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Japan: Mr. Matsukata

6071
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
February 26, 1934.

Mr. Secretary:

Herewith the memorandum which Mr. Matsukata gave the President, together with certain comments (superimposed).

The President asks that you please return the memorandum to him.

*Return to
relate
Home*
SKH/REK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

February 26, 1934.

PSF: Japan
Matsukata

Opened
10/26/67
SPD

There is not much in Mr. M's memorandum which calls for discussion ^{or} ~~and~~ comment.

Mr. M's desire is to promote good relations between Japan and the United States, and he feels that, toward that end, it is necessary for the United States better to "understand" Japan. Toward enabling us to "understand" he offers certain items of "explanation".

Taken at face value, the statements which Mr. M. makes would indicate that there are some things badly out of joint in Japanese internal politics. After that, Mr. M. thinks that, in Japanese-Russian relations, Russia is unreasonable, and that, in Japanese-American relations, the United States is prejudiced in favor of China and against Japan.

Mr. M. states that Mr. Grew is popular in Japan and has the confidence of Japan's leaders. He thinks that Japan's choice of Mr. Saito as Japanese Ambassador here was a happy one.

Only two items in the memorandum seem to call for special comment. Such comment is submitted in the pages here attached.



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

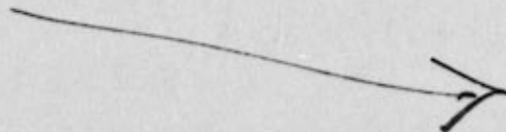
One of the most striking paragraphs, as illustrating the confusion of reasoning with which the Japanese approach and endeavor to explain certain of their problems and acts, in the text of this memorandum, is the paragraph (on page 5) which reads:

"Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Hirota, has more than once proposed that both Russia and Japan remove military forces from along their respective sides of the Manchurian-Siberian border line. This he thinks will dissipate the tension between the two countries, and will pave the way to amicable settlement of pending questions. But Russia somehow has been cool to this proposal."

As we well know, the Japanese contend that Manchuria is now an independent state, "Manchukuo". A proposal that both Russia and Japan remove their military forces from along their respective sides of the Manchurian-Siberian border line should contemplate withdrawal of Japanese forces from positions south and east of the southeastern boundary of Manchuria. But this is not at all what the Japanese have in mind: what they propose is that the Russians should withdraw from positions north of the northern boundary of Manchuria and the Japanese from positions south of the northern boundary of Manchuria. In other words, they regard North Manchuria as the Japanese "side" of the Manchurian-Siberian border line, while at the same time affirming that

"Manchukuo"

"Manchukuo" is an independent state and in no way governed or controlled by Japan. Naturally the Russians are "cool to this proposal" for a withdrawal by them from positions on their own soil in return for a withdrawal by the Japanese from positions not on but far removed from Japanese soil.



Mr. M says (on page 6):

"I regret to have to say that the American attitude has always seemed to us partial in favor of China and biased against Japan. I feel that this has been an obstacle to perfect understanding between America and Japan. Please do not misunderstand me. Japan does not ask America to be favorable to her. We simply ask you to be impartial as between Japan and China."

The view that "the American attitude has always" been "partial in favor of China and biased against Japan" is historically inaccurate. There have been, ~~several periods~~ during the eighty years since relations of contact between the United States and Japan began, several periods when Japan was in high favor in this country and China in disfavor. However, since 1894 (beginning of Chino-Japanese war) and especially since 1906 (when, after the Russo-Japanese war, Japan embarked upon a course of discrimination against other nations in Manchuria) "the American attitude" has been most of the time more favorable toward China than toward Japan. This is easily explainable: the human animal is inclined to be favorably disposed toward those with whom he finds it easiest to get on, those who are not in competition with him, those who do not get in his way, those who do not threaten him either in word or in fact, those who cannot harm him, those who are soft-spoken and easy-going, etc., etc., and to

be

be unfavorably disposed toward those whose attitude and/or actions are the reverse. Generally and comparatively speaking, the Chinese have been and are easy-going and complacent, whereas the Japanese have been and are active, aggressive and inclined to be bellicose.

With regard to official action, however, as contrasted with popular opinion and attitude, I am inclined to believe that the American Government has been much more conciliatory and given to making concessions toward Japan than toward China.

Given a situation such as began with developments in Manchuria in September 1931, the position taken by the United States in defense of and insistence upon respect for treaty obligations inevitably threw the United States onto what happened to be the "side" of China and therefore ranged the American Government, along with that of all the other powers, in opposition to the country which was disregarding treaty obligations, which country happened to be Japan. Thus, as between China and Japan, we "favored" China. That fact, however, was accidental.

To say that we are "partial in favor of China" and "biased against Japan" is a good deal like saying that parents and teachers and friends and judges and administrators, etc., are partial in favor of good boys and biased against bad boys.

5/14

As a matter of fact neither China nor Japan behave at all well in international relations. Both cause other countries a great deal of unusual and unpleasant bother. But the Chinese delinquencies are comparatively petty and are for the most part those of inefficiency and ineptitude, whereas the Japanese delinquencies are on a large scale and involve important consequences and are deliberately planned and efficiently carried out. Naturally, in American psychology, the reaction is comparatively favorable to the Chinese and unfavorable to the Japanese.

The thing most noticeably missing from practically all of these Japanese statements which urge in this country the improvement of friendly relations between Japan and the United States is any evidence of consciousness or concern on the part of the authors with regard to the fact that Japan has broken treaties and has defied ^{and} (villified) all who remonstrate. It happens that the ^A United States attaches definite and great importance to the existence, the spirit and the substance of the treaties.

The thing most noticeably present in practically all of these Japanese statements and similar statements made by American "friends of Japan" is the suggestion or implied suggestion that, in order to improve relations between Japan and the United States, ^{that} ~~that~~ one of the two countries which has done least in the way of unfriendly manifestation toward the other (that is, the United States) make some concession(s) or free gift(s) to the one that has most offended (that is, Japan) But nowhere are there offered any suggestions that Japan make any concessions or free gifts.

There is in fact in the situation as it stands today no real "tension" between the two countries. The United States has not done nor have we any intention of doing

Japan

Japan any injury. There is no reason whatever why we should proceed as though we had been in the wrong, no reason why we should send Japan flowers or pay her compliments as a peace offering: we certainly do not owe Japan anything in connection with Manchuria or in connection with immigration or in connection with naval ratios or in connection with the Mandated Islands, nor would the conclusion of a bilateral non-aggression pact amount to anything other than a present by us to Japan at the expense of China and of the general principles of our foreign policy as applicable and as hitherto applied in reference to the Far East.

It is believed that ^{an} ~~the~~ appropriate reply to all suggestions that the American Government should do something definite and concrete and involving concessions toward improving and signaling friendly relations between this country and Japan is: What about Japan's doing something definite and concrete and involving concessions toward demonstrating that she desires and values the friendship of the United States and that she intends to show some regard for her treaty obligations to the United States (and to other powers).

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 26, 1934

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE:

I think you and Mr. Hornbeck will be distinctly interested in seeing this letter which was handed to me in person by Mr. Otohiko Matsukata the other day. After you have read it please let me have it back.

F. D. R.

Opened
10/26/67
S.D.



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

I am grateful to you for this honor and privilege you have accorded me. I have no intention to lay before you any plan for the improvement of our relations with America, for that is the task for our Ambassador, but I wish to convey to you some of my personal views and sentiments.

It has long been my conviction that the peace of the Far East and the Pacific depends largely upon friendly relations between America and Japan. I believe also that this view is shared by all of our statesmen.

Perhaps some of the things which have happened in Japan during the past few years have seemed to you strange and inexplicable. For instance, the assassination of Premier Inukai by ^{officers and} cadets in uniform must have been a shock to Americans. We ourselves were deeply shocked, but we could at least understand the circumstances which led up to the tragic event. For some years our army and navy men had felt that our government had been in the hands of corrupt, inefficient, self-seeking ^{party} politicians. They



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-2-

had felt that political corruption had been leading the nation into degeneration and ultimate ruin. It was while they were in this defiant and rebellious mood that the London Naval Treaty was signed which they resented for two reasons. First, the treaty was accepted by our Government without the full consent of those who were directly responsible for national defense. Secondly, the treaty gave our naval men a sense of insecurity. Personally, I feel that if the London Conference considered just a little more sympathetically the contentions of our naval men, the cause of peace would have been served much better.

It was a combination of such circumstances which caused intense unrest among our military and naval men, culminating in the assassination of the Premier. They sacrificed the Premier in the hope that this drastic action might serve to awaken the dormant conscience of the politicians and to convince the nation of the imperativeness of purging politics and government of corruption and ineptitude. They thought that the aim justified the means.

It goes without saying that neither the army nor the



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-3-

navy has any intentions of usurping the powers of the Government. All they want is honest, patriotic, and efficient government. They are not opposed to party Government, provided party government is not dominated by corrupt politicians.

No one can fail to see that under the cautious guidance of the present Cabinet Japan has been gradually regaining normalcy. This desirable tendency will be all the more accelerated if other nations will show a willingness to cooperate with Japan for the improvement of her foreign relations.

The abnormal and unfortunate condition which had prevailed in Japan before the assassination of the Premier explains, at least partly, the "explosion" in Manchuria. In a sense, it was a protest of the officers on the spot against the "corrupt" party government which, they thought, permitted Chinese anti-foreignism and Soviet influence to undermine the Japanese rights and interests established at a sacrifice of untold life and treasure in two wars, which, as they saw it, had been forced upon Japan.



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-4-

I presume that the officers on the spot, already restive and resentful, acted on the spur of the moment, without asking for instructions of the home Government or the General Staff. I admit that this was regrettable, but we were simply swept into where we are by force of circumstances which none could avoid.

Many foreigners say that Japan will make of Manchuria a second Korea. This view ignores a certain essential fact. Korea is peopled by Koreans, and not by alien races. Therefore, Japan, by annexing Korea, invited no foreign complications. On the contrary, Manchuria is peopled largely by Chinese. Should Japan annex Manchuria, the Chinese in Manchuria, who are now friendly to us, might change their attitude and fraternize with China, which would cause endless trouble to us.

Since my arrival in America I have heard so much about the impending crisis between Russia and Japan. This is rather a surprise to me. I can confidentially say that our Government has been making sincere and strenuous efforts to maintain peace with Russia. That at least was my con-



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-5-

viction before I left Tokyo. It seems to me highly significant that all the war talk that has been heard has come from Russia, while Japan maintains a dignified silence. I am afraid that this constant harping upon the possibility of war, will serve no good purpose. Certainly it is not calculated to promote peace.

Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Hirota, has more than once proposed that both Russia and Japan remove military forces from along their respective sides of the Manchurian-Siberian border line. This he thinks will dissipate the tension between the two countries, and will pave the way to amicable settlement of pending questions. But Russia somehow has been cool to this proposal.

About China, I regret to have to repeat what has been said a hundred times by critical observers of all nationalities -- namely, that China, though potentially great, has shown no signs of becoming an organized, stable nation in the conceivable future. Moreover, disruptive and destructive influence of the communist movement is far more serious than is commonly known abroad.



The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-6-

PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

I regret to have to say that the American attitude has always seemed to us partial in favor of China and biased against Japan. I feel that this has been an obstacle to perfect understanding between America and Japan. Please do not misunderstand me. Japan does not ask America to be favorable to her. We simply ask you to be impartial as between Japan and China.

I am exceedingly happy to assure you that since your assumption of the Presidency, our national sentiment toward America has signally improved. I wish you could visualize how happy we were when you ordered the major force of your fleet back to the Atlantic. It was an event which the Japanese will long remember.

I am also happy to be able to report that your Ambassador, Mr. Grew, is exceedingly popular in Japan. Our leaders have both admiration and confidence in him, because they know that he is sincere and doing his best to promote good understanding between America and Japan.



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

-7-

We also think that the appointment of Mr. Saito as Ambassador to the United States is a very happy one. Only after our Government has considered a number of candidates, did it come to the conclusion that Mr. Saito was best qualified for this post and to handle the problems which are awaiting adjustment.

I am grateful to you for your kindness in allowing me this opportunity of laying before you certain facts and views which I consider essential. Although the opinion I have expressed is my personal opinion, I believe that it is shared by a very large number of our leaders, both in and out of the Government.

Perhaps it is needless to assure you that my absorbing desire is peace and friendship between the United States and Japan. The happy years which I passed in America among my American friends have ever been fresh in my mind, and I have been deeply pained as I have watched the recent trend of events which have conspired to estrange our two nations. That is what has brought me to America after an



PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria New York

-8-

absence of seventeen years. Nothing could make me
happier than to see American-Japanese relations
restored to their former state of cordiality.

[Otohiko Matsukata]

PSF: *Japanese*
Matsukata folder



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 28, 1934

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Dear Colonel McIntyre:

With all apologies to you for bringing up again the matter of Mr. Matsukata's request to be received by the President, I am attaching hereto a memorandum I received from Mr. Stanley Hornbeck, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, this morning on the subject. I think you will see that there appear to be possibilities of a more serious aspect to this request than that of an ordinary person wishing to visit the President informally. We feel, and Mr. Phillips is in agreement with us in this, that the Japanese are attempting to build up a line of communication directly to the President, which would be

The Honorable
Marvin H. McIntyre,
Assistant Secretary to the President,
The White House.

contrary to the usual practice and which, I am sure, would be denied to our own Ambassador in Japan.

Although, of course, there is nothing to be done about this for the present, I merely wish to bring it to your attention while you have, I hope, a little more time to read it than you have usually in Washington.

Very sincerely yours,

J. C. Dunn
X 885

Enclosure.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

March 28, 1934.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Mr. Matsukata

Dear Mr. Dunn:

Referring further to the matter of Mr. Matsukata's request, addressed by him directly to the President, for a third interview with the President,--

In the light of further information, just received, I feel that it is of the utmost importance that the President be persuaded to abide by the instruction which he gave you to the effect that he would not accord this interview.

I have just been informed by a former American Ambassador to Japan that, in the course of a conversation between himself and the Japanese Ambassador, last evening, after dinner, at the Japanese Embassy, the Japanese Ambassador stated that he was trying to persuade his house guest, Mr. Matsukata, to stay on in Washington "indefinitely". My informant expressed the opinion that this indicated that the Ambassador hopes, relying upon the fact of personal friendship between Matsukata and the President, to employ Matsukata as a channel of communication between the Embassy and the President, thus avoiding the Department of State, etc., etc. I concur in
that

that estimate.

If, after what has preceded and in the light of this evidence that Matsukata is working with and presumably under the direction of the Japanese Embassy, the President were to receive him, the President would be giving the Japanese Embassy a special advantage such as is possessed by no other foreign mission in Washington, he would be placing this Department in an embarrassing and hampered position, and he would be exposing himself unnecessarily to special hazards in connection with the conducting of relations between this country and Japan.

SKH

FE:SKH:ABW

~~MISSY:~~

Should love to see him and suggest
to him after President gets back from the
South on the 8th or 9th.

~~EAR~~

M.L.C.

Hotel Pierre
NEW YORK

Dear Mr. President:-

Before long, if nothing unexpected happens, I shall be leaving this country. Knowing how busy you are, I am reluctant to ask for any more of your time. I should, however, be most-happy if I were permitted to pay you my respect once more, to take leave of you and also to lay before you certain facts and ideas which have claimed my attention since I last-saw you.

I understand that you are going to Florida for a week

needed rest. I presume that
it would be more convenient
for you to receive me after
your return from the South,
although, of course, I am
at your service at any time.
I am hoping to come down
to Washington soon, but where-
ver I may be I can be reached
through the Embassy.

Very Sincerely yours,

Ofshiro Katsukata

March 17th, 1934

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State.