, didn't you? Was that after the conclusion of the pact?

A. Yes, it came about this way -- on the day we concluded that pact, I spoke over the telephone with Von Ribbentrop and with Count Ciano. They both invited me to visit them, and I said if the conditions were right, I may do so. So, later on I went out to visit Europe. But that again -- in proper place I will explain.

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Q. Did you go first to Berlin, or first to Moscow?

A. I passed through Moscow, and so I stopped one day and paid my respects to Mr. Stalin, and then went to Berlin.

Q. In Berlin did you have conversations with Oshima?

A. Some casual conversations, but not on business.

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Q. Did you have a person in your office, or particularly the Vice Foreign Minister, whose name was OHASHI?

A. Yes.

Q. If OHASHI should state that he called on the German Ambassador before your trip to determine whether or not the German government would be dissatisfied if you stopped first in Moscow, would he be mistaken, or telling an untruth?

A. I don't know.

Q. You didn't instruct him to do this?

A. No, may I put in a few words to clarify this? Although it is true when I said at the time that I should like to know the leaders of the German and Italian governments and also the conditions of the countries concerned, as Foreign Minister -- while it is true, yet I would not have gone out to Europe if those objects were all I had. They were used as a kind of camouflage to cover my intention of concluding a non-aggression or neutrality treaty, if I could.

Q. With whom?

A. With Soviet Russia. That was my intention from the start, but I wanted to avoid the attention of the world to it. So I used Berlin and Rome as a kind of a camouflage, and so of course when I was going out I had to pay my respects to Mr. Stalin, so I paid, but I said nothing. When I was coming back, I think it was the night before I left Berlin, in a conversation with Von Ribbentrop, I said Japan was negotiating for a non-aggression treaty or neutrality treaty, and also we asked Von Ribbentrop to use his good offices and in a matter of course when I was on the way back to Tokyo, it was only a matter of course that he should take up that question. It was taken up all through by the Japanese government with Soviet Russia, and then Von Ribbentrop said well you might better not so; it is impossible to get it, the situation is such. He said it would be very difficult. Suppose I had a chance to conclude it, and I might pick it up, and he said of course in such a case.

Q. It was agreeable to him?

A. Agreeable or not, I don't know, but this is my supposition. I think von Ribbentrop imagined that I would never be able to get it, so he said of course. And then I left Berlin and Mr. Stahmer who was then in Berlin, accompanied me as far as the boundary. I told Mr. Stahmer that when I went to leave Berlin, tell von Ribbentrop that I might postpone my departure by one train, and go to Leningrad where I was in my younger days, but I would try anyhow negotiations. And we parted and I said the same thing, not in so much detail, to the American ambassador. He called on me at the Embassy -- Mr. Steinhart. I said I will try to get this neutrality pact or non-aggression treaty. He also told me you can't do anything at present with Soviet Russia, it is very difficult. I said I think so, too, but if I succeed, America ought to welcome it as one more link for peace.



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Q. What was the advice of your American ambassador as to the conclusion of the Tri-Partite alliance, bearing on the Japanese relations with the U.S.?

A. He knew I was anxious to improve and maintain peace between the two countries, and that was two or three days before I left Moscow. I asked him to wire out my words to the President and Mr. Hull.

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Q. How long did you remain Foreign Minister after the declaration of war by Germany upon Russia?

A. The second Konoye cabinet fell on the 17th, was it? Until that date.

Q. The 17th of what?

A. The 17th of July. 16th or 17th. I was then already ill, you know. I didn't go to the government office.

Q. Did you notify the German government that your government did not contemplate an attack on Soviet Russia?

A. Yes. I handed a memorandum, the same memorandum to the Russian ambassador and German and Italian, on the same date. That was in the early part of July.

(Pages 11 and 12)

Q. Now, you said here you met Mr. Stahmer the first time early in September 1940, and by the 27th day of the same month, you had concluded with his government the Tri-Partite alliance, and at that time you didn't ask for two weeks, did you?

A. No, not two weeks. It was just Stahmer replied to my questions.

Q. Even in the ordinary course of events where all speed is necessary, it requires considerable time for the detail work of preparing such a thing as the Tri-Partite Alliance.

A. Yes.

Q. And you have stated here that you met Stahmer for the first time early in September, and that you had instructed Kurusu, your representative in Berlin, to execute the Tri-Partite pact on the 27th of September. But still, at this important liaison meeting you attended on the night of your return from Moscow, urging you for action in this matter -- this proposal from the U.S. -- you pleaded fatigue and asked for two weeks.

A. You must remember the Tri-Partite pact, there were very little details. This draft included so many details and big questions, such as Prince Konoye meeting the President at Honolulu and an exchange of the Navy at Honolulu, etc., and so many grave details.

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Q. All right, now interrupting here, please. You were well informed and had carefully studied long before you met Stahmer, the purpose and intent of the Tri-Party alliance. Isn't that true?

A. No.

Q. When you executed it over this short period of time, you were well acquainted with the entire background?

A. No.

Q. It is your explanation now that on a matter of that seriousness, you met the man early in September and concluded the alliance on the 27th? Yet when this U.S. proposal is presented to you, you pleaded for two weeks time?

A. Yes, I thought it was grave enough.

Q. In fact, the purpose of the Tri-Partite alliance was to neutralize the affect of the U.S. in the Pacific area? Wasn't that one of the considerations in your mind?

A. No. To neutralize Germany and Great Britain.

(Pages 14 and 15)

7 March 1946

Q. At the time you took over, what was the state of German-United States relations? In your general opinion.

A. That America was sympathizing and helping Great Britain with its war equipment, but I did not at the time think of America joining directly in the war, and Germany was trying its best not to come to a clash with America. That was my general observation at the time.

Q. Did you <sup>not</sup> consider, however, that the nature of the alliance, which was one of the first official acts of your government, -- the conclusion of the Tri-Party alliance -- would rightfully lead America to the conclusion that it was your intention to cooperate with the Hitler or Nazi plan of aggressive warfare?

A. No, I didn't think in that way.

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Q. Did you think, from your experience as a member of the Foreign Office and Foreign Minister of Japan, that the conclusion of the alliance with Germany, Italy and Japan at the time, and having in mind all that had then occurred in Europe, was conducive to an amicable condition from which you could realize your all-time desire to reach an agreement with the U.S.?

A. Yes, I thought of it this way -- by concluding the three-party pact that would strengthen the Japanese position a little, and then with the preservation of the national dignity of Japan, then to the United States as showing our sincerity I can gladly come to an understanding in the Pacific and get an agreement on China proper. That is the way that I thought it out -- that this



conclusion of the tri-party pact might ruffle the feeling a little for some time, but showing our sincerity and friendliness we could gradually accomplish that. And after it was shown to you that even if we had the three-party pact, Mr. Hull and the President received us open hearted and negotiated those things. So it was not a dream altogether.

(Pages 11 and 12)

Q. On June 22 the German government declared war upon Russia, didn't they?

A. About that time.

Q. According to this, "Germany invades Russia June 22, 1941". Also Italy declared war upon Russia June 22 or 23. Do you recall that?

A. Not the exact date, but I do recall that sometime before that I sent word to Berlin, I think through Ambassador General Ott, to tell Hitler to forebear to go to war with Soviet Russia. I was against it. I do recall some of the words. I said "Even Napoleon made faux pas and you can't tell what the future has in store", and I strongly opposed Germany's going to war with Soviet Russia. And in that connection I must tell you, you know upon my return to Tokyo and reporting to the Throne and to the Premier about my European trip, I said that the relations between Soviet Russia and Germany were rather dangerous, although I still thought that it was maybe a bluff on both sides, that after all both sides might not go to war. Nevertheless, it was dangerous. But I took care not to commit anything, and not to discuss the situation in Germany, and the Tri-Partite Pact did not oblige us to join the war.

Q. Therefore, July 8 your government told the United States Government that it had not so far considered the possibility of fighting Russia?

A. Yes.

Q. According to this, on July 8 that announcement was made.

A. July 3, I think it was. I communicated the same thing to Russia, Germany and Italy's embassies.

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Q. Why did the cabinet fall?

A. I don't know.

Q. Since you were one of the three or four persons originally in the formation of the cabinet that sat with Mr. Konoye, and two other of the leading ministers, and debated among yourselves the selection of the other members of the cabinet, you were in relation to the cabinet as a whole and the Prime Minister, such an important figure that you were in position to judge why the cabinet failed.



A. I was not then. Take for instance, this Hiranuma, a member of the cabinet. Konoye never consulted me and he apologized profusely afterwards. He did those things rather freely.

Q. It seems that the Konoye cabinet or government fell, that there was a rapid reorganization, and that you were the only minister who was eliminated from the cabinet. Is that correct?

A. No. Several others.

Q. May I ask you the direct question -- was the fall of the then Konoye cabinet the result of a disagreement between yourself and your foreign policy and Prince Konoye as Prime Minister?

A. He says so in his memoirs, but no. You must know that he says once in his memoirs, but several times I told Konoye that if I stand in the way in any way about the negotiations, if he felt so, I would resign at any time not to cause any inconvenience to him. And we were rather all very intimate on terms, and so I told Konoye privately whenever he thinks it is better just tell me to resign and I will do so at once.

Q. I want to read from a document which for the present I do not choose to identify. The purpose of the reading will be to outline to you what apparently was the circumstance at the time, and I will ask you at the conclusion, or if you reach important points, whether or not you agree with them. "During Matsuo's absence from Tokyo his opponents, especially the pro-Anglo-Saxon circles, tried to improve Japan's relations with the United States and with Great Britain, which had been neglected and had worsened 'since the conclusion of the Tri-Partite Pact.'" Is it true, or in your opinion do you believe that the relations between Japan and the U.S. had worsened since the conclusion of the Tri-Partite Pact?

A. Well, I have said that they may have a ruffled feeling somewhat, but my efforts thenceforth were to bring the two countries closer.

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Had you ever been urged by the German representative to request our government to enter the war against Russia?

A. No.

Q. So that if there is documentary evidence in the nature of dispatches between Berlin and Tokyo requesting such action, to wit: the going to war by Japan against Russia, they are either mistaken or false?

A. Fabrications. Of course Oshima, our ambassador, sent a wire asking what Japan will do. So we considered and decided not to join the war.

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Q. Reading further, "The Japanese government replied through Mr. Matsuo that it did not contemplate an attack against Soviet Russia. Indeed, with the exception of a few military hotheads, nobody in Japan wanted war against Russia. Press and public opinion were puzzled and confused by the sudden German attack on the Soviet especially after the much-advertised German-Russia non-aggression pact of October 1939. The Japanese government itself



had just concluded a neutrality pact with the Soviet. They had no actual conflict with Russia and considered Japan not prepared for such a war. Furthermore, it hoped to find an agreement with the United States in the China question which would be impossible in case of a Japanese attack upon Soviet Russia." Do you recall making such a reply to -- well, obviously, if no such request was ever made of you, you never made such a reply?

A. No. When Oshima wired out inquiring what should Japan do, I think he had it in his telegram that Hitler said whether Japan would join or not all depends on Japan and he is not asking for Japan to decide either way. So Germany, as I said yesterday, questioned Japan's help.

(Pages 15 and 16)

Q. In March 1941, what was the nature of the conversation or visit that you had with Ambassador Steinhart in Moscow?

A. I think it was when Steinhart gave me a luncheon in the Embassy. After lunch -- of course it was between ourselves as I said in a book -- your President was the biggest gambler in the States. Laughingly, you know. Now, won't he gamble with Japan just once and if he says that he can't trust Japan won't he trust me just once and tell China to negotiate directly with Japan? I will do just another fair thing by China, and I asked him to send those words out to Washington.

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1 March 1946

Q. Well now, Mr. Matsuo, why, at that time, did you consider that the non-aggression or neutrality pact with Russia was of such importance to your government?

A. That was my program from the start. It had been my contention for years to be on better terms with Soviet Russia.

Q. Why was it so important at this time that you urged the other powerful member of the tri-partite alliance to use the force of their good offices to assist you in obtaining this?

A. I thought Germany was very close and on friendly terms with Soviet Russia, and had a chance to make use of their good offices. Let me complete what I wish to say. When I reached Berlin it was I who said to von Ribbentrop whether he could use good offices concerning the subject. Then he began to explain the situation, and concluded that it was impossible for Germany, in the circumstances, to do so.

Q. Why did you find it urgent and necessary at this period in the international relations of Japan to have such a treaty with Russia?

A. Well, that was my program, and after obtaining neutrality pact or non-aggression pact, there were two drafts, you know, so that I might after adjusting the relations with Soviet Russia, avail myself of opportune moment to go to the U.S. and talk with the President and Mr. Hull about the Pacific, and about the China problem.



Q. And you did consider that this non-aggression treaty was a necessary step before negotiating the Chinese problem with the U.S?

A. Yes.

Q. Why?

A. So if possible to enlist the aid of Soviet Russia also to our amicable settlement with China. And I must tell you, as I said the other day, that my visit to Berlin and Rome was largely a kind of camouflage, and my real intentions from the start when I was leaving Tokyo was to conclude the neutrality pact or non-aggression treaty with Soviet Russia.

Q. Very well. Was this not inconsistent with the principles of the anti-Comintern Pact, previously entered into by your government and Germany and Italy and other nations?

A. No. I don't regard it so. And anyhow, the Anti-Comintern Pact was as good as dead then.

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Q. Now, since you found it so difficult over such a long period of time, you had even urged as you say, von Ribbentrop by telegram to use his good offices to assist in getting this treaty -- how do you account for the fact that in the final analysis you were able to conclude this treaty in a short period of time without, as you say, the good offices of Germany?

A. I think if I could see Stalin in person, I don't think I could ever have gotten that pact otherwise. I had two or three conferences with Mr. Molotov but I despaired. At the last, Mr. Stalin was to see me, and I talked straight with him and I reminded him that mine was not an improvised policy but that he perhaps knew I was working for more relations, better relations between Soviet Russia and Japan -- or, I should say between Russia and Japan because there was no Soviet Russia long many tens of years ago. That I had that policy for more than thirty years, and he knew it, this Stalin.

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Q. Well, what did you agree upon with the Fuehrer and von Ribbentrop at these meetings held in Berlin?

A. In Berlin the first time I called on Hitler, he immediately broached the Singapore question, and by way of joking and bluff, I said like Japan would take Singapore before she allied herself with Germany, but saying that was a joke. In conclusion I said but as a matter of fact that question that is whether -- I am talking to you the sense of the thing -- whether Japan would take Singapore or when she would take Singapore, that must be left to Japan alone to decide. Thereupon Hitler saw the point, you know, that I meant by saying that that it was included in Greater East Asia, and Germany had nothing to do with it. Whereupon Hitler dropped the question and never referred to it again, and von Ribbentrop on that occasion said nothing in the presence of Hitler and the rest of them and the time was devoted largely to the describing by Hitler of war conditions in Europe, particularly western Europe. With Hitler or von Ribbentrop I never discussed about the possibility of war with America.

(Pages 22 & 23)



Q. What was the reason for your resignation?

A. That Konoye asked me to resign. As I have told you, I was thinking of resigning because of the things carried on behind my back.

12 March 1946

Q. Now, for the purpose of outlining to you, Mr. Matsuo, what we will take up this afternoon, I will attempt to go again into your relations with Germany concerning the Tripartite Alliance, particularly your visit to Germany and Moscow in March of 1941.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, did you receive any instructions from the Prime Minister, Prince Konoye, concerning this visit which you made to Berlin and Moscow?

A. No.

Q. Did you discuss your departure with him?

A. Yes.

Q. What did he have to say with respect to this trip?

A. He doesn't care to have an opinion about it, but he agreed to my visiting Europe and I told him I was merely making my visit to Berlin and Rome more a kind of camouflage in my attempt to conclude the Tri-Partite Pact or non-aggression treaty with the Russians, and otherwise improve the relations between Soviet Russia and Japan.

Q. Now, you mentioned the Tri-Partite Pact. Was that an error?

A. That was a mistake. I meant neutrality pact. I have trouble sometimes to repeat those two treaties. Nevertheless, we had two drafts under discussion with our Ambassador at Moscow, and Mr. Molotov. That is why I always refer to two.

Q. What was the Prime Minister's attitude with respect to the conclusion of this neutrality pact with Russia?

A. Of course, he was for it. That is, from the beginning of his cabinet it was agreed upon, you know, between the Prime Minister and myself.

(Pages 1 and 2)