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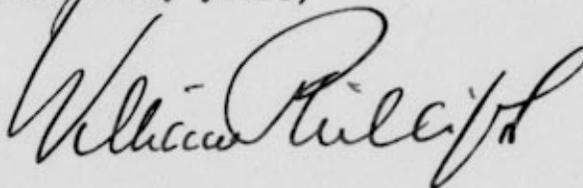
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

January 15, 1934.

My dear Mr. President:

It occurs to me that possibly you may be interested to read the enclosed confidential despatch from Ambassador Grew dated December 12th. It presents the views of the Netherlands Minister, General Pabst, who has been resident in Tokyo since 1923. It is of interest to note how closely General Pabst's opinions coincide with our own.

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:  
From Tokyo No. 608,  
December 12, 1933.

The President,  
The White House.

Tokyo, December 12, 1933.

No. 608.

SUBJECT: Political Problems in the Far East - Japanese  
Activities.

Confidential for the Secretary and Under Secretary.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

S i r :

It is naturally my habit in Tokyo, as it has been in other former posts, to keep in close touch with those of my diplomatic colleagues whom I find by experience to be well informed and to use their minds constructively in diagnosing political situations and in trying to foresee future developments. Boiled down, the number of such colleagues is painfully restricted, and lately the arrival of several new Ambassadors and the absence on

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leave of other chiefs of mission, has still further limited the intelligence market where views, information and ideas can profitably be exchanged. Among the colleagues with whom I maintain frequent contact and whose information and opinion I find to be generally accurate and intelligent is the Netherlands Minister, General Pabst. A former officer in the Dutch Army, he has been Minister in Tokyo since 1923 and has therefore had longer experience in Japan than any other chief of mission save only the Belgian Ambassador, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, who came in 1921. General Pabst possesses the phlegmatic hard-headedness and common sense typical of the Dutch and is not at all of the type prone to find sensation where none exists. Furthermore, as a former army officer and Dutch Military Attaché here, he has intimate contacts with the Japanese Army and Navy not generally enjoyed by the diplomats in Tokyo. I mention these facts merely as background in connection with various comments which he has recently made to me in the course of our talks, as set forth below.

General Pabst attaches much importance to the Pan-Asiatic movement in Japan and to the steps being taken to revise and develop the Great Asiatic Association which were initiated last March (Embassy's despatches Nos. 311 of March 7, 1933, and 468 of July 13, 1933). He believes that Mr. Hirota, the present Minister for Foreign Affairs, in spite of his policy of improving relations with foreign countries, is a staunch supporter of the movement, in the initiation of which he participated, and that he is in sympathy with Japan's expansionist ambitions. General

Pabst

Fabst acknowledges, however, that he has no precise evidence to support this theory. The idea, as he understands it, is to develop an Asiatic League of Nations composed of Japan, as the leader, and "Manchukuo", China and Siam, in other words, a bloc of the yellow races against the white. He said that he had recently been looking at a new text-book just issued to the Japanese primary schools in which is included a large map of the Far East, comprising Japan, "Manchukuo", Siberia, China, French Cochin China, Siam, the Straits Settlements, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, and that on this map there are printed three flags, those of Japan, China and "Manchukuo". The American, French, British, Russian and Dutch flags are conspicuous by their absence. The Minister said that he had observed a significant thing at the funeral of Princess Asaka on November 12, namely that in the row of funeral wreaths the place of honor was given to the wreath from President Fu Yi, the second place of honor was accorded to that of General Tings, the Minister of "Manchukuo" to Japan, while the wreath from the entire Diplomatic Corps was relegated to third place. His interpreter had read the Japanese inscriptions.

The Minister's chief concern, however, is in connection with the "crisis" which the Japanese, especially the Army and Navy leaders and the press, are continually harping upon as certain to occur in 1935. As regards the factor of Soviet Russia in this impending crisis, he entirely concurs in the views set forth in my strictly confidential letter to the Under Secretary of State of October 6, 1933. But what gives the Minister most concern

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is the possible attitude and action of the Japanese Navy if and when it becomes evident in the exploratory conversations preliminary to the Naval Conference in 1935 that Japan presumably cannot hope both for an agreement according to Japan naval parity with the United States and Great Britain and at the same time for a continuance of the restrictions against a fortified naval base for the United States in the Philippines. In the General's opinion there will be grave risk at that time that the Japanese Navy will suddenly descend upon and occupy Guam. "You have noticed," General Pabst said in effect, "that the Navy is no longer content to take a back seat as it was more or less obliged to do during the campaign of the Army in Manchuria. The Navy is now forging to the front as is clearly evidenced by the immense appropriations accorded it in the present budget, partly at the expense of the Army, and in the great naval manœuvres scheduled for next year, the first time that such manœuvres have occurred in two consecutive years. If, at a given moment, the Navy feels that its prestige is at stake and that the future safety, welfare and ambitions of the country lie in its hands, it will no more be subject to restraint by the civil Government than was the Army in Manchuria in 1931." On my referring to the utter stupidity and probable inconclusiveness of an American-Japanese war to which such action would inevitably lead, and the tremendous loss to Japanese trade which would result from such a war, the Minister said, in effect: "Don't for a moment think that questions of economic or financial loss to the country would carry  
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any weight whatsoever with the Navy; the present budget is already likely to bring the country perilously near to financial disaster in future, but the Army and Navy go cheerfully ahead with their plans as if the country's financial status is a matter with which they are not concerned and cannot afford to be bothered, and that economically Japan could get along without America somehow or other if she had to do so. Furthermore from the military and naval point of view, an American offensive would be a negligible factor, because they hold that no American fleet could effectively operate in Japanese waters so far from its Hawaiian base and with its lines of communication liable to be intercepted. Once in possession of the Philippines, with unrestricted naval building in view and having eliminated the dreaded threat of an American naval base in eastern waters, Japan believes that she could disregard the United States and proceed with her Asiatic ambitions. The next step would be the appropriation of New Guinea which offers a considerable extent of territory for colonization and would, to a certain extent, solve the immediate problem of Japanese emigration."

The foregoing is not a precise quotation of General Pabst's remarks but represents closely the general trend of his ideas as he expressed them in our last conversation. There is no doubt that he has the future safety of the Dutch East Indies constantly in mind, of which the future safety of the Philippines is a corollary. He alluded with emphasis to the fact that the Japanese had recently invited a delegation of natives from Java to visit Japan, with a view to broadening the Japanese market in cheap  
cotton

cotton and other goods in the East Indies, and that this delegation is now here.

After a stay of but eighteen months in Japan I should be loath to characterize as fantastic the considered opinions of an intelligent and conservative observer with ten years' experience of this country and its people. We have already seen the sort of action of which an unrestrained and domineering army is capable. We have had ample evidence that in this country the unexpected can always happen. In previous despatches I have pointed out the uneasiness with which certain of the Japanese regard the year 1935-1936, and the determination to alter the present naval ratios. The prestige of the Japanese Navy has for a time been eclipsed by the spotlight in which the Army has moved during the past two years. Prestige is a powerful factor in the Orient.

So far as the present Foreign Minister is concerned, it is safe to say that he is not a chauvinist, that he believes it in the best interests of Japan to be on cordial terms with all foreign countries, especially the United States, China and Great Britain, and that he does not believe in provoking war in any quarter. He is therefore steadily working to develop better relations abroad because he believes that Japan can carry through her program far more readily and effectively in an atmosphere of friendship than in one of hostility with other nations. At the same time, he is what might be called an ardent nationalist. His views, from all that I can gather, are that politically, economically and culturally, Japan  
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can prove herself the leading nation in Asia. The recent growth of Japanese trade throughout the Far East naturally gives added prestige to the country. Mr. Hirota is undoubtedly sympathetic with Japanese development, and will give what encouragement and help he can to any movements which tend to enhance the country's position. He could not hold office on any other terms. I am unable to state to what extent he approves of the recent adventures in Manchuria. Here again he must, if he is to remain in office, accept the situation as he finds it, a fait accompli which he is estopped from criticizing adversely.

To sum up, the Netherlands Minister, an experienced and conservative observer, believes that the year 1935 is likely to produce in fact the crisis which is now being freely predicted in theory, and that the Japanese Navy at that time is fully capable of taking radical action such as the Army has already taken in Manchuria.

Having in mind the various points which I have mentioned in this despatch, it behooves us to approach the year 1935 in all wakefulness.

Respectfully yours,

Joseph C. Grew.

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