

Notes Fueh 20/41

NOTES

regarding the discussion between the FUEHRER and the Japanese Foreign Minister MATSUOKA in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister and of the Minister of State MEISSNER in Berlin on the 4th of April 1941.

Matsuoka further mentioned, that he was induced to make those endeavours for peace particularly in view of the personality of Cardinal CASPARI.

Furthermore he had endeavoured to convince the POPE, that the United States and particularly the American President prolonged the war in Europe and in China. It was not the question to determine, if America or its President were right or wrong. They certainly had their definite reasons for their policy. Notwithstanding the question of right or wrong one had to state the fact, that they prolonged the war in Europe and in China. In regard to China he tried to convince the POPE, that Japan was not fighting the Chinese or China herself, but merely the Bolshevism which threatened to spread in China and in the entire far East. It is regretful that America and England sided with Bolshevism.

The FUEHRER interrupted that both countries also sided in Spain with Bolshevism.

MATSUOKA then also expressed the request, that the FUEHRER should instruct the proper authorities in Germany to meet as broad-minded as possible the wishes of the Japanese Military Commission. Japan was in need of German help particularly concerning the U-boat war fare, which could be given by making available to them the latest experiences of the war as well as the latest technical improvements and inventions. Japan would do her utmost to avoid a war with the United States. In case that the country should decide to attack Singapore, the Japanese navy, of course, had to be prepared for a fight with the United States, because in that case America probably would side with Great Britain. He (Matsuoka) personally believed, that the United States could be restrained by diplomatic exertions from entering the war at the side of Great Britain. Army and Navy had, however, to count on the worst situation, that is with war against America. They were of the opinion that such a war would extend for five years or longer and would take the form of guerilla warfare in the Pacific and would be fought out in the South Sea. For this reason the German experiences in her guerilla warfare are of the greatest value to Japan. It was a question how such a war would best be conducted and how all the technical improvements of submarines, in all details such as periscopes and such like, could best be exploited by Japan.

To sum up, Matsuoka requested that the Fuehrer should see to it that the proper German authorities would place at the disposal of the Japanese those developments and inventions concerning navy and army, which were needed by the Japanese.

The Fuehrer promised this and pointed out that Germany too considered a conflict with the United States undesirable, but that it had already made allowances for such a contingency. In Germany one was of the opinion that America's contributions depended upon the possibilities of transportation, and that this again is conditioned by the available tonnage. Germany's war against tonnage, however, means a decisive weakening not merely against England, but also against America. Germany has made her preparations so, that no American could land in Europe. She would

conduct a most energetic fight against America: with her U-boats and her Luftwaffe, and due to her superior experience, which would still have to be acquired by the United States, she would be vastly superior, and that quite apart from the fact, that the German soldiers naturally rank high above the American.

In the further course of the discussion the Fuehrer pointed out, that Germany on her part would immediately take the consequences, if Japan would get involved with the United States. It did not matter with whom the United States would first get involved if with Germany or with Japan. They would always try to eliminate one country at a time, not to come to an understanding with the other country subsequently, but to liquidate this one just the same. Therefore Germany would strike, as already mentioned, without delay in case of a conflict between Japan and America, because the strength of the tripartite powers lies in their joined action, their weakness would be if they would let themselves be beaten individually.

Matsuoka once more repeated his request, that the Fuehrer might give the necessary instructions, in order that the proper German authorities would place at the disposal of the Japanese the latest improvements and inventions, which are of interest to them. Because the Japanese navy had to prepare immediately for a conflict with the United States.

As regards Japanese - American relationship, Matsuoka explained further that he has always declared in his country, that sooner or later a war with the United States would be unavoidable, if Japan continued to drift along as at present. In his opinion this conflict would happen rather sooner than later. His argumentation went on, why should Japan, therefore, not decisively strike at the right moment and take the risk upon herself of a fight against America? Just thus would she perhaps avoid a war for generations, particularly if she gained predominance in the South Seas. There are, to be sure, in Japan many who hesitate to follow those trends of thought. Matsuoka was considered in those circles a dangerous man with dangerous thoughts. He, however, stated, that, if Japan continued to walk along her present path, one day she would have to fight, anyway and that this would then be under less favorable circumstances than at present.

The Fuehrer replied that he could well understand the situation of Matsuoka, because he himself was in similar situations (the clearing of the Rhineland, declaration of sovereignty of armed Forces. He too was of the opinion that he had to exploit favorable conditions and accept the risk of an anyhow unavoidable fight at a time when he himself was still young and full of vigor. How right he was in his attitude was proven by events. Europe now was free. He would not hesitate a moment to instantly reply to any widening of the war, be it by Russia, be it by America. Providence favored those who will not let dangers come to them, but who will bravely face them.

Matsuoka replied, that the United States or rather their ruling politicians had recently still attempted a last manoeuvre towards Japan, by declaring that America would not fight Japan on account of China or the South Seas provided that Japan gave free passage to the consignment rubber and tin to America to their place of destination. However, America would war against Japan the moment she felt that Japan entered the war with the intention to assist in the destruction of Great Britain. Such an argumentation naturally did not miss its effect upon the Japanese, because of the education oriented on English lines which many had received.

The Fuehrer commented on this, that this attitude of America did not mean anything but that the United States had the hope, that, as long as the British World Empire existed, one day they could ad-

vance against Japan together with Great Britain whereas, in case of the collapse of the World Empire, they would be totally isolated and could not do anything against Japan.

The Reich Foreign Minister interjected that the Americans precisely under all circumstances wanted to maintain the powerful position of England in East Asia, but that on the other hand it is proved by this attitude, to what extent she fears a joint action of Japan and Germany.

Matsuoka continued that it seemed to him of importance to give to the Fuehrer an absolutely clear picture of the real attitude inside Japan. For this reason he also had to inform him regretfully of the fact that he (Matsuoka) in his capacity as Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs could not utter in Japan itself a single word of all that he had expounded before the Fuehrer and the Reich Foreign Minister regarding his plans. This would cause him serious damage in political and financial circles. Once before, he had committed the mistake, before he became Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, to tell a close friend something about his intentions. It seems that the latter had spread these things and thus brought about all sorts of rumors, which he as Foreign Minister had to oppose energetically, though as a rule he always tells the truth. Under these circumstances he also could not indicate, how soon he could report on the questions discussed to the Japanese Premier or to the Emperor. He would have to study exactly and carefully in the first place the development in Japan, so as to make his decision at a favorable moment, to make a clear breast of his proper plans towards the Prince KONOYE and the Emperor. Then the decision would have to be made within a few days, because the plans would otherwise be spoiled by talk.

Should he, Matsuoka, fail to carry out his intentions, that would be proof that he is lacking in influence, in power of conviction, and in tactical capabilities. However, should he succeed, it would prove that he had great influence in Japan. He himself felt confident that he would succeed.

On his return, being questioned, he would indeed admit to the Emperor, the Premier and the Ministers for the Navy and the Army, that Singapore had been discussed; he would, however, state that it was only on a hypothetical basis.

Besides this Matsuoka made the express request not to cable in the matter of Singapore because he had reason to fear that by cabling something might leak out. If necessary he would send a courier.

The Fuehrer agreed and assured after all, that he could rest entirely assured of German reticence.

Matsuoka replied he believed indeed in German reticence, but unfortunately could not say the same of Japan.

The discussion was terminated after the exchange of some personal parting words.

Berlin, the 4th of April 1941.

signed: SCHMIDT.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION
OF DOCUMENT NO 1881-PS

4 April 1941.

I, ERNST M. COHN, Pfc., 33925738, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages; and that the above is a true and correct translation of Document 1881-PS.

ERNST COHN
Pfc.