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GERMANY'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH JAPAN 1933-1941

by

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B.A., University of Montana, 1968

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP

Alliances between sovereign states have been among the least stable of political associations. The relationship between Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, two totalitarian governments, was an uneasy one in the period 1933 to 1945. The foreign policies of each, when directed towards expansion and world power, found sympathy and support from each other in challenging the international order established at Versailles in 1919. In Great Britain, Russia and the United States, they shared the same opponents, but their antagonism toward these enemies involved different objectives which made coordinated foreign policies ultimately impossible. Their interests were often contradictory, and the two were caught up in grandiose delusions about each other's political and military goals. Both practiced such secrecy and deception concerning their own objectives that even on occasions when their interests genuinely converged they were unable to work effectively together.

The accession of Adolf Hitler to power in Germany foreshadowed a new relationship between Germany and Japan. Hitler, in his philosophical work, Mein Kampf, expressed the idea of expansion or Lebensraum. Lebensraum demanded space to the east at the expense of Russia and if necessary through the use of force. Thus Hitler looked to Japan as a potential ally in a Russo-German conflict. His own analysis of the strategic errors in World War I suggested that the international policy of

encirclement had been the cause of Germany's defeat. In any future war, Hitler meant to encircle Germany's opponents.

The new governments of the 1930's, through the press, radio and the screen, had at their disposal channels of power undreamed of and they faced the consequent necessity of making their administrations understood in terms of popular appeal. Mass inculcation brought in its train mass justification. The second half of the nineteenth century had seen the appearance of scientific explanations of biological superiority. The twentieth century raised it to an "ideal" and called it race.

Hitler and the Nazi Party, in their fight for power and subsequent totalitarian regime, used the "ideal" of racial superiority to justify their acts in foreign and domestic policies. The German people were told that they were oppressed at home and humiliated abroad, yet they, as Germans, constituted the embodiment of the superior Nordic racial type. Afflicted psychologically with the burden of defeat after the first World War, the German citizen found comfort in the explanation that his superiority had been unimpaired but that he had been betrayed. The argument had appeal, for it touched popular sensitivity and the Nazis, above all Hitler, recognized this weakness and manipulated it for their rise to power. Hitler needed a united state, based on racial superiority, to serve as the foundation for German territorial expansion.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler believed that Japan, like Germany was the victim

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1

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), part I chapter XI passim.

of a Jewish international conspiracy. The Jew hated Japan in whose Asiatic state he could not adapt himself and so subjugate it. Hitler stated:

He (the Jew) dreads a Japanese national State in his millennial Jew empire, and therefore wishes its destruction in the advance of the founding of his own dictatorship. Therefore, he is now inciting the nations against Japan, as against Germany, and it can happen that, while British statescraft still tries to build an alliance with Japan, the British Jewish press already demands struggle against the ally and prepares the destructive war under the proclamation of democracy and the battlecry: Down with Japanese militarism and Imperialism. 2

Hitler never really liked the Japanese and regarded them with distain and contempt. However, a fact which may have had some influence in Hitler's future considerations was that Japan, like Germany suffered from world Jewry.

The one-sided argument of racial superiority was a domestic issue before the Nazis obtained control of the government, but the introduction of such a concept into foreign policy would ruin relations with most world powers. In the realm of foreign policy, most nations saw themselves obligated to conduct their diplomacy after World War I in the name of some "ideal". Natural boundaries turned into self-determination, the "white man's burden" lost its appeal and arbitration and international cooperation became the substance of international relations. International isolation would result if the Nazis persisted in the ideas of racial superiority.

Nazi racial philosophy loomed large as a consideration in German foreign policy after 1933, and relations with Japan

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2

Ibid., part II, p. 931.



presented a special problem. How could a racially superior Germany conclude an agreement on equal terms with a supposedly inferior nation like Japan? Somehow racial philosophy and the practical considerations of foreign policy would have to be reconciled in order to undertake any diplomatic negotiations.

The Nazis modified their racial philosophy in order to conciliate their administration with the dictates of foreign policy. The success of Japan in Manchuria in 1931 served to qualify the strict doctrines of racial superiority in Mein Kampf. The military spirit of the Japanese army impressed Hitler. A restriction of international racial propaganda occurred after 1933 for the general purpose of avoiding unnecessary disputes in foreign affairs and with the specific intention of cultivating better relations with Japan.

Hitler was enough of a politician not to let ideology get in the way of his diplomacy. The racially superior Germany allied with the inferior Japan for the sake of expediency. An alliance with Japan presented several opportunities for Germany's international position. Hitler admired the militant Japanese state and could do only one thing: he made the Japanese "honorary Aryans" as Party officials gave the Japanese a patent of racial ennoblement to further diplomatic relations between the two countries.<sup>3</sup> Nazi racial philosophy would have to be subjugated to the necessities of the German position in world affairs.

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<sup>3</sup> Arnold Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 1936, p. 385. (Hereinafter cited as Toynbee, SIA).

The Nazi-controlled press attempted to mitigate the dichotomy in racial thought and to promote closer relations between Germany and Japan by reducing racial tension. The Party writers proclaimed that the essence of Nazi racial doctrine was strictly an internal domestic affair and did not contain a value judgement about other racial groups. The Party recognized that there existed peoples whose differences did not necessarily make them racially inferior and that the Japanese possessed racial qualities which made them suitable allies for the racially arrogant Germans. Diplomacy expediency resolved the differences between Germany and Japan. Nazi hypocrisy arranged that the racial question would give no cause for offense to the ally, Japan, for Nazi ideals proved no obstacle to Nazi practice.

The Nazis had one other influential factor whose support was considerable for an alliance with Japan: Geopolitics. Racial superiority had to be recast to suit the exigencies of the Japanese relationship, but Geopolitics on the other hand, advocated a pro-Japanese stance. The pseudo-science of Geopolitics was a subject which made geography a determining constituent of history. As it was used by the Nazis it was nothing more than the ideology of imperialist expansion.

Geopolitics had its origins in Germany. The country had been a leader in geographical research in the nineteenth century and Geopolitics evolved from this background in the early part of the twentieth century. The main tenets of Geopolitics, the dynamics of a growing state organism and planned imperialism, became the political doctrines of Karl Haushofer, a former

general and later professor of geography at the University of Munich.<sup>4</sup> Haushofer, while in the German army, went on a tour of duty to Japan in 1909. He witnessed the annexation of Korea in 1910 and the diplomatic preparations surrounding the event. When he returned to Germany in 1911 he wrote extensively on the community of interests between Japan, Russia and Germany. He did not receive much encouragement in Germany, the country that had coined the phrase, "the Yellow Peril".

Haushofer's fundamental calculation was the geographical pivot of history with a combination of Germany, Japan and Russia to outwit the Western Powers, Great Britain and France. This combination would destroy the sea power of the duo through its internal lines of communication. Japan was to play a leading role in the self-determination of the Asiatic peoples of the Far East and this would entail a shift in the balance of power in the Pacific. Germany, with her interests in China, could hold the balance by allying herself with Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Haushofer expounded these postulates of his Geopolitics in the interwar period to such attentive students as Rudolf Hess,<sup>6</sup> the future deputy Party leader of Nazi Germany. Haushofer visited Hitler while he was in prison with the help of Hess but little is known about his influence on Hitler. However,

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4

Karl Haushofer, 1869-1946. German geographer, theorist of Nazi Geopolitics. He later served as an advisor to Hitler and then committed suicide in 1946.

5

Andreas Dorpalen, The World of General Haushofer (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), chapters I-IV passim.

6

Rudolf Hess, 1894-. Nazi follower of Hitler. He flew to Scotland in 1941, sentenced at Nuremberg in 1946 and is still in prison.

Hitler's political view of world affairs did contain some of the ideas of Geopolitics.

With careful propoganda and ideas of Geopolitics, the Nazis made the race issue compatible for a future entente with Japan. Germany needed a friend among the major world powers to escape from her encirclement in Europe and Japan was the only country which appeared worthy for an alliance of mutual "have-not" nations. The ideas of Geopolitics and Germany's position made it expedient to forego the Hitlerian ideals of a superior race in favor of a practical diplomatic policy to save the Third Reich from political isolation.

Germany had been in the Far East, principally in China, since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Bismarckian era in Germany had prompted imperialistic expansion into China for commercial exploitation which in turn had served notice to a new Japanese government of a powerful rival in the Far East.

The Meiji Restoration reinstated a strong, central government in Japan that looked to the West for its technology. The new Japan chose Germany to supply much of its technical growth and German military officers to construct a modern Japanese army along western lines. It was this German-trained army and German-oriented leadership that shocked the Western world with its defeat of the Russian armies in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905. This close technical and economic cooperation continued until the outbreak of the first World War. Germany and Japan found themselves on opposite sides in the war and Japan took advantage of conditions in Europe to occupy German

possessions in China and in the Pacific.

At Versailles, Japan felt slighted by her allies because she had to return many of her captured territorial conquests. Japan then adopted a policy of peaceful co-existence with her neighbors in the Pacific, but the economic crisis of the world depression intensified the frustration of the peace settlements and encouraged political radicalism. A militant young officer corps of the Japanese army developed a boundless nationalism constructed on a philosophy of territorial expansion through the use of military force. The nationalists in Japan immediately recognized that the depression reduced foreign markets and imported raw materials, threatening the very foundation of the Japanese state. The Japanese intervention in Manchuria in 1931 was an expression of the omnipresent pressure of the military complex and the depression. The conquest of Manchuria signalled the beginning of the military domination and eventual control of the government in Japan.

The incident in Manchuria meant a new foreign policy for Japan because the act isolated Japan from the world community. The other world powers looked upon the act as contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations and against previous declarations outlawing such actions. Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in March, 1933 to protest the non-recognition of the newly created puppet state of Manchukuo. The United States and Great Britain assumed a new interest in the Pacific in light of the hostile actions of Japan against China. Japan, threatened by the naval powers in the Pacific and

the colossus Russia in the north, cast around for a friendly power in a similar situation. The Nazi state in Germany appeared to have a bond with Japan through common grievances and common isolation.

Germany had had strictly formal relations with Japan through the 1920's but with Hitler in power in 1933, the situation changed rapidly. Germany had withdrawn from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference in 1933 and had signed a non-aggression pact with Poland in 1934. These diplomatic events had aroused the British and the French and a hostile Russia. This opposition and the change in Nazi racial propaganda had helped to construct a new friendship with Japan. The international status of both countries after events in 1933 had made both totalitarian states anti-League, anti-communist and anti-revolutionary, but in an active aggressive way favoring territorial expansion.

Germany renewed her diplomatic contacts with Japan because increased tension in Europe necessitated a strong diplomatic maneuver by Hitler against one of his potential enemies, Russia. Hitler wanted to encircle Russia and an entente with Japan was one step towards this goal. Hitler's fear of Russia and his tirades against Bolshevism were to provide the impetus to diplomatic negotiations that was to begin the tenuous alliance between Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT 1933-1936

Germany's position in 1935 stimulated the need for an ally to share the burden of world hostility. Great Britain and France did not approve of Germany's decision to rearm and open rumors circulated in European capitals of possible punitive actions and a preventive war against the Nazi regime. Hitler signed a ten year non-aggression pact with Poland in 1934 with a stipulation to respect existing territorial rights. The agreement created a serious breach in the French eastern European alliance system but France countered with a treaty of mutual assistance with Russia in 1935. Germany's new militant position aroused Soviet fears and suspicions. Russia in turn signed a treaty for mutual assistance with Czechoslovakia in the same year. The imminent threat of encirclement alarmed Hitler and prompted serious consideration of an alliance with Japan. The fear of Bolshevism and the new Soviet menace in western Europe was the immediate basis for the decision.

Most Prussian statesmen of the nineteenth century acted on the assumption that Russian neutrality was the key to Germany's security. Hitler's change of attitude had several motives. The leader of Germany, who had risen to power on the claim that he had crushed Communism at home, had to be consistent in his policy toward Russia. But after his domestic victory, it was necessary to convince the German public that a larger Communist menace still cast its shadow upon Germany from the

vast spaces beyond her eastern frontiers. The Fuehrer's emotional attitude, an attitude in which fear was compounded with hatred, and hatred with hysteria, served to champion National Socialism as the saviour of the western world, commending itself to the critics of the regime. The hatred of Russia helped to perpetuate the ideas in Mein Kampf of Lebensraum in the east and the need for territorial expansion to meet the needs of the German people. The Bolshevik threat could be construed to make German rearmament acceptable in western Europe with the Hitlerian assurance that the new German national policy would be used to defend Europe against the Russian "Red Peril". The clash of the rival political systems was an important feature of international relations in Europe and the antagonism of Communism an equally important factor in the foreign policy of Japan in the Far East.

The Japanese government, in the midst of a virulent nationalism and influenced by the military, considered Russia an anathema to its mission in the Far East. Japan saw herself as the divinely appointed promulgator of a particular type of political and cultural ideals. These ideals clashed with the formidable Communist doctrines of Russia. In Japan's attempt to bring under her influence various Chinese and Mongolian peoples, Russia imposed restrictions upon Japanese expansionist aims in the Far East that were intolerable to the Japanese militarists and nationalists.

Japan successfully had suppressed Communism as a domestic threat, but the military leaders had come to regard



the spread of Communism on the east Asiatic mainland as Japan's principal external danger; and this danger was the motive underlying a large part of the Japanese action in Manchuria and in North China.

Hitler dealt cautiously with the proposed Japanese entente. There were many groups in the country who were not favorably disposed toward Hitler's pro-Japanese policies, among them the German army. The Reichswehr (German army) had been providing China with military advisors since 1928 and the military prestige, coupled with a profitable outlet for Germany's armament industries made the Reichswehr Sinophile in its Far Eastern disposition. It was a favorite subject for German military authors to point to Japan's economic weaknesses in the conduct of modern war because her war potential was entirely dependent on raw materials from abroad. This pro-Chinese position also manifested itself in the Wilhelmstrasse (the German Foreign Office)

The German Foreign Office displayed little support for Hitler and regarded him as an upstart in matters of foreign policy, traditionally handled by the career diplomats of Germany's foreign service. Hitler's first Foreign Minister, Freiherr von Neurath,<sup>1</sup> was indubitably a man of the old school and a career diplomat. Hitler's judgement of him was good: "Neurath is unimaginative. Shrewd as a peasant, but with no ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Constantine von Neurath, 1873-1956. German statesman. After a long diplomatic career, he was Hitler's Foreign Minister, 1933-1938 and later protector of Bohemia. He was tried at Nuremberg, sentenced to prison and released in 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Raushnig, The Voice of Destruction (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 275.

As a product of the Wilhelmstrasse, von Neurath was pro-Chinese. When confronted with unpleasant realities, von Neurath preferred to evade the issue rather than to offer his personal opposition. This was what Hitler wanted as he stated: "...At the moment it's his benevolent appearance that is of most use to me. You can't imagine a man like that going in for a revolutionary policy they will say in England."<sup>3</sup> Hitler realized that the career diplomats furnished a measure of respectability for the Nazi regime in international relations. But it was too early to replace these diplomats with Hitler's own men to commence his personal diplomatic schemes. Hitler faced a real problem in finding an adequate substitute for the German Foreign Office inasmuch as the Party's own members lacked diplomatic training. Most Party members had not been abroad and lacked any facility in foreign languages. To fill this gap in his entourage, Hitler turned to a trusted friend, Joachim von Ribbentrop.<sup>4</sup>

Ribbentrop had served in the German army during the first World War and then as a member of the German delegation to Versailles. He had formed his own wine company after the war, married the daughter of another wine merchant, and quickly had become one of the leading dealers in Europe. With his champagne conviviality, charm and linguistic facilities, Ribbentrop had become a welcome figure in the salons of the

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<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>4</sup>

Joachim von Ribbentrop, 1893-1946. Nazi Foreign Minister. He served as ambassador to Great Britain, 1936-1938 before becoming Foreign Minister from 1938 to 1945. He was tried at Nuremberg, and hanged in 1946.

major European embassies. From these glimpses of diplomatic life, he had acquired a taste for the responsibilities and the power of world diplomacy.

Ribbentrop met Hitler in August, 1932, when Ribbentrop, favorably disposed to the Nazi movement, received Hitler at his home in Dahlem as a frequent guest. The Party's leadership, Goering, Hess, Goebbels and Rosenberg, considered Ribbentrop to be an interloper. For a while, Ribbentrop served as an instructor to the Party on foreign affairs and as an advisor to Hitler, who made use of his linguistic abilities. In April, 1934, Hitler appointed Ribbentrop Reich delegate on matters of disarmament. Ribbentrop used his position to see the daily dispatches from abroad and reports sent to Hitler. He synthesized Hitler's opinions on various matters and made them his own. The similarity between Ribbentrop's views and his own impressed Hitler, who welcomed this contrast to the conservative advice of the Wilhelmstrasse.

Hitler, astute enough to realize that he could not allow a novice to take over the execution of foreign affairs, instead allowed Ribbentrop to form his own organization for foreign affairs, the Dienststelle Ribbentrop, in late 1934. This para-foreign service, financed from Hitler's private budget, served several useful purposes. The Dienststelle Ribbentrop handled many confidential tasks and substituted for the distrusted Foreign Office, which now conducted only routine matters in foreign affairs. Ribbentrop assembled a collection of newspaper people, linguists, professors and businessmen to staff his

organization. He performed his early missions with singular dispatch and vigor, and his genial appearance, affability and informality were in sharp contrast to the Wilhelmstrasse diplomats. Ribbentrop's agents kept German embassies and legations under constant surveillance and provided Hitler with two agencies to manipulate his foreign policy.

As chance would have it, both Germany and Japan had exchanged new military attachés in early 1934 which proved to be of great significance in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. Colonel Eugen Ott<sup>5</sup> had served for about ten years in the political department of the German Foreign Office. He had served for a short period of time in 1933 as an official observer for the German army in Japan and then had returned to Germany. Ott received the appointment of military attaché to Tokyo and had departed from Berlin with no specific instructions for his new task from his superiors but with the knowledge of Hitler's intense interest in the Far East.

The Japanese appointment of Colonel Hiroshi Oshima<sup>6</sup> as military attaché to Germany had a more deliberate purpose. Oshima had served as an assistant attaché in Germany and Austria from 1921 to 1923 and was outspokenly pro-German and a representative of the Japanese army. The Japanese military attachés reported directly to General Headquarters in Tokyo

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5

Eugen Ott, German army officer. He served as military attaché to Japan until 1939 and then became ambassador until the end of the war.

6

Hiroshi Oshima, 1893-1948. Japanese officer. He was the Japanese ambassador to Germany in 1941. Later he was tried for war crimes and hanged in 1948.

with the authority to enter into independent negotiations on any military agreement. Oshima had received instructions to investigate the stability of the Nazi regime, the future of the German army and the state of relations between Germany and Russia.<sup>7</sup>

These military appointments, surrounded by events which seemed most auspicious, furthered the German-Japanese entente. Both countries displayed an interest in the possibilities of an alliance in 1935. Hitler regarded the Japanese as an influential factor in the Russian situation and considered a war between Russia and Japan over China as a possible opportunity for German intervention in European Russia.

The early diplomatic exchanges between the two countries were cautious. The German ambassador, Herbert von Dirksen,<sup>8</sup> suggested to the Foreign Office in early 1934 that Germany recognize the new state of Manchukuo in order to enhance Germany's relations with Japan and to lessen Japanese resentment on the racial issue.<sup>9</sup> The presence of German military advisors in China irritated the Japanese, who resented this assistance to Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>10</sup> The German government hesitated and advised

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<sup>7</sup> International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo: War Ministry Library, 1948), p. 3508. (Hereinafter cited as IMTFE).

<sup>8</sup> Herbert von Dirksen, 1882-. German diplomat. He had a long career in the German Foreign Office and served as German ambassador to Japan from 1936 to 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), Series C vol. II, Dirksen to GFM 17 October 1934 No. 7 p. 9. (Hereinafter cited as DGFP).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Series C vol. III, Dirksen to Buelow 4 January 1934 No. 162 pp. 298-300.

von Dirksen to avoid: "...any close relations with Japan which might lay us (Germany) open to being suspected of wishing to render assistance against Russia."<sup>11</sup>

Hitler queried Ribbentrop about more intimate connections with Japan in late 1934 but Ribbentrop was too busy consolidating his own position to consider the assignment. Ribbentrop negotiated the Anglo-German naval agreement in 1935 and acquired sufficient influence and prestige to undertake the immediate need for an agreement with Japan.

The Japanese viewed German efforts in the Far East with apprehension because of the former German colonies held by Japan and Germany's official Sinophile position. The Japanese military leaders were not at all certain about Germany's relations with Russia and presumed that Germany, because of her close geographical proximity to Russia, feared the Communist state. This common fear of Communism became the immediate pretext for the diplomatic negotiations preceding the signature of the first German-Japanese alliance.

Russia was not idle with two conflicting ideologies on her borders in the 1930's. In August, 1935, the seventh World Congress of the Communist International met in Moscow to plan world Communist strategy. The Congress decided to work in cooperation with Social Democrats of the Popular Front movements in Spain and in France. But the Communists went even further, adopting a resolution condemning fascist aggressors and imperialist warmongers, stating:

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<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Series C vol. III, Buelow to Trautmann 12 October 1934 No. 247 p. 480.

In the face of the war provocations of the German fascists and Japanese militarists, and the speeding up of armaments by the war parties in the capitalist countries...the central slogan of the Communist Parties must be: struggle for peace. All those interested in the preservation of peace should be drawn into this vital front. The concentration of forces against the chief instigators of war at any given moment (at the present time-against fascist Germany and against Poland and Japan which are in league with it) constitutes a most important task of the Communist Parties. 12

The Communist International declared war on Germany and Japan. This new Russian foreign policy statement was a splendid argument for German-Japanese collaboration. The overt threat presented a convenient opportunity to crystallize an auspicious partnership between Germany and Japan to counter the Comintern (Communist International).

Ribbentrop conversed with the Japanese military attaché Oshima to determine the views of the Japanese army toward a proposed defensive alliance against Russia in June, 1935.<sup>13</sup> Oshima gave no definite reply and wired the General Staff in Tokyo for instructions.<sup>14</sup> The Comintern resolution in August prompted Ribbentrop to intensify German efforts. Ribbentrop wanted to know the opinion of the Japanese army about an agreement with Germany stipulating that neither Germany nor Japan would aid Russia if war began between either party and Russia.<sup>15</sup>

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12

Report of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (London: Modern Books Ltd., 1936), p. 24.

13

IMTFF, exhibits 477, p. 3508.

14

Ibid., record pp. 3481-3491.

15

Ibid., exhibits 477, pp. 2762, 3492.

The Japanese General Staff replied to Oshima's inquiry stating that the proposal required further examination. The General Staff sent Lieutenant Colonel Wakamatsu of the German division of General Headquarters to Berlin to ascertain the views of the German army and the German government concerning the possibility of concluding an agreement against the Comintern. Until Wakamatsu's arrival in Berlin in November, 1935 neither side took any further action.

16

Ribbentrop and General von Blomberg, the Reich Minister of War, met in Berlin with Wakamatsu in secret conference. Wakamatsu stated that the Japanese army was in favor of a general treaty. Ribbentrop in turn suggested that Germany and Japan conclude a separate anti-Comintern agreement. Inasmuch as the seventh Congress of the Communist International declared both nations to be its enemies, Ribbentrop proposed that Germany and Japan had a similar need to defend themselves. Wakamatsu replied that the Japanese army felt the same way but since these proposals were Ribbentrop's and not from the Foreign Office, he wished to know where the German government stood on the matter. Wakamatsu assumed that the German government preferred a pact against the Comintern rather than a direct military alliance. There was no further progress in subsequent talks, and Wakamatsu left Berlin to inform the Japanese army.

The disjunction of Hitler's two foreign policy organizations made itself blatantly apparent when von Dirksen,

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16

Werner von Blomberg, 1878-1946. German general. He served as War Minister, CinC of the armed forces but was ousted by Hitler in 1938.



the German ambassador, learned of the negotiations in Berlin, not from his own Foreign Office (which knew nothing of the talks) but from the Japanese General Staff.<sup>17</sup> Von Dirksen endeavored to inform the German Foreign Office in a memorandum when he stated:

...Japan is the only Great Power which is opposed to the Soviet Union both on profound ideological grounds and for a great variety of political reasons, and which, in addition, appears to be determined to settle these differences by force of arms as soon as she feels militarily strong enough.<sup>18</sup>

Ribbentrop conducted his diplomatic negotiations in such an oblique manner that Hitler or the Japanese could repudiate these unofficial contacts, but such methods were to attain the sought-after alliance.

The year 1936 witnessed a series of crises on the international scene that sharpened the ideological battle against Russia and the activities of the Comintern. In France, the Blum Cabinet, supported by the Popular Front took office in June. The Civil War in Spain began in July with fascist and Communist elements on opposite sides. The Spanish Civil War furnished the Nazis with a potent argument, maintaining that the war truly represented the outcome of the decisions at the Comintern Congress. Germany claimed to be the defender of western civilization against the insidious influence of the Comintern. The conclusive anti-Communist position of the German government encouraged support in Japanese political

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<sup>17</sup>

Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow Tokyo London (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 153. (Hereinafter cited as Dirksen, Moscow Tokyo London).

<sup>18</sup>

DGFP, Series C vol. IV, Dirksen to Erdmann 28 December 1935 No. 479 p. 953.

circles for an alliance. To the Japanese, Nazi foreign policy appeared to justify a closer relationship with Germany to counter the activities of the Comintern.

Hitler met the Japanese ambassador to Germany, Viscount<sup>19</sup> Mushakoji, in June, 1936 when the ambassador returned from Japan with instructions on the suggested alliance with Germany. Mushakoji stated that Japan regarded Communism as a serious menace and that: "she looked with great respect on Germany, who, as Russia's western neighbor, had overcome this danger. Japan, as a spiritually related country...desired the closest<sup>20</sup> cooperation with Germany." Ribbentrop presented the German proposals for a limited agreement with the Japanese, and<sup>21</sup> Mushakoji forwarded the terms to Tokyo.

Ambassador von Dirksen returned to Berlin in 1936 and discussed the Japanese situation with Ribbentrop. The German Foreign Ministry knew nothing of the new activities of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop and von Dirksen had to inform them of the diplomatic exchanges. Foreign Minister von Neurath was very suspicious and opposed any political agreement with Japan. The Wilhelmstrasse made no effort to interfere and allowed Ribbentrop to continue the negotiations. The ambassador returned to Tokyo with the impression that Hitler attached<sup>22</sup> great importance to the negotiations with Japan. Colonel Ott,

<sup>19</sup>  
Viscount Mushakoji, Japanese ambassador. Replaced by Togo in 1938.

<sup>20</sup>  
DGFP, Series C vol. V, Hitler and Mushakoji 9 June 1936 No. 362 pp. 603-604.

<sup>21</sup>  
IMTFE, exhibit 3610.

<sup>22</sup>  
Dirksen, Moscow Tokyo London p. 172.

the military attaché, also returned home to attend the fall maneuvers of the German army. Hitler asked Ott for his opinion on the situation in Japan. Ott replied that the Japanese army favored the conclusion of a German-Japanese agreement.

Negotiations for the pact began in earnest with this information and after the Japanese discussed the proposals of June, 1936. Ribbentrop reported to Hitler on the negotiations from the first of August with the Japanese military attaché Oshima. The two parties worked on the various details to satisfy the Japanese government and were in agreement on the major articles of the pact by mid-August.

The greatest difficulties lay in the provisions of the secret accords to the pact. Ribbentrop attempted to write a broad stipulation into the first secret article which dealt with the actions of either party if one became involved in a conflict with Russia. The Japanese regarded this provision as a negative point which put little restraint on either participant. The Germans compromised on the point but insisted that the clause plainly designating Russia remain in the article. The two parties settled other difficulties on future agreements with Russia with an exchange of supplementary notes to the pact. The Japanese opposed publication of the Anti-Comintern Pact but Ribbentrop insisted that it be done and the Japanese army pressured the Japanese Foreign Office to accept. There was some hesitancy in Japanese political circles that Germany

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DGFP, Series C vol. V, Ribbentrop to Hitler 16 August 1936  
No. 509 pp. 899-900.

stood to gain immensely and would exploit her position, using Japan as a tool for her own foreign policy. The army again overcame the opposition and the two parties, Ribbentrop and Mushakoji, initialled the completed draft on 23 October in Berlin, in front of Hitler.

The treaty's preamble, written with the intent to broaden the popular appeal and acceptance of the document, stated the opposition of the two signatories, Germany and Japan, to the objectives of the Comintern. In the following articles they agreed to consult each other on Communist activities, inviting third parties to join the pact. The pact was to remain in force for five years with a provision for renewal. The supplementary protocol dealt with the exchange of information about the activities of the Comintern and the formation of a permanent committee to handle the coordination of measures against Communist subversion.<sup>24</sup>

The heart of the pact was in the text of the secret protocol attached to the public agreement. Germany and Japan recognized the threat of Russia and provided in Article one that:

Should one of the High Contracting States become the object of an unprovoked attack or threat of an attack by the USSR, the other High Contracting State obligates itself to take no measures which tend to ease the situation of the USSR... 25

The other secret articles of the protocol dealt with future treaties between the signatories and Russia with the secret

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Documents on International Affairs 1936 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 297-299. (Hereinafter cited as DIA). See Appendix A for the full text.

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Appendix A.

agreement being part of the public agreement against  
<sup>26</sup>  
 the Comintern.

Ribbentrop and Mushakoji exchanged notes to clarify certain provisions of the secret protocol. Mushakoji's notes, Annexes One and Two, stated that both governments agreed that:

the 'political treaties' referred to in Article II of the aforementioned Supplementary Agreement do not include either fishery treaties, or treaties concerning concessions, or treaties concerning frontier questions between Japan, Manchukuo, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the like, which may be concluded between Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. 27

In his reply, Ribbentrop confirmed this interpretation.

Ribbentrop's note, Annexes Three and Four of the secret protocol, stated that:

The German government does not regard the provisions of the existing political treaties between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, such as the Rapallo Treaty of 1922 and the Treaty of Neutrality of 1926, in so far as they have not become null and void under the conditions existing at the time the Agreement comes into force, as being in contradiction to the spirit of the Agreement and the obligations arising from it. 28

In his reply, Mushakoji stated that his government took note with sincere satisfaction of this communication. Both parties agreed to keep the Annexes secret and reveal them, by mutual consent, to third parties.

The agreement required the final approval of the Japanese Privy Council. Those Japanese in favor stressed the danger of Russia in the Far East and the growing unrest in the

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Appendix A.

<sup>27</sup>

DGFP, Series C vol. V, p. 1139.

<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., Series C vol. V, p. 1139.

area. In Japan's view, Germany faced a similar situation in Europe and it was only natural that the two countries should cooperate. Russia, having secured her position in Europe with alliances between herself, France and Czechoslovakia, appeared ready to devote more time to the Far East, increasing the threat of Russian intervention. Those Japanese opposed to the treaty feared widespread repercussions at home and increased hostility with Russia. The objections found little support and the Privy Council unanimously approved the Anti-Comintern Pact on 25 November 1936.

In Berlin, Hitler quickly approved the pact and in order to justify the agreement, initiated a torrent of anti-Communist propaganda. Nazi vituperation reached new heights under the slogan of "the Battle against Bolshevism". The German press denounced Russian foreign policy and concluded that a defensive alliance against Bolshevism was highly desirable. Ribbentrop signed the agreement for Germany as Minister Plenipotentiary at large. The agreement, signed in the offices of the Dienststelle, rather than the German Foreign Office and without the signature of Germany's Foreign Minister, caused a great deal of speculation at the time. Ribbentrop explained after the war that the Fuehrer arranged it in that manner because he wished to denote the pact's ideological nature and to avoid an official air. Hitler was not eager to have von Neurath sign the pact because in case it became

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Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), vol. X, pp. 239-241. (Hereinafter cited as IMTN).

expedient to repudiate the entire project, the fact that the German Foreign Minister had not approved the agreement would be of some help.

The major European countries received the news of the pact with open misgivings and were already wondering if they might be victims of aggressive designs by either Germany or Japan. They assumed that these designs might be brought nearer to realization now that the two powers suspected of harboring such designs were openly allied in common cause. Russia, not satisfied with the various explanations given to her by the German ambassador, scorned the agreement. The Russian Foreign Minister, Maxim Litvinov,<sup>29</sup> speaking on 28 November before the All-Union Congress, gave vent to Russian exasperation when he stated:

Well-informed people refuse to believe that for the drawing of the two scanty published articles of the German-Japanese agreement it was necessary to conduct negotiations for fifteen months, and that on the Japanese side it was necessary to entrust these negotiations to an Army general, and on the German side to an important diplomat, and that it was necessary to conduct these negotiations in an atmosphere of the strictest secrecy. As regards the published...agreement, it is only a camouflage for another agreement which was simultaneously discussed and initially ... (and) in which the word 'Communism' is not even mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

The Russians were well-informed about the real intention of the Anti-Comintern Pact. The agreement could only serve to worsen relations between Germany and Russia.

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<sup>29</sup>

Maxim Litvinov, 1876-1951. Communist diplomat. As Foreign Minister, he obtained U.S. recognition but he was replaced in 1939 by Stalin and then served as ambassador to the U.S. until 1943.

<sup>30</sup>

DIA, 1936. p. 302.

The British took a dim view of the pact, and its publication aroused immediate apprehensions for the security of the Empire. It appeared that the Germans and the Japanese intended to divide the world on ideological grounds with the British Empire challenged on all shores. Italy maintained a careful reserve and pointedly avoided any indication that she planned to adhere to the pact in the near future. But Ribbentrop spoiled the secrecy when, speaking of: "Germany...creating a bulwark against this pestilence (Bolshevism) in Central Europe," he predicted that soon: "Italy will hoist the anti-Bolshevist banner in the south."<sup>31</sup> Hitler believed that Italy, bound by the October Protocols of 1936 with Germany, would join the Anti-Comintern Pact to create a triple entente.

The German government disclosed that the pact was open to all other nations as an assurance against the Comintern threat. The German press contended that the Japanese were united in support of the pact--thus ignoring the widespread opposition in Japan to the agreement. A publicity campaign began to promote popular interest in Japanese culture to abet the political coalition between the two countries.

In Tokyo, the pact received a decidedly unenthusiastic reception. The Japanese press, a bit less restricted than its German counterpart, regarded the agreement as a sudden decision in foreign policy to decide Japan's friends and enemies. The Tokyo Asahi on 2 December wrote:

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<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., pp. 299-300.



In plain language it is too hasty, we should think, for Japan to decide her foreign policy without first examining whether England is Japan's friend or enemy. As Chiang Kai-shek, of all people, has said...the agreement in question can by no means help Japan in pursuit of her policy toward Russia. Why? Because it is impossible to think that Germany would lend her forces to Japan in event of any crisis between Japan and Russia. 32

It appeared that the Japanese made lukewarm friends at the expense of red-hot enemies. Many Japanese resented being dragged into European conflicts at the expense of Japan's independence in foreign affairs.

An analysis of the Anti-Comintern Pact and its significance must consider Hitler's foreign policy in Europe and in the Far East. The pact against the Comintern threatened Russia in both Europe and in Asia. The pact menaced Great Britain and France in these same areas. Because there were no commitments in the agreement for military action, the pact was ineffectual in case of war. However, the assumed stipulations of military obligations extended Germany's influence to world-wide dimensions. But the provisions of the pact obligated Germany to accept a policy that was contrary to her previous diplomatic position.

The German government could not influence Japan's foreign policy despite Ribbentrop's efforts. The provisions of the Anti-Comintern Pact did not include any dangerous obligations, but Hitler failed to foresee the consequences of Japan's

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As quoted in: David H. James, The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 185.

foreign policy in the Far East. The German government wanted to establish closer relations with Japan and at the same time, maintain Germany's influential position in China. This policy demanded diplomacy far beyond the extent of Ribbentrop's ability. When Japan became involved in a war with China in 1937, Germany had little recourse but to acquiesce to Japanese requests and to end her aid to China. The ultimate significance of the Anti-Comintern Pact was the dependence of German foreign policy in the Far East on Japan's disposition.

Japan wanted an agreement with Germany to immobilize Russia in the Far East by threatening her on two borders. The Japanese government did not want a definite agreement against Russia which included military obligations but sought instead to forestall Russia with the threat of Germany in the west. Japan did obtain this in the Anti-Comintern Pact and could proceed with her territorial aggrandizement in China. The German government underestimated the character of its ally, Japan, and this blunder was full of portent when Germany's real opponent in Europe became not Russia but Great Britain.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FIRST CRISIS 1937-1938

Germany's position in world affairs seemed rather auspicious at the beginning of 1937. The new German government had reclaimed the Rhineland, and rearmament had reestablished Germany as the strongest power in central Europe. The Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan and the October Protocols with Italy had given Hitler a measure of security and an instrument to use against the vacillating diplomats of Europe. Germany's stature had risen in Europe and in the Far East. Relations with Japan had grown on the new political foundation, trade with Manchuria had been revived and the profitable commerce with China offered a firm base for a friendly but informal relationship.

Germany did not want to neglect her friendship with China despite the coalition with Japan. Hitler realized that, after the Anti-Comintern Pact, Germany needed to maintain a balance between China and Japan so as not jeopardize the Chinese trade. Hitler, receiving the first Chinese ambassador in 1936, stated: "Germany is anxious carefully to foster and deepen the friendly relations which have so long existed between our two countries."<sup>1</sup> This policy was put to the supreme test when war began between China and Japan in July, 1937. Germany found that she could not maintain this foreign policy

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Norman Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922-1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), vol. II p. 1271. (Hereinafter cited as Baynes, Speeches).

in the Far East in opposition to Japan, and Germany would have to foresake China to save the entente with Japan.

Japan entered the war against China with her own slogan, "the Battle against Bolshevism in Asia" but Germany professed serious doubts about the Communist menace. The new Far Eastern war created a visible strain in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. The German Foreign Office sent indential telegrams to all its missions, stating that: "Germany will observe strict neutrality in the Far Eastern conflict."<sup>2</sup> For the sake of German commercial interests in China and her Anti-Comintern policy, Germany desired a peaceful solution to the war. But Germany took no steps to join any action to stop Japan or to help negotiate a peace settlement, a move which would have definitely been in Germany's favor to extricate herself from her awkward position. The Japanese ambassador, Viscount Mushakoji, explained the Japanese military campaign in China to the German Foreign Office as service to Germany because of its anti-Communist intent. Baron von Weizsaecker,<sup>3</sup> head of the Political Department, contradicted the ambassador by pointing out to him that the policy did not lead to an elimination of Communism in China but would actually foster the ideology. The Anti-Comintern Pact had never been

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<sup>2</sup>  
DGFP, Series D vol. I, GFM to Tokyo 20 July 1937 No. 463 pp. 733-735.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ernest von Weizsaecker, 1882-1951. German diplomat. Weizsaecker had a long career in the Foreign Office, serving as head of the Political Department under von Neurath and later as State Secretary under Ribbentrop. He was tried at Nuremberg, convicted and sentenced to prison. He was released in poor health and died in 1951.

intended to fight Communism in other countries and the war brought Germany no benefits.<sup>4</sup> Two issues, German trade with China and German military advisors in China, were to renew the old hostilities between Germany and Japan and place the new alliance at its most tenuous extreme until Germany sacrificed her position in the Far East for the bond with Japan.

The issue of German trade with China, much of it in military equipment, stretched Germany's "strict neutrality" and sharply delineated the division between the German Foreign Office and those in the Nazi Party concerned with foreign policy. Germany was brought face to face with a dilemma that had been inherent in the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact. The longtime Sinophile attitude of the German Foreign Office and the fear of possible commercial ruin in business circles enhanced the anti-Japanese feeling in Germany. China placed large commercial orders in Germany for armaments and industrial machinery. Germany in turn acquired much needed foreign exchange from these transactions and also valuable strategic raw materials, including tin and wolfram. The German Foreign Office felt that China was a much better ally than Japan and German businessmen saw in China a lucrative market with vast economic potential. The German Officer Corps supported these pro-Chinese views with its own unfavorable opinion of the Japanese army. Many officers believed that Japan could never occupy the whole of China.

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DGFP, Series D vol. I, Memorandum 28 July 1937 No. 473 pp. 744-745. Also, Ernest von Weizsaecker, Memoirs translated by John Andrews (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1951), pp. 116-117. (Hereinafter cited as Weizsaecker, Memoirs).

China would remain unconquered and this would result in a long, protracted war which Japan could not sustain economically without bringing chaos to the internal structure of the Japanese economy and nation.

The Japanese acted quickly to demand what was expected of Germany in their political relationship. The Japanese Counselor speaking to Weizsaecker, insisted that all German arms deliveries to China be halted, including those already contracted by China to Germany.<sup>5</sup> The German Foreign Office attempted to justify German actions, stating that the export of arms to China was on a modest scale and regardless of the Anti-Comintern Pact, could not be made an issue for German-Japanese negotiations.<sup>6</sup> The German government, in view of its proclamation of neutrality, agreed to make no new deliveries of arms, but was nevertheless understandably loath to cancel existing orders. Hitler ordered that no further Chinese orders be accepted and that arms shipments to China be camouflaged as much as possible to avoid antagonizing the Japanese.<sup>7</sup> Hitler's disposition toward Japan endeavored to protect the advantageous Chinese commerce, an important contribution to the German economy. The Japanese, not satisfied by this double talk, threatened to seize

<sup>5</sup>  
DGFP, Series D vol. I, Memorandum 22 July 1937 No. 467 pp. 737-738.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Tokyo 28 July 1937 No. 472 pp. 742-744.

<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 17 August 1937 No. 478 p. 750. Despite Hitler's order, the Japanese soon found out the shipments to China and the ambassador to Berlin expressed indignation at Hitler's role in the whole affair.

German arms shipments en route to China if Germany did not  
 comply to Japan's demands.<sup>8</sup>

German military advisors in China, ex-officers of the German army and hired by the Chinese government to create a modern Chinese army, had absolutely no connection with the German government on any official basis. Commanded by General Alexander von Falkenhausen,<sup>9</sup> they did much to promote German-Chinese relations and to increase German influence and prestige in the Chinese government. Members of the German Foreign Office realized that if Japan insisted upon the recall of these advisors, China might then turn to Russia to provide officers to instruct Chinese troops. This was the very last thing that Hitler wanted. The possibilities of Russian interference grew with the signature of the Russo-Chinese Non-Aggression Pact on 21 August 1937. The Japanese government demanded late in August that the German personnel be ordered to leave the country because they were participating in staff planning and the tactical disposition and control of Chinese troops fighting the Japanese invaders. This military assistance stiffened Chinese resistance. Berlin warned Falkenhausen not to collaborate but to little avail.<sup>10</sup> Within a brief time from the beginning of the war in July, Germany faced decisions affecting her entire position in the Far East. Germany had to choose between complying with

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<sup>8</sup>  
 Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 30 July 1937 No. 474 pp. 745-747.

<sup>9</sup>  
 Alexander von Falkenhausen, 1878-1951. German soldier. He served in China from 1933 to 1938 and then returned home.

<sup>10</sup>  
 DGFP, Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 23 August 1937 No. 483 p. 755.

Japanese requests or see the efforts of the last four years to establish an accord with Japan wasted.

German foreign policy at this critical point lacked unity and direction. The German Foreign Office viewed Japanese actions in China with alarm and disapproved of the conflict. The Foreign Office did not want to yield to Japanese demands against the arms shipments and military advisors, but although cognizant of the implications of this stand, lacked the influence to save the German position in China from destruction. Hitler pursued a vacillating policy, unable to choose between Germany's previous interests or the new political alliance with Japan. In a discussion with von Neurath on 16 August, Hitler stated that: "he adhered in principle, to the idea of cooperating with Japan, but that, in the present conflict between China and Japan, Germany must remain neutral."<sup>11</sup> Hitler's decision on arms shipments to China conflicted with his previous pronouncements toward Japan.

The Nazi Party's foreign policy advisors did not foresee the fatal course of Japan's imperialist policy against China. Ribbentrop, not concerned with Germany's interest in China, advocated a strong pro-Japanese position, believing that Japan would win a swift victory over China.<sup>12</sup> Hitler inclined toward this position also and felt that he must support the Anti-Comintern Pact in view of the spread of Communism in Spain

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<sup>11</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 17 August 1937 No. 478 p. 770.

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 19 September 1937 No. 486 pp. 758-759.



and China. The pact united Germany and Japan against the Communist threat. Germany continued to profess neutrality but by autumn 1937, the German government, despite the objections of the Foreign Office, decided to yield to Japanese demands.

Hitler instituted his decision immediately and on 18 October Goering issued orders to halt all arms deliveries to China. Goering stated that the Japanese threatened to withdraw from the Anti-Comintern Pact: "if support of the Chinese by Germany was continued in its present form and that the Fuehrer had decided that an unequivocal attitude was to be adopted toward Japan."<sup>13</sup> General Wilhelm Keitel<sup>14</sup> protested that it would not be feasible to stop all deliveries, some of which China had already paid for, because Germany could not return the payments. The Reich Minister of War von Blumberg agreed, and supported by the Foreign Office, pressured Goering to rescind his order and to resume deliveries.<sup>15</sup> It was quite clear in Berlin that an end to the Sino-Japanese war would be of great benefit to Germany, both from the economic considerations involved and the political standpoint. The only hope was for German mediation in the conflict but this required political support in Berlin, support which Hitler would not give his Wilhelmstrasse diplomats.

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 19 October 1937 No. 500 pp. 768-769.

<sup>14</sup>

Wilhelm Keitel, 1882-1946. German soldier. Keitel had a long military career, as chief of staff of the army and later as commander of OKW. He was convicted at Nuremberg and hanged.

<sup>15</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. I, Memorandum 22 October 1937 No. 504 p. 772.

The Chinese appeal to the League of Nations and the signatories of the Nine Power agreement resulted in a conference of interested states in Brussels. Japan indicated from the outset that she would refuse to attend because she feared possible collective action by the Western Powers. Hitler refused to participate because of his pro-Japanese inclination and because he feared that the conference, if successful, might establish a precedent in cases of future aggression. Germany's absence from Brussels, despite the need for friendship with both nations, was anti-Chinese and so by inference pro-Japanese. Germany could not please both powers, and her position in relation to the conference was an illustration of her dilemma in the Far East.

The German Foreign Office attempted to mediate the conflict by offering its good offices to handle the exchanges between China and Japan. The German ambassador in China, Dr. Trautmann, informed the Chinese that Germany could serve as a mediator in the conflict because direct negotiations appeared most promising.<sup>16</sup> The Foreign Office made the first move because of hints received from the Japanese army and its representative Oshima that the time was ripe for negotiations. Ambassador von Dirksen received another such Japanese request through diplomatic channels and conveyed the message to the Wilhelmstrasse.<sup>17</sup> The Foreign Office in turn asked von Dirksen

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<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 22 October 1937  
No. 503 p. 771.

<sup>17</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 28 October 1937  
No. 506 p. 773.

if he thought the Japanese government was sincere in its professed desire for negotiations and instructed him to tell the Japanese that Germany would not exert overt pressure on China:

Please tell the Japanese that in our opinion we have done everything possible since the outbreak of the conflict to exert a friendly influence on China, and we consider a more far-reaching pointed move premature. 18

The Chinese expressed a willingness to hear the Japanese terms and they were conveyed to von Dirksen.

The Japanese government forwarded its peace terms to China, stating that if China did not accept them, Japan would continue the war and exact harsher terms in China's complete defeat. The terms in brief were: 1. Inner Mongolia was to be autonomous, 2. Demilitarized zones were to be created in North China which would be under Chinese administration and headed by a pro-Japanese official, 3. The demilitarized zones around Shanghai were to be extended, 4. China was to cease her anti-Japanese activities by complying with certain Japanese requests, 5. She was to join the battle against Bolshevism, 6. China was to reduce import duties to a lower level, 7. The rights of foreign powers in China were to be respected. Von Dirksen judged the terms acceptable to China without a loss of face and advised that the German military personnel be utilized to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to agree to the terms. 19 Von Neurath instructed

18  
Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Dirksen 30 October 1937 No. 509 p. 775.

19  
Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 3 November 1937 No. 514 pp. 778-779.

Trautmann to convey the terms to the Chinese, adding that they: "seem acceptable to us as a basis for the opening of negotiations."<sup>20</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek read the terms and at once declared he could not accept them for China until Japan restored the status quo ante bellum in China. He realized that to negotiate on the Japanese proposals would mean a revolution in China with the Communists seizing power. Trautmann reported this to Berlin along with the rumor that the Chinese expected Anglo-American support in the mediation.<sup>21</sup>

The massive Chinese defeat around Shanghai in early November and the general rout toward Nanking prompted the German diplomats to redouble their efforts to secure peace through direct negotiations with Japan. Von Dirksen in Japan proposed that the German military advisors in China be used to influence Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>22</sup> General Falkenhausen, at the request of Trautmann, attempted to point out the disastrous consequences of a prolonged war to China but with no success.<sup>23</sup> Von Neurath pressed the Chinese ambassador in Berlin to agree to negotiate but with similar results.<sup>24</sup> There followed a temporary halt in

<sup>20</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 3 November 1937 No. 515 p. 779.

<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Trautmann to GFM 5 November 1937 No. 516 p. 781.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 8 November 1937 No. 520 p. 783.

<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Trautmann to GFM 9 November 1937 No. 521 p. 784.

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 1 December 1937 No. 527 p. 787.

the conversations between the three parties. German diplomatic efforts accomplished nothing, and the diplomats could only wait for the seemingly inevitable collapse of China and the end of Germany's position in that country.

By the end of November, 1937, even the Chinese could no longer delude themselves that an international conclave in Europe would rescue them from their plight or that the Chinese forces could halt the Japanese advance. These dilatory tactics were all too evident and, while German diplomats tried unsuccessfully to convince the Chinese of the necessity to give ground in the peace negotiations, the Japanese grew more impatient. Chiang Kai-shek agreed to negotiate with the Japanese on 3 December using the first proposals as the basis for the talks.<sup>25</sup> Germany was to act as mediator with the entire proceedings to be strictly secret. The Chinese also suggested that Hitler appeal publicly to both governments to conclude an armistice and cease hostilities.

In Tokyo, the Japanese General Staff, alarmed at the expansion of the area of military operations and the increase in war expenditures, now seemed impatient in its quest for peace. Von Dirksen inquired if Japanese demands remained unchanged from the first proposals, and the Japanese Foreign Office confirmed that there had been no change.<sup>26</sup> Japan hoped

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25

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Trautmann to GFM 3 December 1937  
No. 528 pp. 787-789.

26

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 3 December 1937  
No. 529 pp. 789-791.

that Hitler would persuade Chiang Kai-shek to initiate a peace offer to which the Japanese government would then respond. 27

When the armistice appeared near, the military situation in China outran the diplomatic negotiations. On 7 December, von Dirksen handed the qualified Chinese acceptance to the Japanese Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister expressed doubt if the original proposals still sufficed with the Japanese army ready to seize the Chinese capital at Nanking. Internal pressures in Japan stifled any attempts at moderation because the public and the young officer corps of the army, intoxicated by the series of new military successes, demanded adequate compensation for their sacrifices. <sup>28</sup> The army felt the pressure of the lower ranks--the radical wing of the army--for the imposition of severe terms and the army could only comply to these demands.

This decision by the Japanese government stunned the German Foreign Office, but von Neurath nevertheless decided that Germany should continue to offer her good offices. He did instruct von Dirksen to intimate to the Japanese that Germany could not go transmitting in good faith to China terms which Japan kept extending to a harsher level. The Japanese government forwarded the new terms to von Dirksen on 22 December, stating that in view of the rapid changes in the military situation, the following became necessary: 1. China must abandon her

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Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 3 December 1937  
No. 530 pp. 791-792.

28

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 7 December 1937  
No. 536 p. 799.

pro-Communist and anti-Japanese policies, 2. Demilitarized zones and special regimes were to be established in certain areas, 3. Agreements for close economic cooperation should be concluded between Japan, China and Manchukuo, and 4. Japan was to paid an indemnity.<sup>29</sup> Japan also demanded direct negotiations with no cessation of hostilities until the conclusion of peace. Japan insisted that China recognize Manchukuo and join the Anti-Comintern Pact to counter the recently concluded Sino-Russian Non-Aggression Pact. There were other stipulations for a demilitarized zone in the Yangtze Valley and a general tariff and trade agreement. Japan expected China's answer by the end of the year.

Von Dirksen protested the threatening tone of the harsh Japanese peace terms and considered it improbable that China would accept such conditions. When von Neurath received the proposals, he expressed serious doubts. He finally decided to forward the terms to China but warned Trautmann in China to refrain from expressing any opinion on the proposals.<sup>30</sup>

Ambassador Trautmann conveyed the Japanese terms to the Chinese government whose representative professed shock at such demands. The Chinese requested an elaboration of the main points and threatened to turn to Russia for aid. The German Foreign Office persuaded the Japanese to extend their

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29

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 23 December 1937  
No. 540 pp. 802-804.

30

Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 24 December 1937  
No. 542 p. 805.

time limit and urged the Japanese government to moderate its terms.<sup>31</sup> General Falkenhausen and Trautmann did their utmost to convince Chiang Kai-shek to accept the terms because of China's desperate position, but the latter felt the revised proposals to be impossible for his country.

The Japanese government submitted a third set of proposals of nine points clearly intended to wreck the negotiations. The new terms, an effort by the Japanese army to confuse the Chinese and to rupture the negotiations completely, were vague and indefinite. On 12 January, Trautmann, advised of new ominous developments on the Japanese General Staff, warned the Chinese government that the Japanese would wait no longer for a reply.<sup>32</sup> The Chinese Foreign Minister declared that the proposals of late December were too broad and that China wished to know the real content of the Japanese demands. Von Dirksen communicated this reply to the Japanese Foreign Office. He attempted to mollify the Japanese and suggested that if the negotiations were to end, world opinion would blame the Japanese government.

The Japanese regarded the Chinese answer as plain subterfuge and lacking in sincerity. The Japanese government decided to attempt no further contacts with the Chinese. Von Dirksen expressed his regret at this hasty decision and

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<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 24 December 1937  
No. 543 pp. 808-809.

<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Trautmann to GFM 12 January 1938  
No. 551 pp. 814-815.



warned that the continuation of the struggle would have unfavorable effects on the relations between Germany and Japan. The war with China would worsen Anglo-Japanese relations, which Germany considered undesirable, and it would encourage Communism in China. Moreover, the protraction of the war would weaken Japan in its ideological struggle with Russia.<sup>33</sup>

German mediation came to an end, and despite some half-hearted attempts by the Chinese, it could not be revived. The Japanese attitude in the government and in the army were of such a nature to discourage all further efforts. The German Foreign Office, especially ambassadors von Dirksen and Trautmann, struggled, under extenuating circumstances, to achieve peace but there never was a real chance. There was a lack of direction in the German government, typified by Hitler's pro-Japanese stand, which provided no basis of strength for the negotiations. Hitler's own foreign policy was at cross-purposes with the German Foreign Office. While recognizing Germany's considerable economic interests and political position in China, he refused to take any step which might jeopardize the alliance with Japan. Hitler moved to acknowledge Japanese hegemony in China and to terminate Germany's involvement in Asiatic affairs.

The German government acted quickly to facilitate the change in German foreign policy. Hitler's decision on China involved a change in the Foreign Office, based in part on a

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<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 17 January 1938 No. 558 p. 821.

report received from von Dirksen in Tokyo. The report recommended that Germany recognize Manchukuo, stop all deliveries of arms and munitions to China, and recall the German military personnel. Von Dirksen believed that China would drift into the Russian orbit and it would be better to withdraw the German advisors rather than have them collaborate with Russian personnel. This was necessary in order to avoid an estrangement in relations with Japan.<sup>34</sup> Hitler needed to bring the Foreign Office under his complete control with a change in the Foreign Ministry to one favorably disposed to his pro-Japanese attitude.<sup>35</sup> The one man who strongly espoused the appropriate position and whose chimerical outlook of world affairs pleased Hitler, was Ribbentrop. Hitler replaced von Neurath with his own lackey, Ribbentrop, on 4 February 1938. With the last vestiges of opposition removed, the way was now open for the full implementation of Nazi foreign policy.

Hitler decided to recognize Manchukuo as an independent state. He publicly announced this decision in the course of a speech before the Reichstag on 20 February when he justified the act as: "a sober respect for actual fact."<sup>36</sup> Hitler went on to state:

I cannot agree with those politicians who think they do Europe a service in harming Japan. I am afraid the defeat

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<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Dirksen to GFM 26 January 1938  
No. 564 pp. 826-831.

<sup>35</sup>

Hitler also acted in early 1938 to consolidate his power in the government by replacing von Blumberg in the War Ministry.

<sup>36</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 21 February 1938  
No. 570 pp. 839-840.

of Japan in Eastern Asia would never benefit Europe or America, but only Bolshevist Soviet Russia. I do not consider China strong enough, either spiritually or materially, to withstand from her own resources any attack by Bolshevism...Germany, in the defensive attitude she adopts toward Communism, will always regard and value Japan as an element of security, and a guaranty, moreover, for the culture of mankind. 37

Hitler left no doubt that while German neutrality would continue along with hopes for peace between China and Japan, he accepted the Japanese plea that they were fighting Communism in China, which hitherto the German Foreign Office refused to countenance. 38  
To emphasize the change in German foreign policy, Hitler recalled von Dirksen from Tokyo and replaced him with the military attaché, now Major General Ott--an unusual event in German diplomatic practice and full of portent.

The surrender of the German position in China now proceeded apace. Hitler and Ribbentrop were ready to sacrifice the goodwill of China and valuable commercial position of Germany in that country for the primacy of politics. Goering issued orders halting the export of all war material immediately, irrespective of the dates of conclusion on the delivery contracts. 39 He repeated the order in May because German deliveries somehow kept reaching the Far East. The cancellation of these contracts caused a considerable loss to the German armament firms. The recall of German personnel, initially

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DIA, 1938. Vol. II, pp. 8-9.

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DGFP, Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 21 February 1938 No. 570 p. 840.

39

Ibid., Series D vol. I, Memorandum 28 April 1938 No. 579 p. 856.

decided in April, but delayed by Chiang Kai-shek, was of special concern. Ribbentrop advised Trautmann to order General Falkenhausen to quit his military position. Falkenhausen replied that such a move would be of special concern, a breach of contract and the men under his command would not leave China. Trautmann supported this decision in an attempt to save the German position in China. But Ribbentrop did not relent and was adamant. In early May he promised that the advisors would be withdrawn and repeated his order that the advisors leave as soon as possible; the German government paying their return fares and compensating them for their loss of further salary.<sup>40</sup> The consequent wrangle between Ribbentrop and Trautmann led to the recall of the ambassador. On 28 June, when a delay occurred in the departure of the German advisors, Ribbentrop ordered Trautmann to hand over his office to the Charge' d'affaires and return to Germany.<sup>41</sup> This was the final blow in the self-destruction of Germany's influence in China. The Japanese war not only eliminated German commerce in China but forced Germany to relinquish her privileges in China to Japan. Germany's sacrifice received little recompense from Japan.

The considerable German business interests in China which flourished in the post-war era under favorable auspices

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Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 13 May 1938 No. 583 pp. 861-862.

41

Ibid., Series D vol. I, GFM to Trautmann 24 June 1938 No. 600 pp. 883-884.

faced ruin with the German retreat from China. Not only had the normal economic exchange been destroyed between Germany and China, but the extensive arms trade, at one time estimated to be from 50 to 80% of China's war resources, came to an abrupt end.<sup>42</sup> Ribbentrop attempted to negotiate with the Japanese government for compensation of the lost industries, war damage claims and a guarantee of equal opportunity for German businessmen in China. The Japanese government would only promise Germany commercial opportunities as good as third powers because it did not want to antagonize Great Britain or the United States by openly violating the principle of equality of opportunity. The two partners could not even agree on the form of a projected understanding for a commercial treaty and the conversations deadlocked. Ribbentrop's attempt failed to bring German businessmen any compensation for their losses in China. Japan charged her toll and Germany paid in full the price of the Anti-Comintern Pact and for Japan's friendship.

The German Foreign Office was well aware that Japan's ploy to eradicate Communism from China to justify the war would have the opposite effect in China. The Japanese army did not conquer China, Chiang Kai-shek refused to capitulate and Communism thrived under these conditions, proving to be the ultimate victor in the Sino-Japanese war. Japan lost her

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<sup>42</sup>

Toynbee, SIA, vol I, pp. 569-573.

calculated venture against China and unfortunately not only the stakes of her own empire but a substantial German interest as well. Japan, having seized a major portion of China in a surge of national expansion, would not share her gains with Germany. Japan had the unexampled superiority of possessing her strength in Asia while Germany, in the geographical circumstances of this situation, could not possibly hope to counter this through mediation. Germany, lacking other outposts in the Far East and dependent upon the goodwill of Great Britain for her connection to Asia, could not force a solution. Germany's earnest endeavors for peace had little chance for success because Japan's desires were sufficiently large to be prohibitive to negotiations. The German government tried to maintain a delicate balance between China and Japan in the Far East, trying to please both without offending either. The attempt failed and Hitler made his decision, sacrificing the valuable economic privileges in China to retain the political friendship of Japan.

This decision appeared to be a mistake but viewed from its own environment in Nazi foreign policy, there was substantial justification. Nazi ideology adulated power and despised mercenary gain. Germany's relations with China, though profitable, were devoid of a forceful quality. But Japan, in Hitler's mind, epitomized the very sinew of strength--the samurai warrior state. Hitler regarded Japan as a more valuable ally against Russia, Great Britain or the United States than China could ever hope to be. From this point of

view in world strategy, Hitler resolved the German dilemma in the Far East and opted for Japan. That German business interests suffered consequent disadvantages was unfortunate but Hitler calculated that to work with China, a weak nation, would restrict his freedom of action in foreign policy. Japan occupied a definite place in Hitler's world strategy and it was from this position that steps were taken to strengthen the bond between Germany and Japan with a definite military alliance between the two nations.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AXIS TRIANGLE 1937-1939

Germany in 1937 faced a new protagonist in Europe-- Great Britain. Hitler could not settle the question of Lebensraum in Eastern Europe through negotiations with Great Britain. The accession of Italy to the Anti-Comintern Pact presented a way in which to overcome this obstacle. The strategic value of Italy would be her threat to the British in the Mediterranean. Mussolini would act as Hitler's navy. The coalition assumed a new character with this challenge to Great Britain as well as the secret accords against Russia. Germany, Italy and Japan presented a formidable political block of nations against Great Britain and Russia but this was only so long as peace prevailed. The Anti-Comintern Pact did not have any basis for military action or assistance in case of aggression.

Hitler reasoned that Japan was in a similar situation in the Far East with the assistance that Great Britain and Russia gave to China. The two governments had a common goal in their foreign policies to strengthen the coalition against Russia, and now Great Britain, with the creation of a military alliance.

The Anti-Comintern Pact had been ostensibly directed against the Communist International but the secret protocols had provided that Germany and Japan would consult each other in the event of a threatened or actual attack by Russia. The



pact had committed each partner to nothing more than benevolent neutrality and fell short of containing definite military obligations. Germany, in the initial negotiations, had favored a military commitment but then had retracted her proposals to assure the completion of some form of agreement with Japan. In 1936, the Japanese General Staff, through its military attaché in Berlin, had offered the German government a military understanding but these proposals, repeated in 1937,<sup>1</sup> were considered premature and unfavorable by Hitler. A technical liaison for intelligence had been established between the German and the Japanese General Staffs in 1937, but it was limited to the Russian military situation. The occasion for a stronger alliance, a triple alliance including Italy, who had adhered to the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1937, was considered by both Ribbentrop and Hitler.

Ribbentrop, while ambassador to Great Britain in 1937, explained his views for a German military alliance with Italy and Japan in a memorandum to the German Foreign Office. He stated that a revision of Germany's position in Eastern Europe could only be achieved through the use of force, a policy which would inevitably clash with the French alliance system. A war with France would bring Great Britain into the conflict but Ribbentrop believed that the French would not fight if they understood that Great Britain would not support them. This situation could be realized by the superior forces of a

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<sup>1</sup>

F.C. Jones, Japan's New Order in East Asia 1937-1945 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 99, fn. 2.

coalition threatening the British Empire. If Great Britain could be "neutralized", France would cease to be a problem. Ribbentrop regarded Great Britain as Germany's primary enemy and considered a German-Italian-Japanese alliance the best possible method to check Great Britain in the Far East, in the Mediterranean and in Europe. This tripartite coalition would need a firm military foundation to permit no doubt about the intentions of the signatories.<sup>2</sup> These ideas soon directed Germany's foreign policy.

The Japanese General Staff principally sponsored the strategy for a military alliance between Germany and Japan. The Japanese objectives centered on the conclusion of the China war, prolonged by the support received from Great Britain and Russia. An alliance might reduce this aid and Japan could draw an advantage once again from the European political scene. But the Japanese army and the Japanese government could not agree on the precise content of an understanding. The government considered an alliance specifying Russia as sufficient to terminate the Chinese war but the army wanted to include the other world powers. The divisions between the army and the navy compounded the situation.

Ribbentrop initiated negotiations in January 1938, when he asked the military attache Oshima if the German-Japanese bond could not be strengthened with a military understanding. Oshima transmitted the proposals at once to the General Staff

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<sup>2</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. I, Ribbentrop to GFM 2 January 1938  
No. 93 pp. 162-168.

in Tokyo.<sup>3</sup> Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, but Japan did not reply. A report from the new Japanese ambassador to Berlin, Shigenori Togo,<sup>4</sup> to the Japanese Foreign Office explained the silence. He considered an alliance with Germany to be undesirable since her policy in Europe was leading toward war. This dissenting opinion created friction between the civilian and military officials in Tokyo, causing hesitation and delay.

The German government, with Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister, viewed the projected alliance with Japan as an ever more important facet of its foreign policy. Ribbentrop directed his efforts against Great Britain, who now seemed to provide the most opposition to Germany in Europe. The early enemy, Russia, crippled herself with the purge trials. Ribbentrop offered Italy a treaty of mutual assistance within the framework of a tripartite coalition but the Italians refused when they learned that Germany had no firm agreement with Japan. Ribbentrop was not too successful as yet with his grand coalition.

It took the Japanese army the entire spring of 1938 to realize that the war in China could not be ended by military means. The Japanese General Staff instructed Oshima to reopen discussions with Ribbentrop to negotiate a consultative pact against Russia. Ribbentrop replied that a consultative pact was weak and one-sided; instead, he proposed a mutual aid treaty

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<sup>3</sup> IMTFE, exhibit 497.

<sup>4</sup> Shigenori Togo, 1882-1950. Japanese statesman. A career diplomat, he served as ambassador to Germany in 1937 and as ambassador to Russia from 1938 to 1940. Under Tojo, he was Foreign Minister from 1941 to 1945. He was tried at Tokyo, sentenced and died in prison in 1950.

aimed not only at Russia but against all countries. Oshima doubted that his government would be willing to accept such commitments. The Japanese Foreign Office protested any military commitment to Hitler, who seemed prone to risk everything for his ambitions. But the clash with the Russian army at Changkufeng in China in July 1938 quelled the opposition. The Japanese army, fully aware of the Russian threat in China, would pay the price for an alliance with Germany against Russia, even if the price meant commitments against other world powers.

Ribbentrop submitted a draft of a treaty to the Japanese, consisting of three articles, the third of which stipulated military assistance in case one of the other signatories was attacked.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese government discussed the proposals during the first half of August and with great dispatch, extraordinary for the Japanese, gave their limited acceptance of the draft. The qualifications of the acceptance included the decision that all powers other than Russia would have to be regarded as strictly secondary and Japan's automatic participation in case of war could not be promised. Ribbentrop received this muddled acceptance from Oshima and labored under the impression that Japan agreed to his entire proposal. This mistake became the first cause for much subsequent confusion.

The Munich crisis reached its climax and Ribbentrop's attention became almost wholly occupied in European affairs. The crisis in Europe demonstrated how easily Japan might be

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DGFP, Series D vol. I, p. 896. Also see IMTFE, exhibits 497 and 776, p. 3508. Kido Diary 9-10 August 1938.

dragged into a conflict were she allied with Germany. The events in Europe caused a partial withdrawal from Japan's original position toward a military alliance and explained in part the later fruitless negotiations.

During the Munich crisis, Ribbentrop submitted a revised draft of the proposed tripartite pact to the Italian Foreign Minister. The third article of the proposed alliance now promised "aid and assistance" were one of the signatories to be attacked.<sup>6</sup> Ribbentrop believed that the time was right for an alliance. Hitler regarded war as likely in four or five years, with the western powers and Russia already in a coalition.<sup>7</sup> Munich demonstrated how weak the western powers were and it only increased the tendency toward isolation in the United States. Hitler concluded that Japan's participation in a tripartite agreement could only strengthen her position in the Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

Events in Japan reflected the confused situation in government circles on the question of a tripartite accord. The appointment of Oshima as ambassador to Germany appeared to be a favorable development, supporting those who sought the alliance. But the Japanese Foreign Office would not yield on its objections

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<sup>6</sup> Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers 1933-1939 edited by Malcolm Muggeridge (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1948), 30 September 1938. Also see DIA, 1939-1946 vol. I, pp. 145-146.

<sup>7</sup> DGFP, Series D vol. I, Memorandum 10 November 1937 No. 19 pp. 29-39.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. IV, Memorandum 28 October 1938 No. 400 pp. 515-517.

against a broad pact, aimed at both the western powers and Russia. This renewed hesitation, unknown to Ribbentrop, and the Japanese army's pressure for a full alliance caused the Japanese government to resign. The constant problem of the war in China complicated the negotiations and halted any further Japanese attempts to induce the Germans to soften the tone of the proposed tripartite pact.

The Axis triumphs in Czechoslovakia and Albania, coupled with the protracted Chinese war, led to a reevaluation of the Japanese position by the new Japanese government. The government now decided to accept in principle the terms of the proposed agreement but declared that for political and economic reasons, Japan would not be able to sign such an accord at the present time for various obligations.

Ribbentrop endeavored to convince the Italians to adhere to a tripartite pact. Late in 1938 Mussolini decided to accept the terms of the accord and Ribbentrop immediately prepared a draft for signature in early January 1939.<sup>9</sup> But when Ribbentrop pressed Oshima for a confirmation of Japan's acceptance of the draft, he learned that Japan was by no means ready to sign any proposal. The German plan, completely upset, had to accept the news in good terms in view of Japan's importance in the projected tripartite understanding.

Ribbentrop, still confident that an agreement could soon

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Ibid., Series D vol IV, Memorandum 28 October 1938 No. 400 p. 515. Also see, Ciano to Ribbentrop 2 January 1939 No. 421 pp. 543-545.

be reached, received the Japanese proposals in April 1939. The Japanese government wanted to limit the accord to a general military treaty against Russia alone. All other states were minor objectives and Japan would only participate in a war against them at her own discretion.<sup>10</sup> Ribbentrop, greatly disappointed, replied that if the Japanese could not accept in principle military obligations against other powers, he could not consent to their desire to give a different interpretation of the pact in various explanations to these powers. He supported an oral agreement after the public pact had been signed, which would practically absolve Japan from joining in active hostilities against any power except Russia. But Ribbentrop objected to any written agreement on this because if it became known to others, it would seriously weaken the value of the pact.<sup>11</sup>

The Japanese indecision exasperated the German government. Hitler did not want to conclude anything less than a general military treaty but Ribbentrop could not obtain this commitment. On 20 April Ribbentrop warned Oshima that should Japan continue to delay, Germany might be forced to seek a non-aggression pact with Russia.<sup>12</sup> Hitler made a bid for Japanese support on 28 April when he stated:

To create still closer relations between Germany, Italy and Japan is the constant aim of the German government. We regard the existence and maintenance of the freedom and independence of these three Great Powers as the strongest

<sup>10</sup>

IMTFE, exhibits 497, 776A; record pp. 3494, 3508.

<sup>11</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. VI, Ribbentrop to Ott 26 April 1939 No. 270 pp. 337-339. Also see IMTFE, record pp. 34006-07.

<sup>12</sup>

IMTFE, record p. 6079.

factor in the future making for the preservation of a true human culture, a practical civilization, and a just order in the world. 13

The Japanese Prime Minister responded to Hitler's message with a personal note on 4 May. He declared that Japan was honestly desirous of concluding a pact and sincere in her readiness to extend aid, including military assistance, to Germany, should she be assailed by third powers, and even if Russia were not among these. But in Japan's existing situation, she was not able to render effective military aid, at the moment or in the near future, although she would when circumstances would permit. The Prime Minister asked that Germany agree to a secret understanding to excuse Japan from her obligations of military assistance for the time being, and allow her to give an innocuous explanation when the pact was published. He added that to doubt Japan's sincerity would destroy the real basis for any agreement and make its future signature impossible.<sup>14</sup>

The Japanese note failed to convince Ribbentrop of Japan's good faith. He suspected that if Germany agreed to a secret written agreement of the kind that Japan wanted, the Japanese government would use the public pact to try to blackmail the major powers in the Pacific. If this proved unsuccessful, the government might then reveal the secret provisions of the pact to these powers as proof that Japan was

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Baynes, Speeches Vol. II, p. 1635.

14

DGFP, Series D vol. VI, Ott to GFM 4 May 1939 No. 326 pp. 420-422.



not irrevocably committed to a war against them if they became engaged in a war against the Axis, Germany and Italy, in Europe. Ribbentrop concluded a bilateral agreement, "the Pact of Steel", with Italy although he did not altogether abandon the idea of a tripartite agreement. But the conclusion of a separate German-Italian accord meant that Hitler's interest in the Japanese pact was not as strong as before.<sup>15</sup>

Ribbentrop sent new drafts of the latest revision of the proposed tripartite pact to Japan on 15 May.<sup>16</sup> The revised draft stressed the defensive nature of the agreement, giving Japan the right to state that it was directed primarily against Russia. But Japan could not give assurances that it would operate against that power alone, or that under no circumstances would Japan engage in hostilities against the western powers. These were substantial concessions by the German government. Ribbentrop instructed his ambassador in Tokyo to urge the Japanese government to accept, pointing out that the consolidation of Japan's position in Asia under the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" depended on the Axis being superior to their opponents. Japan could not allow these hostile powers to assume they could count on Japan's neutrality in the event of a war in Europe.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. VI, Ribbentrop to Ott 15 May 1939  
No. 382 pp. 494-496.

<sup>16</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. VI, Weizsaecker to Ott 15 May 1939  
No. 383 pp. 496-500.

<sup>17</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. VI, Ribbentrop to Ott 15 May 1939  
No. 382 pp. 494-496. Also see; IMTFE, record p. 6119.

Renewed fighting around Nomonhan in northern China between Russia and Japan in May 1939, and the new German proposals provoked a crisis in the Japanese government. The army wanted to sign an agreement immediately, but the navy vigorously opposed any commitment against the major powers, including the United States. The navy pleaded that Japan could not survive economically with the oceans dominated by the combined fleets of the major world powers. On 21 May the Japanese government issued a statement indicating that while Japan sympathized with Germany and Italy in desiring changes in the territorial status quo, Japan had to maintain her freedom of action.<sup>18</sup> The official signature of the "Pact of Steel" on 22 May spurred the Japanese government to make one more supreme effort to conclude a treaty with Germany.

The Japanese government formulated a compromise in a stormy meeting on 5 June. The proposal embodied practically all of the points of Ribbentrop's revised draft of May. Japan agreed not to inform the major powers about the nature of the agreement and also conceded to the German demand for at least pro-forma participation in case of an Anglo-German war. But the government instructed Oshima to inform Ribbentrop that Japan would be unable to render effective military aid for some time. The Japanese proposal had one reservation; while in case of war with Russia her entry would be automatic, in all other instances Japan wished to reserve her freedom of choice

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<sup>18</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. VI, Ott to GFM 23 May 1939 No. 427 pp. 426-428.

in declaring war until the appropriate moment. Ribbentrop, faced with a possible Anglo-Russian entente, rejected the Japanese offer, refusing to accept anything other than an oral declaration on Japanese entry into the war. The Ribbentrop-Oshima talks deadlocked and came to an end in mid-June.

Hitler decided to move against Poland and his first task was to isolate that country in Europe. His approach to Russia in May was a serious effort to avoid a two-front war. If Japan would not sign a military treaty, perhaps Russia would agree to mutual guarantees---there would be harm in trying both ways. On 23 May 1939 at a military conference, Hitler explained the German position with Japan:

Japan is a weighty problem. Even if at first for various reasons her collaboration with us appears to be somewhat cool and restricted, it is nevertheless in Japan's own interests to take the initiative in attacking Russia in good time. 20

Hitler wanted to take no chances. He would forestall the major powers without an alliance with Japan. Hitler ordered Ribbentrop to proceed with the negotiations for a German-Russian non-aggression pact. 21

The news of the non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia stunned Oshima and shocked the Japanese government. The government considered the signature an extremely dangerous,

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Ibid., Series D vol. VI, Memorandum 16 June 1939 No. 535 p. 734. Also, Ribbentrop to Ott 17 June 1939 No. 538 pp. 737-740. Also see; IMTFE, exhibit 614 record pp. 34011-12.

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Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), vol. VII, pp. 847-854. (Hereinafter cited as NCA).

21

Weizsaecker, Memoirs pp. 199-200.

treacherous act and a contravention of the Anti-Comintern Pact. The German-Russian agreement destroyed the whole basis of Japanese foreign policy in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Ribbentrop argued that Japan could not stand apart. If Great Britain and Russia, both of whom opposed Japan in China, defeated the Axis in Europe, Japan would be isolated. Japan would also face a hostile United States, who could be reckoned as a potential enemy. Ribbentrop instructed Ott to advise the Japanese government that Germany had no alternative owing to the critical situation in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Hitler did not feel any anxiety from the bitter Japanese reaction, indeed he appeared optimistic almost to the point of being megalomaniacal. Addressing his military leaders at Obersalzberg on 22 August, he exclaimed that: "since Autumn 1938, I have found out that Japan does not go with us without conditions...I have decided to go with Stalin."<sup>24</sup>

He went on:

We must take into account the defection of Japan. I have left to Japan a whole year's time to decide. The Emperor is the companion piece of the late Czars. Weak, cowardly, irresolute, he may fall before a revolution. My association with Japan was never popular. We will furthermore cause unrest in the Far East... Let us think of ourselves as masters and consider these people at best as lacquered half-monkeys, who need to feel the knout. 25

<sup>22</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. VII, Ott to GFM 25 August 1939 No. 262 pp. 277-278.

<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. VII, Memorandum 25 August 1939 No. 292 p. 300.

<sup>24</sup>

NCA Vol. VII, pp. 752-754.

<sup>25</sup>

Ibid.

Hitler's opinion of the Japanese was not high. He realized that without a firm military agreement, Japan would be of little use to Germany. Hitler expressed these thoughts to Mussolini three days later:

Japan would probably agree to an alliance against Russia, which would have only a secondary interest, under prevailing circumstances, for Germany, and in my opinion, for Italy also. She would not, however, undertake definite obligations against England, and this, from the standpoint not only of Germany, but also of Italy, was of decisive importance. 26

Political expediency forced Hitler to conclude his pact with Russia to insure the success of his war against Poland. Japan simply would not ally herself with the Axis and Hitler did not want a partner who would not strengthen his position in Europe. Thus ended the abortive negotiations of 1939 for a tripartite agreement.

The failure of the negotiations for a tripartite pact in 1939 was due in part to two illusions which dominated Hitler's world strategy. He made a mistake in his general diplomatic calculations. Hitler sought an alliance with Japan in order to "neutralize" Great Britain by posing a threat to her empire through a tripartite coalition. Faced with antagonists in Europe, the Mediterranean, and in the Far East, Great Britain would not fight and France, not daring to oppose Germany alone, would cease to be a problem. Russia, confronted with a hostile

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Nazi-Soviet Relations (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 25 August 1939 pp. 80-81. (Hereinafter cited as NSR). Also see; DGFP, Series D vol. VII, 25 August 1939 No. 266 p. 287.

Germany and Japan on either side, would be too isolated to offer any resistance. This international manipulation of world politics far exceeded the diplomatic ability of Hitler and certainly was beyond the grasp of Ribbentrop. Hitler's belief that he could accomplish this diplomatic coup was the first fallacy in his world strategy.

The second illusion was even more significant in Hitler's relations with Japan. Hitler simply did not comprehend the national objectives of Japan's foreign policy, which were not the same as his own. Hitler wanted the Japanese alliance to cause difficulties for the major powers in their colonial possessions in the Far East. But Japan hoped to settle the Chinese war by having Germany start a war in Europe, or at least create such unrest there that Great Britain, France and Russia would be unable to devote their attention to the Far East. This difference in national policies by each ally meant a different interpretation of a potential military understanding; Germany wanted a general inclusive alliance and Japan only a limited one. Japan realized that if she signed a general military alliance, Japan might have to carry the main burden of the war and face greater odds because of her economic dependence on the high seas. This conflict in foreign policy objectives was the ultimate reason for the absence of a German-Japanese coalition in 1939 and constituted the second fallacy in Hitler's world strategy.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRIPARTITE PACT 1939-1940

The conclusion of the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact shocked the Japanese government. Ribbentrop warned the Japanese diplomats that if they continued to delay and procrastinate over the terms of the proposed tripartite pact, Germany might be forced to turn to Russia for her own safety in Europe.<sup>1</sup> This warning in April and a similar one in June by Ribbentrop did not convince Japan that Germany was indeed serious in her intentions.<sup>2</sup> Oshima believed that Ribbentrop used these threats as a bluff to get the Japanese government to sign the agreement and Germany would not deliberately violate the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Japan found herself deserted, almost dismissed by Germany in favor of her worst enemy, Russia. Hitler's latest diplomatic deceit came at a critical time for the Japanese, fighting throughout the summer in a border war against the Russians. The Japanese government highly resented the German action because it appeared to give Russia a free hand in the Far East against Japan. The new German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact for all intents and purposes rendered the Anti-Comintern Pact a worthless scrap of paper. The German-Japanese entente

<sup>1</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. VIII, MacKensen to Weizsaecker 5 September 1939 No. 11 p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. VIII, Memorandum 4 September 1939 p. 9.

entered a new period of crisis and hostility.

The Reich State Secretary Weizsaecker told Oshima the news and then urged that Japan consider collaboration among the three powers. Such a move could help settle the Japanese differences with Russia, a point the German government never failed to stress thereafter.<sup>3</sup> Ribbentrop instructed Ott to explain the German position to the Japanese government in Tokyo. Ott endeavored to assuage Japanese feelings when he met with the Japanese Foreign Minister on 25 August. Ott explained the motives for the pact in regard to Germany's critical position in Europe at the moment. Germany had no alternative and the German-Russian agreement would be of benefit to Japan since it would enable the German government to use its influence for the improvement of Japanese-Russian relations.<sup>4</sup>

The beginning of war on 1 September initiated a new diplomatic effort by Ribbentrop to convince the Japanese government of the benefits of the new alliance with Russia. In German foreign policy, the treaty with Stalin was not a breach of trust, because the abortive alliances with Japan in 1936 was against Russia. Great Britain, not Russia, was now the enemy and the war only intensified this German attitude. Ribbentrop met with Oshima and argued that Japan's fate hinged on a German victory in Europe. If Germany was to lose, a coalition of the western powers and the United States would soon

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. VII, Memorandum No. 186 p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. VII, Ott to GFM 25 August 1939 No. 262 p. 277.



deprive Japan of her Far Eastern possessions. He proposed that Japan take advantage of the German detente with Russia and allow the German government to mediate to secure a Japanese-Russian rapprochement and a possible diplomatic accord. Such an agreement between Japan and Russia could end the frontier problems in China and allow Japan to extend her influence southward for further expansion against Great Britain.<sup>5</sup>

The new Japanese government, the last one having fallen on the news of the German-Russian pact in late August, received the proposals in not a wholly unfavorable atmosphere. Many extremists advocated a German-Russian-Japanese alliance with a rapid advance against British interests in the south. The Japanese army was not opposed to the plan but the forces against such an alliance did not forget Germany's conduct in August. Those opposed remained adamant in their opposition to an alliance and the removal of several pro-German officials in the new government strengthened this opposition. There would be no alliance at this time.

Japan, seemingly isolated after the German-Russian pact, found that the war in Europe gave her great freedom of action in the Far East. The Japanese government declared its neutrality--or non-involvement in the war as it preferred to call it--on 4 September. The government then proceeded to ask the belligerent powers to voluntarily withdraw their troops and ships from China in order to avoid incidents. The undeclared

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<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. VIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 9 September 1939 No. 40 pp. 36-38.

war between Japan and Russia on the Chinese border came to an abrupt halt. The Japanese army, unprepared to fight a long war with Russia and without German support, desired a quick truce. The Japanese ambassador to Russia, Togo, arranged the truce on 16 September without German diplomatic aid. Japan now appeared to be free to advance in Asia with her major antagonists involved in war in Europe, and with the Russian problem temporarily settled in the north.

Hitler and Ribbentrop received General Juichi Terauchi<sup>6</sup> of the Japanese General Staff in November 1939, and attempted to reconcile the recent hostility between the two nations. Both men pointed out that no divergence of political interests existed between Berlin and Tokyo and that any division would only aid their mutual enemies. Ribbentrop said that Germany signed the accord with Russia alone but that he talked with Stalin about the question of a Russian-Japanese agreement, and Stalin declared: "if the Japanese desire war, they can have war, if they desire an understanding, they can have that too."<sup>7</sup> General Terauchi agreed with the German position and Ribbentrop promised to work for such an accord between the three nations.

Ribbentrop did press for a Russo-Japanese agreement in Moscow after the victory in Poland but the Japanese ambassador Togo, wary of the Germans, refused to give his support to

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Juichi Terauchi, 1879-1946. Japanese army officer. He commanded an army in China in 1937 and then led invasion forces in 1941. He was condemned to death for war crimes in 1946.

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DGFP, Series D vol. VIII, Memorandum 25 September 1939  
No. 182 p. 131.

the scheme.<sup>8</sup> Hitler reassured Oshima that Germany had no interest in territorial acquisitions in Asia and that each nation had separate, distinct interests. He did not want Japan to enter the war and wished only that she recognize Great Britain as the common enemy.<sup>9</sup> Ribbentrop repeated this statement in a discussion with the new Japanese ambassador to Berlin.<sup>10</sup> These diplomatic maneuvers reflected the course of the war late in 1939 and the knowledge that Great Britain did not intend to allow Germany to have Eastern Europe. This meant a long war and Germany wanted to secure her friendship with Japan as a part of German world strategy.

Hitler's sudden change in foreign policy with the German-Russian pact caused much consternation and profound indignation in Tokyo. Japan appeared utterly isolated and under ordinary circumstances this might have ended the German-Japanese relationship. But Hitler and Ribbentrop believed that Japan's animosity would be of short duration and that she would soon follow Germany's lead.<sup>11</sup> This conclusion was correct

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8

Ibid., Series D vol. VIII, Schulenburg to Weizsaecker 16 September 1939 No. 79 p. 77.

9

Ibid., Series D vol. VIII, Memorandum 24 October 1939 No. 292 pp. 333-334.

10

Ibid., Series D vol. VIII, Memorandum 12 December 1939 No. 448 pp. 524-526.

11

Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 33.

for several reasons, all of which contributed to make the diplomatic crisis between the two nations only a small interlude.

Japan's own aggressive intentions drove her back to the Axis camp. The war in Europe and the subsequent political upheavals opened the rich European colonies for conquest. The truce with Russia ended the border war in the north and Japan could now conduct a more aggressive policy in the Far East, taking advantage of the international situation created by Germany. The diplomatic crisis quickly passed with these advantages available. Ribbentrop now only would have to wait for the events in Europe to induce Japan to seek a military alliance with Germany to assure her share of the German victories. The end of the "Phoney War" and the collapse of France led to the climax in Germany's diplomatic relations with Japan.

The conquest of Norway and the cataclysmic events in May 1940, with the invasion of the low countries and France caused a resurgence of Germany's more familiar line of foreign policy. In 1938 Ribbentrop expounded the idea of posing a triple threat to the British Empire to "neutralize" Great Britain and isolate France. The plan did not succeed in 1938-1939 but in 1940 such an idea acquired a new look. Hitler repeatedly stated that Great Britain's failure to capitulate was attributable only to the hope that the United States would enter the war on her side. Obviously the United States needed to be "neutralized" to prevent her from supplying Great Britain

to any extent and to force the English to surrender. This desired situation could best be achieved with a German-Japanese military agreement which would pose a threat to the United States in the Pacific as well as in the Atlantic. This idea quickly matured in German diplomacy through the summer of 1940<sup>12</sup> when United States support assumed unexpected proportions.

Japan viewed the German domination of Europe and considered it the right time for closer relations with the Axis through a military alliance. A new Japanese government, headed by Prince Fumimaro Konoye<sup>13</sup> and the pro-German Foreign Minister Yasuki Matsuoka,<sup>14</sup> believed the situation highly favorable for the construction of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" in Asia. Japan did not want to lose the Dutch East Indies or the extensive British possessions and suspected that the German government might develop aspirations for its own colonial empire. The Japanese navy feared the British fleet, but since the United States still appeared unwilling to emerge from her isolation, it was clear in Tokyo that Japan could waste no time in placing her claims for territories in Asia. The Japanese government formulated a policy to facilitate these actions,

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<sup>12</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. X, Berghof Conference 31 July 1940 pp. 370-374.

<sup>13</sup>

Fumimaro Konoye, 1891-1945. Japanese statesman. He had a long career in the Japanese government, serving as Premier in 1937 and in 1940; later a peace envoy and then committed suicide.

<sup>14</sup>

Yosuki Matsuoka, 1880-1946. Japanese diplomat. He attended the University of Oregon law school and made a career in the foreign service. He served as Foreign Minister and ousted in 1941 because of his pro-German attitude. He was indicted for war crimes but died before his trial in June 1946.

hoping that because of Japan's geographical isolation, it could maintain an independent course in foreign affairs and profit from the German victories in Europe.

Germany had no war obligations to Japan and remembered with rancour her previous hesitation over a proposed military alliance. Hitler, inflated by his victories in the summer, and believing peace to be near with Great Britain, did not wish to undertake any diplomatic step which might antagonize Great Britain and force her to continue the war.

The diplomatic exchanges between the two countries, slowed by the war in early 1940, now increased because of the new developments in Europe and in Japan. Ambassador Ott reported that Japan asked about the German position on French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies. Ott replied that Germany had no interest in these areas as long as Japan would pledge to keep the United States occupied in the Pacific, possibly by an attack on the Philippines or Hawaii if the United States decided to join Great Britain in the war against the Axis.<sup>15</sup>

Ribbentrop met with a special Japanese envoy to discuss their foreign policies. The Japanese government, striving for a new order in Asia, had to stay on good terms with Russia and to protect herself from the United States fleet in the Pacific. Ribbentrop countered with the statement that Japan seemed disinterested in European affairs and hinted that the Japanese government should present a more concrete approach

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<sup>15</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. X, Ott to GFM 24 June 1940 No. 6  
pp. 5-6.

16  
 if it expected to reach some accord with Germany. Hitler's peace offer to Great Britain in his speech on 19 July 1940 and its rejection dispelled any hopes of a short war. The German government, disregarding the past diplomatic failures, renewed its efforts for a military alliance with Japan. Germany faced the prospect of a long war and one in which United States intervention could not be ruled out in Europe. The first signs of a rift in the German-Russian partnership appeared and Hitler already spoke of an attack against Russia. 17  
 The German government believed it necessary to secure Japan to the Axis alliance and if necessary, make concessions to achieve this adherence.

State Secretary Weizsaecker met the Japanese ambassador, who talked of a possible alliance and Japan's new order in the Far East. Japan would not exclude European states, provided they recognized Japan's leadership in the Far East and restricted their activities to commercial matters. 18  
 The German government hesitated through the month of August, waiting to evaluate the outcome of the air war over Great Britain. The reluctance on the part of Germany to act decisively reflected the strain of the invasion preparations and Hitler's uncertain territorial ambitions with the conquered colonial empires of the French

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Ibid., Series D vol. X, Memorandum 9 July 1940 No. 137 pp. 162-167.

17

NCA Vol. VII, p. 926. Also see; Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union (London: Leiden Brill, 1959), p. 109.

18

DGFP, Series D vol. X, Memorandum 1 August 1940 No. 271 pp. 391-392. Also see; Memorandum 7 August 1940 No. 304 pp. 432-433.

Republic and the Netherlands.

Ribbentrop dispatched his confidential agent, Heinrich  
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Stahmer, as Minister Plenipotentiary to Japan at the end of August with instructions concerning a military alliance. Ribbentrop instructed his emissary to ascertain the actual intentions of the Japanese government toward Germany and, if favorable, to open negotiations in conjunction with Ott should Japan show any inclination to conclude an agreement. Stahmer was to report every detail of all conversations to Ribbentrop for approval and advice. The German special envoy arrived in Tokyo on 7 September to conduct the negotiations.

Japan had good reason to desire an alliance with Germany. Hitler's uncertain attitude toward the Far East upset the Japanese plans for a new order in Asia. This reluctance indicated that Germany might have her own plans in the Far East, something Japan could not tolerate in view of her own economic needs. This uncooperative attitude worried the Japanese government but it was the policy of the United States, more than anything else, that led to an alliance with Germany. The agreement between the United States and Canada at Ogdensburg to coordinate their national defense in August stressed the solidarity of the Western Hemisphere. The announcement from London of the projected lease of British bases to the United States in exchange for fifty destroyers made a profound impression upon the Japanese government. It feared that the

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Heinrich Stahmer, German diplomat. Stahmer was one of Ribbentrop's special people and had been to Japan previously on other diplomatic matters in 1938.



United States fleet might move to Singapore or Hong Kong, bolstering Great Britain's determination to continue the war.

The Japanese government acted immediately to formulate terms for an accord when they received the news that Ribbentrop's special envoy would be in Tokyo. The quickly concluded document was a fundamental agreement announcing that the three parties, Germany, Italy and Japan, would cooperate in establishing their respective spheres of influence in Europe and in Asia. The Axis powers would invite Russia to join and all four nations work together to prevent the United States from acting outside her own hemisphere. Japan would assist her allies with all means short of war but would reserve the right to enter into a war against Great Britain or the United States until the proper moment.<sup>20</sup> Japan had three motives in these terms: she hoped to render Russia and the United States inactive with a tripartite alliance, secondly she expected to end the material support to China and finally, by eliminating the Chinese war and neutralizing Russia and the United States, Japan could move south to conquer those areas left by the defeated colonial powers.

The United States grant of fifty destroyers to Great Britain caused consternation in Berlin. Hitler realized that Great Britain was not likely to surrender under these circumstances. The agreement between the two nations contained a provision for the future possibility of leases to the United States in the Mediterranean or at strategic points close to

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INTFE Exhibit 541, record pp. 8318-19.

Europe. This implied the threat of direct intervention which Hitler wished to avoid at all costs. In order to forestall the United States from intervention in Europe, Hitler directed Ribbentrop to conclude an alliance with Japan. Such an agreement would surround the United States on two sides and might prevent her from giving material support to Great Britain. <sup>21</sup>

Under these orders, Stahmer and Ott met with the Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka to negotiate the terms of an alliance. Stahmer explained Germany's position. Germany did not want the European conflict to develop into a world war but desired to terminate it as soon as possible. Germany in particular wished to avoid United States participation, which Ribbentrop considered unlikely, but not impossible. Ribbentrop felt that it was more likely that the United States would act against Japan. Therefore an agreement between Germany and Japan would be mutually advantageous in deterring the United States from intervention in Europe or in the Far East. Germany at this time did not seek military assistance from Japan against Great Britain but only wanted Japan to help restrain the United States. The German government acknowledged Japanese hegemony in the Far East and asked only for economic privileges and assistance in securing strategic raw materials. <sup>22</sup> Germany requested Japan to assume a strong, determined position toward

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<sup>21</sup>

William Langer and S. Gleason, The Undeclared War 1940-1941 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), pp. 24-25. (Herein-after cited as Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War).

<sup>22</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XI, Ott to GFM 10 September 1940 No. 44 pp. 57-58.

the United States in the hope that such a display would tend to restrain the latter's policies and material support.

Ott, Stahmer and Matsuoka conducted the negotiations for a draft treaty in the strictest secrecy. The three diplomats finished their work on 11 September and Ott wired Ribbentrop that the two parties had agreed on a draft but that there were still some questions the Japanese government desired to have clarified in secret protocols.<sup>23</sup> The major difference of opinion arose over the wording of what became article three, in which the contracting powers defined their obligations in the event of an outside attack. The original Japanese draft was vague and non-committal. Stahmer submitted a more precise counterdraft providing that if a party to the pact was attacked by a power not involved in the European war or in the Sino-Japanese conflict, the other members would resist with all possible political, economic and military means. Ribbentrop also wanted the military obligations of article three to operate when one of the three powers concerned was "either openly or in concealed form" attacked by a power not involved in either war. This stipulation would be directed against United States military assistance to Great Britain.

Matsuoka strongly objected to this clause and successfully deleted the passage. The draft treaty went to a special meeting of the Japanese cabinet on 16 September and Ribbentrop left for Rome on 19 September to inform Italy. Ribbentrop made one more attempt to broaden the Japanese

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<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XI, GFM to Rome 20 September 1940 No. 77 p. 132.

obligations under article three with a new revision on 21 September. This draft read that if a power not involved in the European war or in the Far Eastern conflict "committed acts of aggression" against one of the contracting powers, Germany, Italy and Japan would "undertake to declare war on such a power and to assist one another with all political, economic and military means".<sup>24</sup> Ribbentrop declared that this declaration would effectively deter the United States from entering the war if the pact stated in clear and impressive terms that the United States would be automatically at war. But the Japanese navy strongly opposed this definite commitment to declare war and the Germans reluctantly gave way.

The negotiators agreed on the text of the Tripartite Pact and its secret accords on 23 September and transmitted the pact to Berlin and Rome.<sup>25</sup> Ribbentrop insisted that the pact be signed in Berlin, much to Matsuoka's displeasure. Ribbentrop in turn agreed to the English translations of the text to facilitate matters for the Japanese Privy Council and not delay ratification to compare separate language texts for discrepancies. All parties approved the text of the draft treaty and signed the Tripartite Pact in Berlin on 27 September 1940.

The Tripartite Pact itself consisted of a preamble and six articles. The three parties, in defense of their new orders and in the quest of peace, recognized in articles one

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<sup>24</sup>

IMTFE record pp. 6398-6400, 27987-28007.

<sup>25</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XI, Ribbentrop to Rome 24 September 1940 No. 95 p. 164.

and two their respective spheres of interest in Europe and in the Far East. Article three, the military basis of the treaty, stated:

Germany, Italy and Japan agree to cooperate in their efforts on aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means if one of the three Contracting Powers is attacked by a Power at present not involved in the European war or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict. 26

To implement the pact, the respective governments would appoint joint commissions. The three powers also stipulated in article five that the pact affected in no way the existing political status between the signatories and Russia. The Tripartite Pact would remain in force for ten years. 27

Certain additional provisions, embodied in an exchange of letters between the Japanese Foreign Minister and Ott, contained the secret accords to the public agreement. These represented the German concessions for the alliance with Japan. Germany agreed that the question whether one of the parties to the treaty had or had not been attacked would be decided by consultation among the three parties to the treaty and Japan would be free to choose her own time to enter the war. Germany would render full military and economic assistance to Japan in event of an attack while in the meantime, Germany would give Japan all possible technical and material aid to prepare for any military emergency. In the event of war between Japan

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Ibid., Series D vol. XI, Text of Tripartite Pact 27 September 1940 No. 118 p. 204. See Appendix B for complete text.

27

Ibid.

and Great Britain, Germany would afford all possible assistance. Japan would keep the former German possessions in the Pacific. Other ex-German colonies now held by Japan would be returned upon the conclusion of the European war, but Germany would agree to sell such territories back to Japan. Finally, Germany<sup>28</sup> promised to work for a detente between Japan and Russia.

The reaction to the Tripartite Pact in Japan accentuated the divisions in the Japanese government. Foreign Minister Matsuoka declared that the agreement would help to accomplish the objectives of Japanese foreign policy in China and in Asia. An official spokesman for the Japanese government stated that the treaty was not directed against any specific power, and should be viewed as a mutual aid pact rather than a military alliance.<sup>29</sup> Others in official circles regarded the signature of the pact as a tremendous gamble on the part of the Japanese government that Germany would defeat Great Britain. There was a notable lack of enthusiasm in the press for the treaty, signifying a large measure of public disapproval.

Ribbentrop's speech at the signature of the treaty in Berlin was the official belligerent attitude of the German government. The Foreign Minister stated:

The pact now signed is a military alliance between three of the most powerful states on earth. Above all it proposes to bring peace to the world as soon as possible...any State which might harbor the intention of interfering in the final phase of the solution of these problems in Europe or in

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IMTFE record pp. 6398-6402.

29

Documents on American Foreign Relations 1940-1941 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), pp. 279-280. (Herein-after cited as DAFR).

Eastern Asia, on attacking any signatory of the three power pact, will have to reckon with the entire massed energy of the three nations embracing 250 million people. This means that the Pact will, in any event serve the restoration of peace. 30

The German press called the new alliance a serious defeat for British diplomacy and the end to all hope for intervention of any third parties. Hitler also voiced his pleasure about Japan's collaboration with the Axis. The Tripartite Pact was to be the high point in Germany's diplomatic relations with Japan.

The reaction of the other world powers was not great. Most felt that this coalition had been in the process of formation for a long time and was the logical outcome of Japanese foreign policy since 1931.<sup>31</sup> The addition of one more alliance to the cauldron of war for half the world did not seem that important.

One condition of the secret accords to the Tripartite Pact was Germany's promise to mediate the differences between the Japanese and Russia. Certainly one important inducement to the Japanese government to conclude the agreement with Germany was its expectation that the agreement would improve Japan's relations with Russia. Ribbentrop described the pact as the logical result of Germany's foreign policy to promote friendly relations between Russia and Japan. A reconciliation

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Ibid., pp. 305-307.

31

Frank Ikle, German-Japanese Relations 1936-1940 (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956), pp. 316-317.

between Russia and Japan would allow all four powers to act in concert to define their spheres of influence.<sup>32</sup> Ribbentrop invited Vyacheslov Molotov,<sup>33</sup> the Russian Foreign Minister, to Berlin to discuss those issues concerning Russia, Japan and Germany. Molotov arrived for a two-day visit in Berlin on 12 November 1940.

Ribbentrop expressed the German desire for an agreement among the Axis, Russia and Japan designating their respective spheres of interest for the four powers. Germany possessed only a commercial interest in the Far East with the Tripartite Pact meant to regulate only European conditions. Germany wanted to conclude an agreement with Russia dividing Europe, with Russia doing the same with Japan in the Far East. The four powers then could decide on a suitable partition of the British Empire.

Molotov countered with a demand that German-Russian cooperation would have to be settled first. The Russian government would agree to a four-power pact if Japan would renounce her concessions on the island of Sakhalin. Hitler promised a great coalition from Gibraltar to Vladivostok if Russia would join with the Axis and Japan for harmony in the Far East.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>

NSR, pp. 207-213. passim.

<sup>33</sup>

Vyacheslov Molotov, 1890-. Russian statesman. He was a strong supporter of Stalin and served as Foreign Minister from 1939 to 1949. He lost his standing under Khrushchev in 1957 and then served as ambassador to Outer Mongolia, a choice assignment.

<sup>34</sup>

NSR, pp. 234-247. passim.



Ribbentrop made one more attempt to convince Molotov of the necessity to cooperate and to define the outlines for the great partition of the Eastern Hemisphere. He produced a draft of a treaty with the signatories of the Tripartite Pact on one hand and Russia on the other, agreeing to prevent the extension of the war, to respect their separate "natural spheres of interest" and to join no combination against each other. Ribbentrop told Molotov that Japan wanted a non-aggression pact with Russia and would be quite generous, recognizing Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang as being in the Russian sphere of influence. Molotov replied that negotiations with Japan would be difficult and laboriously complex.

The Molotov visit to Berlin was a climactic moment in German-Russian relations and its failure ruined any expectations of the Japanese government for a negotiated settlement through the Tripartite Pact. The negotiations resulted in no agreement among the four powers and for Japan, it did nothing to solve the China war. Japan experienced her first disillusionment with the Tripartite Pact and, along with the refusal of Great Britain to surrender, it meant a sharp setback for the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere". German mediation did not produce a detente with Russia and henceforth, Japan would return to direct negotiations with the Russian government. Hitler, angered by Molotov's hostile attitude, concluded that there was but one solution to the problem. On 18 December 1940 Hitler signed War Directive No. 21 OPERATION BARBAROSSA for

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Ibid., pp. 247-254. passim.

the invasion of Russia in the spring of 1941.

The Tripartite Pact was a political treaty for the authoritarian new order of the Axis. It supported a policy of worldwide intimidation directed against the United States and Russia and a proposed division of the disintegrating British Empire. In September 1940 a military alliance made little sense to a victorious Germany but she feared the persistent support of the United States to Great Britain. Germany signed the treaty in the hope that the addition of Japan to the Axis alliance would force the British to negotiate for peace and isolate the United States from intervention.

Germany and Japan were reborn soldier states opposed to the effete western powers. Their totalitarian governments represented the embodiment of a new international political order for world domination. The Tripartite Pact promoted this political system for the mutual advantage of Germany and Japan.

The policy of worldwide intimidation focused on the danger of the United States. Germany gained an ally in the Pacific to force the United States to divide her forces and to weaken her support to Great Britain. Japan hoped that German mediation could secure Russian neutrality so that she might conquer the rich colonial possessions in Southeast Asia.

The division of the British Empire would help Germany weaken the resistance of Great Britain in Europe if Japan would sever the vital outposts in the Far East from the home

islands. Germany stood to gain immensely if Japan seized the major military possessions in Asia. Such actions by the Japanese government would shift United States interest to the Pacific.

The Tripartite Pact was the climax in Germany's diplomatic relations with Japan. The pact was a political accord and could not be used for military purposes because of the geographical separation between Germany and Japan. Distance made their collaboration impossible as did the differences in their foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, the pact did represent a serious political menace and a veiled military threat to the United States with the distinct possibility of a two-front war. But the alliance increased the importance of the United States without intending to do so. Germany wanted to gain time to defeat Great Britain before the United States entered the war. But Hitler made the fatal decision to invade Russia. This decision, unknown to the Japanese government, made the Tripartite Pact in actual practice an unworkable military alliance whose political value deteriorated as the war expanded into a global conflict in June 1941.

## CHAPTER VI

### WAR 1940-JUNE 1941

The failure of the German-Russian conferences in November 1940 placed Germany and Japan at opposite ends in their relations with Russia in 1941. The Japanese government believed that Germany would be able to improve Russo-Japanese relations but when the German-Russian entente began to deteriorate, it refused to face reality. Germany prepared for a massive attack against Russia in the spring and Hitler did not feel that it was necessary to inform his ally of the invasion.

Germany wanted Japan to take the initiative in the Pacific and seize the British stronghold of Singapore. Hitler hoped to defeat Great Britain by indirect means through an attack on Singapore. This move would be extremely advantageous because it would mean one more setback for the tottering British nation and remove a major obstacle to Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere".

The German motives for a Japanese attack on Singapore were consonant with the spirit of the recently signed Tripartite Pact. In a naval intelligence estimate in January 1941 the chief of Naval Operations expressed the view:

It must and can be assumed that if America's entry into the war is provoked by steps taken by Japan, the United States will not commit the main part of her fleet in the European theatre... it is in our interest to encourage the Japanese to take any initiative she considers within her power in the Far Eastern area, as this would be most likely to keep

American forces from the European theatre in addition to weakening and tying down British forces.

We can accept the risk that such action by Japan might bring about America's entry into the war on the side of Britain, since, so far as naval warfare is concerned, the total advantages outweigh the total disadvantages.<sup>1</sup>

This apparent willingness to risk war with the United States was contingent on the Japanese government seizing Singapore and threatening the United States.

Hitler and Ribbentrop labored under the illusion that they could influence the Japanese government in its foreign policy with the provisions of the Tripartite Pact. Germany did not possess the means to force the Japanese government to do anything against its will and to depend upon Ribbentrop's diplomatic skill was a dubious thing indeed. Japan shrewdly sought to profit from Germany's military efforts, to maintain her freedom of action and to decide for herself when and where to go to war. Japan played a waiting game, promising action but setting no date and so leaving open her policy. These traits of Japanese diplomacy confused the German government and did not further Germany's foreign policy in 1941.

Ribbentrop met with the new Japanese ambassador General Oshima at Fuschl on 23 February 1941 in an attempt to persuade Japan to capture Singapore. Germany had no further military tasks on the continent because the Axis partners were victorious; all that remained was to convince the British government to recognize the fact. The main problem for the members of the

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<sup>1</sup> Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Matters (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 8-9 January 1941. (Hereinafter cited as FCNM).

Tripartite Pact was an extension of the alliance's usefulness. Hitler wished to bring the war to a close as soon as possible. Japan could play a decisive role if she would act at once to annihilate Great Britain's key position in the Far East: Singapore. Ribbentrop stated:

Japan in its own interest would be right to enter the war as soon as possible. The decisive blow would be an attack on Singapore...it must be carried out with lightning speed and if at all possible without a declaration of war.... 2

Ribbentrop summarized the reasons for quick action: 1. A surprise move against Singapore meant a decisive blow against the core of British imperialism; 2. The suddenness of the operation would help keep the United States out of the war since she lacked armaments to take such a risk; and 3. It was in Japan's own interest to secure her new order in the Far East before a peace settlement had been agreed on.

Oshima replied that he favored such an attack on Singapore but said such an operation would be difficult. It would require seizure of the Malay peninsula and Japan needed time to prepare.<sup>3</sup> The conference ended on this pessimistic note. Ribbentrop continued to pursue the matter with a strong note to Ott in Tokyo, urging him to use all means to induce Japan to seize Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler, in the middle of his preparations for the

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<sup>2</sup>  
DGFP, Series D vol. XI, Memorandum 23 February 1941 No. 78 pp. 139-151. passim.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XI, Ribbentrop to Ott 27 February 1941 No. 100 p. 183.

invasion of Russia, issued War Directive No. 24 Regarding Cooperation with Japan on 5 March to explain his position on Japan. He stated in the directive:

It must be the aim of the collaboration based on the Three Power Pact to induce Japan as soon as possible to take active measures in the Far East... The Barbarossa Operation will create most favorable and military prerequisites for this. The seizure of Singapore as the key British possession in the Far East would mean a decisive success for the conduct of the war of the three Powers... The Japanese must not be given any intimation of the Barbarossa Operation. 5

Hitler evidently thought that the Japanese might betray the plan to Moscow as a means to obtain a non-aggression pact with Russia. Hitler's order was part of his political strategy with Japan against the United States. This decision not to inform the Japanese government was to have serious consequences for Germany at a later date and an adverse effect in Japan.

Hitler evinced a general desire to keep the United States out of the war in Europe. He sought to prevent diplomatic incidents in the Atlantic and to refuse any challenge which might lead to United States intervention. Hitler hoped to divert the United States to the Pacific by encouraging Japan to act boldly in that ocean. Germany did not want Japan to enter into actual conflict with the United States because such a war would soon spread to the Atlantic. But a move against Singapore would oblige the United States to focus her attention in the Pacific. Hitler shrewdly calculated that the United States would have to take the initiative to declare war--a difficult

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Ibid., Series D vol. XI, Directive No. 24 5 March 1941  
No. 125 pp. 219-220.

step for a democracy. Hitler's political strategy worked for a time to Germany's benefit but its eventual failure was due to Hitler's inability to influence Japan.

The disappointing results of the Tripartite Pact and the failure of Molotov's visit to Berlin prompted Foreign Minister Matsuoka to consider a personal trip to Europe. He received a formal invitation from Berlin and decided to come early in 1941. Matsuoka's journey to Europe with visits in Moscow and Berlin had a dual purpose. Matsuoka wanted to learn Germany's plans against Great Britain and if relations with Russia were still good. While in Moscow, Matsuoka hoped to negotiate a non-aggression pact with Russia and to attempt to settle the Chinese war. In each case Matsuoka was to make no military commitments to either nation with respect to participation in the European war.

Ribbentrop prepared extensively for this important visit to Berlin. He would be able for the first time to speak directly to Matsuoka in an attempt to persuade him to have Japan attack Singapore. It also gave Ribbentrop the opportunity to forewarn the Japanese that all was not well between Germany and Russia and that Japan should move quickly in the south to take advantage of the forthcoming opportunities in the north. Ott wired Ribbentrop before the first scheduled conference about the possibilities for a Japanese attack on Singapore. He concluded that the Japanese were preparing such a venture but that the attack hinged upon Japan's freedom of action



without fear from Russia.<sup>6</sup> Weizsaecker prepared a memorandum on topics for discussion in Matsuoka's forthcoming conferences with Ribbentrop. He concluded that the Japanese government should be informed of the impending attack on Russia so as to save it much embarrassment and not weaken the bonds of friendship between Germany and Japan.<sup>7</sup>

Matsuoka arrived in Berlin on 26 March with great ceremony and spent the next week in a series of high-level conferences with the leaders of Germany. Hitler, in the midst of the Yugoslavian crisis, considered the visit important enough to have two personal discussions with Matsuoka.

Ribbentrop's first meeting with Matsuoka on 27 March was a tedious review of the military situation in Europe and the future value of the Tripartite Pact. Relations with Russia at the moment 'were correct...but not very friendly'. Germany would not pay Russia's price for adherence to the Tripartite Pact and her activities in the Balkans were totally unacceptable. If Russia assumed a position that threatened Germany, Hitler would crush her completely.

The principle enemy now was not Great Britain. The United States must be prevented from taking an active part in the war and from rendering effective aid to Great Britain. Ribbentrop stated that Hitler believed that Japan should decide as soon as possible to take positive action against

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<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 25 March 1941 No. 209 pp. 361-362.

<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 24 March 1941 No. 200 pp. 348-349.

Great Britain. A sudden attack on Singapore would be a decisive factor to help defeat Great Britain and the speed of the operation should keep the United States out of the war because that country could scarcely risk sending its fleet into Japanese waters in the Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

Hitler met the same day with Matsuoka to reiterate the German position in Europe and the unique opportunities in the Far East for Japan to satisfy her colonial aspirations. The capture of Singapore would be a major step toward the establishment of Japan's new order in Asia.<sup>9</sup> Ribbentrop repeated Hitler's conversation the next day. He stated that: "Germany ...had everything she needed...in Europe" but Japan would have to seize Singapore in order to establish her dominance. On Russia, Ribbentrop stated:

...that a closer collaboration with Russia was an absolute impossibility since the ideological bases of the army as well as the rest of the nation were completely incompatible. 10

This was the first definite hint of the impending invasion and Matsuoka registered surprise.

Ribbentrop pressed the issue on Russia in yet another conference with Matsuoka. He stated that: "if Russia should ever attack Japan, Germany would strike immediately" and gave a firm assurance that Japan could move southward towards

8

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 31 March 1941 No. 218 pp. 376-383.passim.

9

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 1 April 1941 No. 222 pp. 386-394.passim.

10

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 31 March 1941 No. 230 pp. 405-407.passim.

Singapore without fear of any complications from Russia. Ribbentrop cautioned Matsuoka against signing a conclusive agreement with Russia but to conduct negotiations on a superficial level.<sup>11</sup> Stalin's price for joining the Tripartite Pact was too high for Germany to consider and Ribbentrop told Matsuoka that the British fleet, involved in the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean, could not interfere with a Japanese assault on Singapore.

Matsuoka travelled to Rome to confer with Mussolini and the Pope and then returned to Berlin on 4 April. In his final conferences with Hitler and Ribbentrop there were few things that remained to be said. Hitler stated that he wanted to prevent the United States from entering the conflict and had taken steps against a possible invasion of Europe. He went on to declare that:

If Japan got into a conflict with the United States, Germany on her part would take the necessary steps at once... Germany...would promptly take part in case of a conflict between Japan and the United States for the strength of the Axis in the Three Power Pact lay in their acting in common. Their weakness would be allowing themselves to be defeated separately. 12

Matsuoka returned the assurance with the statement that a war against the United States appeared unavoidable but made no definite promise to Hitler to join Germany if she became involved in a conflict with the United States. Matsuoka departed from Berlin and journeyed to Moscow.

11

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 31 March 1941 No. 233 pp. 413-420.passim.

12

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 4 April 1941 No. 266 pp. 453-458.passim.

Matsuoka signed a treaty of neutrality with Stalin while in Moscow on 13 April. Matsuoka, from his talks in Berlin, realized that Germany did not intend to invade Great Britain and that German-Russian relations were not good. Therefore Japan would have to depend on her own resources. Japan looked south and was anxious for a treaty with Russia to safeguard herself in the north. The Russian government attempted to negate the possibilities of a two-front war if relations with Germany deteriorated any further. The stipulation of mutual neutrality in times of war provided Russia with a measure of security in the east to meet the imminent crisis in the west.

Hitler regarded the Russo-Japanese neutrality treaty with a mixture of perplexity and indifference. At a naval conference on 20 April Hitler stated that the agreement had been concluded with Germany's approval.<sup>13</sup> But many officials in the higher echelons of the German government realized that Matsuoka's action in Moscow annoyed Hitler. Ribbentrop stated that he had not given his approval of such a treaty to Matsuoka and the conclusion of the accord was a complete surprise.<sup>14</sup> Hitler's basic attitude was one of indifference because the agreement tended to camouflage his future action against Russia. However, Hitler underestimated the value of the understanding for Japan. The Japanese government maintained

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<sup>13</sup>  
FCNM, 20 April 1941.

<sup>14</sup>  
DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 5 July 1941  
No. 72 p. 84.

its independence in foreign policy which would have serious repercussions for Germany.

Japan's independent foreign policy did not take long to make itself known when, on 4 May, Matsuoka informed Ribbentrop that Japan had begun to negotiate with the United States in an effort to mediate the differences between the two nations in the Pacific and the recent embargoes upon Japan by the United States. The conferences began through regular diplomatic channels in early 1941 without the knowledge of the German government.

Ribbentrop was furious when he heard the news. Ott wired Berlin that influences hostile to the Tripartite Pact compelled Matsuoka to yield. In a conversation with him, Matsuoka stated that:

If war should break out between Germany and Russia, no Japanese Prime Minister or Foreign Minister would be able to keep Japan neutral. In such a case Japan would be impelled by natural consideration to join Germany in attacking Russia. 15

Ribbentrop showed Oshima a report of the Japanese-American talks and took the position that if Japan should conclude an agreement with the United States, it would render the Tripartite Pact meaningless, no matter what phraseology might be used in an attempt to reconcile the act. Ribbentrop expressed his desire that Japan would not sign a non-aggression pact with the United States. But Hitler differed with Ribbentrop on this point and was ready to see the conversations continue,

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Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Ott to GFM 6 May 1941 No. 464 p. 723.

provided that they served to deter the United States from  
affording assistance to Great Britain.<sup>16</sup> Hitler's pledge to go  
to war against the United States if she attacked Japan was no  
doubt meant to stimulate Tokyo into action against Singapore.  
Germany could give Japan little support except through submarine  
warfare and Hitler concluded that if the Japanese government  
continued to negotiate with the United States, it would relieve  
the pressure on Germany. The German invasion of Russia would  
settle Japan's uneasiness in the north and thereby create a  
much stronger threat to the United States when Japan actively  
intervened in Asia.

Ribbentrop drafted a strong note to the Japanese  
government. In it he reminded Matsuoka that the Tripartite  
Pact was to prevent other powers from intervening in the war.  
In order to avoid weakening the agreement, its members should  
not make special agreements outside the pact, or at any rate,  
fail to insure recognition of the critical stipulation of the  
pact. The German government demanded that it be permitted to  
participate fully in the Japanese-American negotiations.<sup>17</sup> This  
burst of temper did not ruffle the Japanese government and  
Matsuoka assured Berlin of Japan's loyalty to the Tripartite  
Pact. Ribbentrop, deeply discontented and confused, still  
felt that Japan would honor her obligations.

German preparations continued for the invasion of Russia

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<sup>16</sup>

IMTFF, record pp. 9920-24.

<sup>17</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XII, Ribbentrop to Ott 18 March 1941  
No. 537 pp. 820-822.

and still Ribbentrop did not inform Japan of the operation. Ott asked Ribbentrop if he could inform Matsuoka about the impending invasion to warn the Japanese government and perhaps coordinate it with military action by Japan in the Far East.<sup>18</sup> Ribbentrop did not wish to contradict Hitler's directive and instead speculated that the German attack on Russia might cause Japan to halt her advance to the south and join with Hitler in dispensing of her traditional enemy Russia.<sup>19</sup> Weizsaecker asked Oshima if Matsuoka understood the true state of affairs between Germany and Russia. Oshima replied that he did not believe Matsuoka suspected the deep hostility between the two and appeared genuinely shocked at the suggestion. There was still no German initiative to inform Japan of the impending invasion of Russia.

Matsuoka, unaware of the invasion, explained Japan's position in the Far East to Ott on 21 June. He made no secret of Japan's intention to seize Indo-China and to capture the Dutch East Indies. Japan needed the valuable economic resources in those islands, especially oil. Matsuoka requested German assistance to get the Vichy government of France to consent to Japanese naval bases in Indo-China.<sup>20</sup> Japan appeared to be poised by mid-June to diplomatically secure a foothold in Indo-China and then aggressively move south against the

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18

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Ott to GFM 6 June 1941 No. 596 pp. 967-970.

19

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Memorandum 11 June 1941 No. 618 p. 1016.

20

Ibid., Series D vol. XII, Ott to GFM 21 June 1941 No. 653 pp. 1057-59.

British Empire.

Hitler was never so near to complete victory as in May and June 1941 because of Germany's success in the Balkans and the apparent possibility of closing the Mediterranean to Great Britain. He accomplished all this before the United States could enter the war and had his ally Japan in the Pacific to threaten the United States and delay intervention. Hitler now only had the problem of Russia. Here he determined to stake everything on a German victory. The conquest of Russia would provide Germany with the economic resources for the final assault in the west. In Europe, the invasion of Russia provided only a temporary respite to Great Britain. But in the Far East, it gave the final impetus to Japan's plans for expansion that was to lead to war with the United States.

Hitler presented his ally Japan with a fait accompli on 22 June 1941 when the German army invaded Russia. The deliberate policy of not informing Japan of the German plans resounded with shocking effect in Tokyo. Prime Minister Konoye regarded the action as a betrayal of the Tripartite Pact and favored an immediate withdrawal from the accord. The attack made nonsense of one of the reasons for Japan's adherence to the pact--a settlement with Russia. The Japanese government concluded that Russia would not be easily defeated and that Hitler had involved Germany in a long, exhausting war. Such circumstances meant that Japan would now face a coalition of the United States, Russia and Great Britain. The prospect for the expected German defeat of Great Britain



faded into the background.

Germany attempted to soothe Japan with a torrent of diplomatic notes all designed to calm her ally and to keep her within the Tripartite Pact. Ott explained to Matsuoka the reasons for the German attack on Russia. Matsuoka in turn stated that according to his reports from Berlin, Hitler did not expect active participation by Japan against Russia.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to this assumption Ribbentrop pushed for immediate military action by Japan against Russia in a discussion with Oshima. He listed seven reasons for Japanese intervention: 1. It would provide a direct land connection between the two countries; 2. The war would provide a solution to the Russian problem; 3, It would make possible a new order in Europe; 4. Japan in turn could create her own new order; 5. Rather than drive south to Singapore, she could move north and then free her rear for the south; 6. A decision should be made without hesitation; and 7. A swift defeat of Russia would keep the United States out of the war. Ribbentrop instructed Ott to use all his influence and these arguments to persuade the Japanese to intervene.<sup>22</sup> Another note, written in the excited optimism of the first massive German victories, urged Japan to intervene quickly because Russian military resistance might collapse sooner than expected.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 23 June 1941 No. 1 p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 28 June 1941 No. 35 pp. 40-41.

<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 28 June 1941 No. 36 pp. 41-42.

The Japanese government listened to these bombastic overtures to war with strong restraint and a growing distrust of Germany. Japan could not be lured into a war with the promises of a quick victory over Russia. Matsuoka informed the Russian ambassador in early July that Japan would honor fully her neutrality agreement with Russia. The course of German-Japanese relations continued to run true to past form: each party attempting to exploit the other and consulting the other only when in its own interest.

## CHAPTER VII

### DECISION TO DEFEAT JUNE 1941-DECEMBER 1941

Germany's relations with Japan after the invasion of Russia in June 1941 underwent a reversal of policy, appearing inconsistent to the Japanese government. Ribbentrop's arguments that Russia had been defeated and then his request for Japanese assistance against Russia seemed surprising at such an early date in the war. The Japanese asked themselves, if the German government wanted to benefit from Japan's cooperation, why did Hitler refuse to inform Japan properly and fail to plan joint strategy in advance? No doubt suspicion, and the desire for secrecy and surprise were part of the answer and also Hitler's confidence in Germany's capacity to defeat Russia alone. German diplomats advised Japan to occupy Singapore but when the Japanese government did not drive south and instead began to negotiate with the United States, Hitler considered intervention by Japan in the war against Russia as the best alternative.

Ribbentrop sent a strong note to the Japanese government on 1 July urging it to intervene in the war to seize Vladivostok and to advance west so that the defeat of Russia would free both Europe and the Far East from her menace:

The impending collapse of the Russians' main military power and thereby presumably of the Bolshevik regime itself, offers Japan the unique opportunity to free herself also from the Russian threat and give the Japanese empire the security in the north which is a necessary condition for its vitally important expansion in the south. It therefore seems to me that the need of the hour is for the

Japanese army to seize Vladivostok as soon as possible and...meet the German troops advancing to the east halfway ...before the cold season sets in...and finally to have the whole Russian question settled...jointly in such a way as to eliminate for all time the Russian threat to both Germany and Japan. 1

Ribbentrop went on to state that the defeat of Russia would; "suffice to paralyze any tendency toward intervention in the war (by) the United States (and) hasten the defeat of England by the Axis powers."<sup>2</sup> Ribbentrop with his faulty logic believed that Japan's intervention would solve all of Germany's world problems. What he failed to see was that German influence in Tokyo fell far short of such a task. Ribbentrop not only overestimated German influence in Japanese affairs but he also miscalculated Japan's military strength. Hitler recognized the Japanese puppet regime in China as the legitimate government of China in an attempt to obtain Japan's military support.<sup>3</sup> All these major policy changes came within the space of ten days for German foreign policy.

The sudden shift in German foreign policy confused the Japanese government and necessitated a change in its policies. Japan did not have sufficient troops available for simultaneous assaults against Vladivostok and Singapore and the Japanese army feared the strong Russian forces in the north. The army had high hopes that Germany soon would crush Russia and then Japan would have no need to go to war. Matsuoka alone advocated

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DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 1 July 1941 No. 53 pp. 61-63.

2

Ibid.

3

Weizsaecker, Memoirs p. 256.

an offensive against Russia for political, ideological and strategic reasons but the military leaders still favored a southward advance based on the hard facts of economic necessity.<sup>4</sup>

Ott reported from Tokyo that Matsuoka stated that Japan was not at present in a position to enter the war against Russia but was preparing for all eventual possibilities.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese government instead decided to secure points'appui in French Indo-China in order to increase its pressure on Great Britain and the United States. Japan reasoned that such a contribution to the common cause would be no less important than Japanese intervention against Russia.<sup>6</sup> Ribbentrop certainly misjudged Japan's intentions when he believed that she would attack Russia. The Japanese-American conversations presented a more disconcerting problem to the German government.

Ribbentrop distrusted Japan's motives for the talks and this apprehension grew when the United States occupied Iceland on 10 July. He asked Ott for more details on the Japanese-American negotiations and the possibility of an oral accord between the two countries. Ribbentrop doubted if the United States occupied Iceland without Japan's consent. He also cast serious aspersions on the report of a deadlock in the negotiations between Japan and the United States.<sup>7</sup> Ott reported

<sup>4</sup>  
NSR, pp. 627-629.

<sup>5</sup>  
DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 3 July 1941 No. 63 pp. 73-75.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 3 July 1941 No. 64 pp. 75-76.

<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 10 July 1941 No. 89 pp. 110-113.

strained relations between the two countries because of the United States economic blockade. The Japanese government regarded an United States entry into the war with great anxiety. Ott tried his utmost to have Japan declare war against Russia.<sup>8</sup>

Hitler had a talk with Oshima at his field headquarters in the east on 15 July. He spoke at length on the campaign against Russia and urged that Japan join to annihilate Russia.<sup>9</sup> Germany's efforts suffered a severe setback when on 16 July the Konoye government resigned and Germany lost its strongest supporter in that government, Foreign Minister Matsuoka.

The new Japanese government implied no change in Japan's policy toward Russia and promised to uphold the Tripartite Pact.<sup>10</sup> Ott expressed the opinion that the new government would not pursue a vigorous policy against the United States, or Russia.<sup>11</sup> But the German government deluded itself to the point where it believed that Japan's entry into the Russian war to be only a matter of time. Ribbentrop continued his efforts to convince Japan to cease negotiations with the United States. The embargo by the United States on aviation gas and oil to Japan placed the Japanese government

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 14 July 1941 No. 105 pp. 131-132.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, editor's note p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 20 July 1941 No. 130 pp. 185-186.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 20 July 1941 No. 131 p. 186.

in a great dilemma and generated greater misgivings in Japan about an <sup>12</sup>early war with Russia. These reports still did not convince the German Foreign Office that Japan had no interest in a war against Russia.

Hitler's thought Japan's intervention imminent and in a naval conference on 22 August stated: "Japan would carry out the attack on Vladivostok as soon as forces have been assembled...and the attack is to come as a surprise move."<sup>13</sup> Hitler's prediction conflicted with a report two days later from the German naval attaché in Tokyo. He stated that, based on conversations with leading Japanese naval officers on 22 August, there would be no attack on Russia. Japan instead, after consolidating her bases in Indo-China, would occupy Thailand and the Dutch oil fields, attack Manila and blockade Singapore.<sup>14</sup> Ribbentrop responded to this news with a hysterical telegram in which he called Japan's attitude incomprehensible and outlined several arguments with which Ott was to counter the irresolution of the new Japanese government.<sup>15</sup>

Japan continued to follow her own independent course in foreign policy, antagonizing Germany and creating a serious breach in the German-Japanese alliance. The Japanese Prime

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 22 August 1941 No. 225 pp. 351-353.

<sup>13</sup>

FCNM, 26 August 1941.

<sup>14</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Memorandum 24 August 1941 No. 235 p. 367.

<sup>15</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 25 August 1941 No. 234 pp. 375-379.

Minister suggested a personal conference with the President of the United States to discuss the difficulties between the two nations.<sup>16</sup> Ott asked if there was a change in Japan's policy but the Japanese Foreign Office informed him that this was not the case. Japan was still loyal to the Tripartite Pact and would assume no commitment contrary to the pact.<sup>17</sup> These serious divergences in the alliance forced Germany to make a renewed attempt to bring Japan closer to her side. Ribbentrop directed Ott to urge that Japan inform the United States that further acts of aggression would invoke the casus belli in the Tripartite Pact and that she would exercise caution in dealing with the United States.<sup>18</sup>

The Japanese government assured Germany on 16 September that Japan would come to the aid of the Axis in case of an attack by the United States on them and repeated that Japan in accordance with the Tripartite Pact had fulfilled her task of restraining the United States from entering the war.<sup>19</sup> Ott considered such statements to be far from precise and unimpressive. But regardless of Germany's objections, Japan continued to negotiate with the United States. The negotiations did not solve the problems and as the month of September drew

<sup>16</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 29 August 1941 No. 256 p. 410.

<sup>17</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 13 September 1941 No. 310 pp. 490-493.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 14 September 1941 No. 316 pp. 503-506.

<sup>19</sup>  
Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 16 September 1941 No. 324 p. 515. Also see: Ott to GFM 20 September 1941 No. 342 pp. 537-538.



to a close, the chances for peace or war began to gravitate toward the latter.

Germany had its first intimation of this new course toward war in a report from Ott of Japan's position as sketched by high officers of the Japanese army. The generals preferred an attack in the south against the British Empire which would not be dependent on weather as would operations against Russia. Great Britain was the immediate enemy but there was a growing feeling that war with the United States was inevitable.<sup>20</sup> The German Foreign Office emphasized its dissatisfaction with strong denunciations to Oshima of the continued negotiations with the United States. At the same time it was also aware that these negotiations were fast approaching a complete deadlock. The Japanese government fell on 16 October and a new government under General Hedeki Tojo<sup>21</sup> assumed power. The choice of the general was not illogical in view of the army's determination to attack the United States should negotiations fail. The German government did not consider the consequences of a failure in the talks, a costly mistake.

The advent of the Tojo government in October 1941 actually worried Hitler. He feared that Japan might declare war against Russia and so be in Germany's way were Russia suddenly to collapse, as she appeared to be doing at this stage of the invasion.<sup>22</sup> However this was not the case as the

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<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 4 October 1941 No. 378 pp. 608-611.

<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Hedeki Tojo, 1884-1948. Japanese general. A career army officer Tojo served as Prime Minister from October 1941 to July 1944 as wartime leader of Japan. He was tried and convicted of war crimes and hanged in Tokyo in 1948.

<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Weizsaecker. Memoirs p. 262.

Tojo government showed a decided lack of enthusiasm for intervention. Ott confirmed this position in a talk with the new Foreign Minister Togo. He stated that there was no decision yet about the United States or Russia and that foreign policy was still uncertain.<sup>23</sup> Tojo was much more hostile to the United States than his immediate predecessor and Ott learned that there were definite limits on Japan's conversations with the United States beyond which she would not go.<sup>24</sup>

Japanese-American relations deteriorated rapidly through November and Japan approached the decision on war. The German government, not fully cognizant of this course, continued to be vociferous in its call for an end to the negotiations. The two nations renewed the original 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact with one important modification: the abolition of the secret protocol between Germany and Japan. The German-Russian war, the Japanese-Russian neutrality treaty and the Tripartite Pact made this change a logical one.

The Japanese government faced a serious crisis with the possibility of a Japanese-American war becoming more definite and the question: would Germany prove faithful to its promises? A strict interpretation of the Tripartite Pact made no provision for assistance if Japan initiated an attack. There was considerable doubt in the Japanese government and a fear that Germany might conclude a separate peace. At an Imperial

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<sup>23</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 31 October 1941 No. 434 p. 717.

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 6 November 1941 No. 451 p. 744.

Conference on 5 November, the Japanese government formulated its policy. Japan decided to inform Germany and Italy without delay of her intention to initiate hostilities when negotiations with the United States deadlocked and war became irreconcilable, as was expected after 25 November. In the spirit of the Tripartite Pact, Japan would begin conversations with her Axis partners for their entry into the war and the conclusion of a "no separate peace" agreement. Japan intended to refuse a German demand to enter the war against Russia, even it meant a delay in German participation.<sup>25</sup>

A member of the Japanese General Staff approached the German military attaché in Tokyo on 20 November and asked whether Germany would support Japan with military forces should a conflict arise between Japan and the United States. Ott passed the question on to Ribbentrop in Berlin. Ribbentrop replied that Germany considered it a matter of policy that in case either Germany or Japan became involved in a war with the United States, they would conclude a peace or armistice jointly and that Germany: "would be entirely inclined to lay down the necessary stipulations in an agreement..."<sup>26</sup> The Japanese government, highly gratified with Germany's response, pressed the matter further. The Japanese Minister of War asked Ott if Germany would also consider herself at war with

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IMTFE, exhibits 578, 588.

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DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 21 November 1941 No. 487 pp. 806-807. Ribbentrop apparently made these statements without first consulting Hitler on this critical question. He did not realize the significance of the request.

the United States if Japan should open hostilities against the latter.<sup>27</sup> The German Foreign Office made no reply to this request for a direct commitment.

Ribbentrop met with Oshima on 28 November to discuss Japanese-American relations. Ribbentrop commented that he did not believe that Japan could avoid a showdown with the United States and that the situation hardly could be more favorable for a war now. A war would realize the full potential of the Tripartite Pact. Germany would join with Japan at once and sign a "no separate peace" agreement. Ribbentrop stated at the end of the conversation:

Should Japan become engaged in a war against the United States, Germany of course would join the war immediately. There is absolutely no possibility of Germany's entering into a separate peace with the United States under such circumstances. The Fuehrer is determined on that point. 28

Japan did not want to attack Russia too, but at this stage any Japanese expansion of the war was welcome to the German government. Germany had no suspicions that Japan intended to attack the United States. Hitler believed that Japan would attack the British and the Dutch possessions in the Far East, exactly what he wanted Japan to do. He felt that a pledge to support Japan if the United States was to intervene would give her the courage to strike. If Hitler had known in advance what Japan was going to do, he might have avoided giving his

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27

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 23 November 1941  
No. 492 p. 813.

28

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Memorandum 28 November 1941  
No. 512 pp. 868-870. passim. Also see: Pearl Harbor Attack  
(Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), Vol. XII,  
exhibits 1-6 pp. 200-202. (Hereinafter cited as PHA).

"blank check" of support. But at this date Hitler believed that he had decisively beaten Russia.

Japan made the final decision to attack the United States on 1 December and immediately set in motion diplomatic efforts to secure the participation of the Axis in the coming war with a special agreement. Tojo instructed Oshima to tell Hitler and Ribbentrop that Great Britain and the United States, in a provocative manner, made military movements that Japan, for her security, could not tolerate. Oshima was to say very secretly to them that there was extreme danger that war suddenly might break out between the Anglo-Saxon nations and Japan through some clash of arms and to add that the time of the outbreak of the war might come sooner than anyone dreamed.<sup>29</sup>

Germany's response appeared to be in some doubt and Ribbentrop was extremely cautious. He replied to Oshima's request for an agreement with much hesitancy, pointing out that Germany was being asked to make an extremely grave decision without adequate information. Ribbentrop considered that Germany was not obligated to assist Japan in case she attacked the United States but Hitler dismissed these considerations as unimportant.<sup>30</sup> On 5 December Ribbentrop told Oshima that Hitler accepted Japan's request and also gave him a draft of the proposed treaty. The draft provided that should a state of war arise between Japan and the United States, Germany and

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<sup>29</sup>

PHA, vol. XII, pp. 204-205.

<sup>30</sup>

Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War pp. 925-926. Also see: Alan Bullock, Hitler (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 607-608.

Italy would also enter the war and wage it with all the armed forces at their disposal. Japan would do the same should war break out between the Axis and the United States. The three powers would not conclude peace without full previous agreement among themselves with the same stipulation applying in event of war between Japan and Great Britain. The agreement was to have the same duration as the Tripartite Pact of 1940.<sup>31</sup> The draft showed that Germany had no idea that war between Japan and the United States was imminent. Tojo warned Oshima that war might come before the agreement could be signed and he considered a simple "no separate peace" accord to be the best.<sup>32</sup>

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December stunned the German government. No one suspected the attack. Ribbentrop later said:

I tried to induce Japan, at the time, to attack Singapore. I also tried to make Japan attack Russia. She did neither of the things we wanted her to do, but instead...she attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor. <sup>33</sup>

Ribbentrop, after hearing the news of the attack, questioned Oshima and told him that Germany and Italy would immediately support Japan. The attack on Pearl Harbor also made the draft treaty obsolete.<sup>34</sup> Hitler, despite his earlier desire to avoid a conflict with the United States, was not only surprised but delighted by Japan's successful intervention. Hitler

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<sup>31</sup>

PHA, vol. XXXV, pp. 684-685.

<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., Vol. XXXV, p. 686.

<sup>33</sup>

IMTN, vol. X, p. 297.

<sup>34</sup>

PHA, vol. XXXV, p. 687.

considered Japan's entry into the war among the most decisive events in modern history.<sup>35</sup> Japan's action provided psychological support for the German army which was just then undergoing serious reverses on the Russian front. On 5 December Ott warned the Japanese government against attacking the United States outright.<sup>36</sup> But he received a sharp directive from Berlin to correct this wrong impression. So long as Japan joined the war the form was not important anymore, cabled Ribbentrop.<sup>37</sup> This attitude was not surprising. Since September Germany had, for all intents and purposes been at war with the United States in the Atlantic.

A day after Pearl Harbor, Oshima submitted a formal request that Germany declare war on the United States. Ribbentrop told him that Hitler already had given orders to the German navy to attack United States shipping. He was in conference with his staff at General Headquarters to decide how a formal declaration of war could be written so as to make a good impression on the German people.<sup>38</sup> Many thought that Hitler would avoid the request because of the previous shrewd policy of avoiding incidents in the Atlantic. But this approach was now impossible. Hitler's stand in the Atlantic

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<sup>35</sup>

Elizabeth Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 263.

<sup>36</sup>

DGFP, Series D vol. XIII, Ott to GFM 5 December 1941 No. 545 pp. 956-957.

<sup>37</sup>

Ibid., Series D vol. XIII, Ribbentrop to Ott 6 December 1941 No. 551 p. 966.

<sup>38</sup>

PHA, vol. XII, p. 253. The reverses on the Eastern front occupied much of Hitler's time and delayed a draft statement.

was no longer practical since the United States now escorted convoys with orders to shoot on sight from President Roosevelt. If the Germans avoided an outright declaration of war, the United States' focus of attention would shift to the Pacific and allow Germany much needed respite. However, clever diplomacy found itself pitted against totalitarian arrogance and Hitler's prestige. The logic of the situation did not allow Hitler to renege on his pledge.<sup>39</sup> Ribbentrop drafted a revised tripartite agreement providing that the Axis would fight until victory was secured, that they would make no separate armistice or peace without full agreement of each partner and that, after the war, they would collaborate closely<sup>40</sup> in the establishment of an equitable new order.

Hitler, speaking in his most vituperative fashion before the Reichstag, declared war on the United States on 11 December 1941. He revealed in his speech that a political accord, signed that day also by the Axis and Japan, meant war against Great Britain and the United States but significantly omitted Russia. Germany and Japan now united in a brotherhood of arms for the logical climax of their coalition. Hitler's declaration of war relieved Roosevelt of the problem of being openly at war with Japan but still not formally at war with Germany and Italy.

Germany's relations with Japan after Pearl Harbor became a mirage in international relations. Henceforth strategy

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<sup>39</sup>

IMTN, vol. XXX, document No. 657D.

<sup>40</sup>

PHA, vol. XXXV, pp. 687-688.



rather than diplomacy would govern their relations but for the rest of the war, common planning was conspicuous by its absence and the various military agreements only so much paper. The vast geographical distance between Germany and Japan and the difficulties in communications contributed to this situation. But the peculiar nature of the totalitarian regimes of Germany and Japan did not allow any collaboration as neither ally could or would provide military assistance for the other. Under these circumstances, Hitler's declaration of war was as great a blunder as Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

The efficacy of the Tripartite Pact hinged on the fact that neither Germany nor Japan proved willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the alliance, a point inherent in this opportunistic association. Their mutual efforts were against the status quo and the destruction of the established order. In the Tripartite Pact, each ally established the territorial domain of its new order and warned others against interference. Therefore, if one ally considered its aims to be realized it cared little for the other. This was why Hitler had no use for the Japanese after the fall of France and why in 1942 Japan showed little concern about Germany.

Two more factors, distrust and the mutual desire to draw an advantage from the other, characterized the Tripartite Pact. The events of 22 June and 7 December demonstrated the suspicion harbored by Germany and Japan toward each other, an

attitude so distrustful that each preferred to forego mutual strategy for the sake of secrecy. Both allies showed great propensity for wishing the other to carry the burden of the war. Germany wanted Japan to assault Singapore and later Vladivostok as an effective contribution to the war. Japan did not have the slightest intention of doing those things unless Germany staged a successful invasion of Great Britain or Russia collapsed politically. Hitler could not imagine that this would be Japan's attitude.

Germany and Japan professed a single aim on the question of the United States but again, they could not coordinate their policies. Both wanted to keep the United States out of the European and the Far Eastern struggles but this policy failed when the United States refused to be intimidated by the Tripartite Pact. Hitler evolved a new approach to divert United States' attention to the Pacific. He ordered the German navy to avoid all incidents in the Atlantic and meanwhile, urged the Japanese government to attack Singapore and to assume a forceful attitude toward the United States. Hitler believed that if the United States became involved in the Far East, she would be less inclined to interfere in Europe or render assistance to Great Britain. But this attempt to use Japan failed because German influence in Tokyo was strictly limited. Japan, after the first failures of the Tripartite Pact, decided to reshape her policy toward the United States. If the pact could not keep the United States out of the war, perhaps diplomatic negotiations with her would be able to solve

Japan's problems. Certainly Japan was neither capable nor willing to conduct the dangerous policy of constantly inciting the United States as Hitler wanted Japan to do.

Hitler faced a serious dilemma when Japan began to negotiate with the United States. He staunchly opposed the negotiations because they offered the United States immediate relief in the Pacific. As a consequence, the United States could assume a more militant belligerency in the Atlantic. A Japanese accord with the United States would mean Japan's worth as an ally to be nil. Therefore the only alternative lay in the failure of the negotiations. But this in turn might initiate a war between Japan and the United States, which Hitler had better approve if he did not wish to lose Japan altogether. The war would spread to the Atlantic, and to prefer it to an agreement would indicate to the Japanese government how insincere Hitler was in his desire to prevent United States' intervention. There was a conflict between Hitler's Atlantic and Pacific policies--a conflict which eventually tended to blur his thinking. In his anxiety to retain Japanese support, Hitler became less cautious and urged Japan to follow a more belligerent line toward the United States. The United States policy in the Atlantic after September 1941 with the sink on sight orders placed Germany and the United States at war for all practical purposes and strengthened Hitler's tendency to take chances. Germany's policy toward the United States experienced a complete reversal within a year from cautious neutrality to outright belligerency and war.

Japan viewed her role in the Tripartite Pact quite differently. When Germany wanted Japan to attack Singapore, the Japanese government expressed fear of Russia and the United States. Japan pleaded prior commitments in southeast Asia when Germany urged her to take Vladivostok. The Japanese wanted to establish their "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" and neither Hitler nor Ribbentrop could divert them from their course. Japan wanted to acquire the European colonies in Asia and even hoped to settle her disputes with the United States. When this proved impossible the Japanese government decided to proceed with its expansionist policies at the risk of war with the United States. Ribbentrop tried his utmost to involve Japan but he exercised little influence and understood less about Japan's plans. Germany's part in the Japanese move against Pearl Harbor was extremely small and directly, Germany bore no responsibility. Japan made her decision without any consideration of Germany's interests. In fact, the Japanese decision to move south relieved Russia on her eastern border and allowed her to move a quarter of a million troops west to strengthen the defense of Moscow, eventually halting the German offensive in December 1941. During the rest of the war military cooperation of every kind was lacking and each nation went its own way. The value of the Tripartite Pact was reduced to the paper it was written on.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The German declaration of war against the United States was a high point in the German-Japanese entente and also marked the beginning of its decline. The political association whose principle purpose had been to cause unrest and create discord among the major world powers would henceforth be the subject of massive attack until its destruction. While the Allies sought to coordinate their strategy, no real collaboration existed between Germany and Japan. They did conclude a military agreement in January 1942 whose provisions seemed rather to delimit the areas of combat for each nation than to prescribe joint action. After having established their private spheres of influence, neither Germany nor Japan could see the necessity to aid one another in defense of their interests. Hitler assumed complete control in directing the war in 1942 and it was inconceivable that he would be willing to plan a joint military campaign. He might persuade the Japanese government to attack Singapore because it was in Germany's interest but Hitler proved unwilling to reveal his plans on Russia in order to profit from possible Japanese collaboration.

The enormous distance between Germany and Japan seriously hampered collective action along with adequate communications. All regular land and sea routes closed to Germany after the attacks on Russia and Pearl Harbor. The only

opportunity for political contacts was the radio but this was limited. Germany's use of blockade runners, auxiliary cruisers and submarines to escape Allied control of the sea was none too successful. Germany could neither deliver military equipment to Japan nor obtain vital raw materials from the Japanese Empire because of the difficulties in commercial intercourse during the war.

In an area where Germany and Japan would really have been able to coordinate their strategy--the Russian theatre--the two faced different circumstances inasmuch as Japan was not at war with Russia. Japan attempted to negotiate a German-Russian reconciliation with proposals for a mediated peace after 1941. Japan argued that Germany faced disaster in the struggle with Russia. Hitler would not listen to such pleas and wanted to destroy Russia, especially after his first military defeats. Japan had little inclination to join in the war against Russia and this position only provided additional difficulties for the none too stable coalition.

The coalition between Germany and Japan was one of negative attitudes rather than positive formulas. Germany's reaction to Japan's successes after Pearl Harbor was a renewed fear of the "Yellow Peril" with the fear that all of Asia might be lost to the yellow race.<sup>1</sup> The "have-not" states, Germany and Japan, in their quick assent to great power status, wanted to create new orders to receive a better share of the world's wealth. Germany and Japan fought on separate fronts

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Toynbee, SIA Vol. IV, 1939-1946, pp. 65-67, 310-311. Also see: Ciano, Ciano's Diary 1939-1943 10, 11 March 1942, 5 April 1942.

with the same objective but did not cooperate in military strategy. The aggressive nature of the association offered strategic opportunities to each member at different times. Japan used these opportunities advantageously threatening the European colonies. In times of peace, this coalition held a distinct advantage over its opponents and extended the political influence of Germany tremendously. The relationship was not a perfect one when Japan for instance, chose to destroy the German commercial position in China and Germany was unable to prevent it.

The strength of Berlin and Tokyo in peace became its weakness during the war. The Axis partners, widely separately, could not cooperate effectively in any military efforts with their forces stretched all over their respective spheres. The Japanese connection then started to operate against Germany's interests. Germany, being the more powerful of the two nations, represented a greater danger and because of this, the Allied strategists decided to defeat Germany first while holding Japan in check. When the United States entered the war, Germany and Japan were already so deeply engaged that they were incapable or unwilling to assist each other. The German-Japanese alliance had split of its own accord.

Germany's foreign policy toward Japan had sound political considerations but the German Foreign Office could never quite achieve the definite commitment to make the alliance effective. The Anti-Comintern Pact and the Tripartite Pact fell short of the concrete military obligations that Germany

so desperately needed to carry out her international policy of territorial expansion. Without firm commitments, Germany could get Japan to do little with effective military assistance and when Japan did act, the blow fell on the wrong adversary. German diplomacy under Ribbentrop's direction was simply not strong enough to bring Japan to terms. Hitler and Ribbentrop misunderstood Japan's own political considerations in the Far East and could not or would not comprehend that Japanese foreign policy was motivated by causes different from Germany's interests.

Germany's decision to settle for less in the way of military obligations from Japan provided no basis for Axis solidarity, collaboration and strategy. Germany struck some bad bargains with Japan because those in charge could not see beyond Germany's own self-interests. The alliance in peace was successful but to rely upon the good faith of the Japanese government to act in concert with Germany was a costly mistake. Germany's diplomatic relations with Japan were not a complete failure. Germany did manage to accomplish some significant successes to meet German peacetime needs. But Germany failed to achieve a definite military alliance with Japan and this failure enabled the Allies to accomplish their global strategy and defeat Germany.





## APPENDIX A

### THE GERMAN-JAPANESE AGREEMENT AGAINST THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL 1

#### I

The Government of the German Reich and the Imperial Japanese Government, recognizing that the aim of the Communist International known as the Comintern, is to disintegrate and subdue existing States by all means at its command; convinced that the toleration of interference by the Communist International in the internal affairs of the nations not only endangers their internal peace and social well-being, but is also a menace to the peace of the world; desirous of cooperating in the defence against Communist subversion; have agreed as follows

#### Article I

The High Contracting Parties agree to inform one another of the activities of the Communist International, to consult with one another on the necessary preventive measures and to carry these through in close collaboration.

#### Article II

The High Contracting Parties will jointly invite third States whose internal peace is threatened by the subversive activities of the Communist International to adopt defensive measures in the spirit of this agreement or to take part in the present agreement.

#### Article III

The German as well as the Japanese text of the present agreement is to be deemed the original text. It comes into force on the day of the signature and shall remain in force for a period of five years. Before the expiry of this period the High Contracting Parties will come to an understanding over the further methods of their cooperation.

In witness whereof,  
Berlin, November 25, 1936

vonRibbentrop  
Mushakoji

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1  
Documents on International Affairs, 1936 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 297-299.

## II

## SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL

On the occasion of the signing today of the agreement against the Communist International, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have agreed as follows:

A) The competent authorities of the two High Contracting States will work in close collaboration in matters concerning the exchange of information over the activities of the Communist International as well as investigatory and defensive measures against the Communist International.

B) The competent authorities of the two High Contracting States will within the framework of the existing laws take severe measures against those who at home or abroad are engaged directly or indirectly in the service of the Communist International or promote its subversive activities.

C) In order to facilitate the cooperation of the competent authorities provided for in paragraph (A) a permanent committee will be set up. In this committee the further defensive measures necessary for the struggle against the subversive activities of the Communist International will be considered and discussed.

## III

TEXT OF THE SECRET ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE  
GERMAN-JAPANESE AGREEMENT 1

The Government of the Third Reich and the Imperial Japanese Government, recognizing that the Government of the U.S.S.R. is working toward a realization of the aims of the Communist International and intends to employ its army for this purpose; convinced that this fact threatens not only the existence of the High Contracting States, but endangers world peace most seriously; in order to safeguard their common interests have agreed as follows:

## Article I

Should one of the High Contracting States become the object of an unprovoked attack or threat of attack by the U.S.S.R., the other High Contracting States obligates itself to take no measures which would tend to ease the situation of the U.S.S.R. Should the case described in paragraph I occur, the High Contracting States will immediately consult on what measures to take to safeguard their common interests.

## Article II

For the duration of the present agreement the High Contracting States will conclude no political treaties with the U.S.S.R.

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Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

contrary to the spirit of this agreement without mutual consent.

Article III

The German as well as the Japanese text of the present agreement is to be deemed the original text. The agreement comes into force simultaneously with the agreement against the Communist International signed today and will remain in force for the same period.

In witness whereof,  
Berlin, November 25, 1936.

vonRibbentrop  
Mushakoji

## APPENDIX B

### THE THREE-POWER PACT BETWEEN GERMANY, ITALY AND JAPAN 1

The Governments of Germany, Italy and Japan consider it the prerequisite of a lasting peace that every nation in the world shall receive the space which it is entitled. They have, therefore decided to stand by and cooperate with one another in their efforts in Greater Asia and the regions of Europe respectively. In doing this it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things, calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned.

It is, furthermore, the desire of the three governments to extend cooperation to nations in other spheres of the world who are inclined to direct their efforts along lines similar to their own for the purpose of realizing their ultimate object, world peace.

Accordingly, the Governments of Germany, Italy and Japan have agreed as follows:

#### Article I

Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe.

#### Article II

Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.

#### Article III

Germany, Italy and Japan agree to cooperate in their efforts on aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means if one of the three Contracting Powers is attacked by a Power at present not involved in the European War or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.

#### Article IV

With the view of implementing the present pact, joint technical commissions, to be appointed by the respective Governments of Germany, Italy and Japan, will meet without delay.

#### Article V

Germany, Italy and Japan affirm that the above agreement

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<sup>1</sup>  
Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1940-1941 (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941), pp. 304-305.

affects in no way the political status existing at present between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia.

#### Article VI

The present pact shall become valid immediately upon signature and shall remain in force ten years from the date on which it becomes effective. In due time, before the expiration of the said term, the High Contracting Parties shall, at the request of any of them enter into negotiations for its renewal.

In recognition thereof,

Berlin, the 27th of September, 1940

Ribbentrop  
Ciano  
Kurusu



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The large number of secondary sources available on Japan in the period under study represents some important background material for the thesis. David James' The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire is a fine source for an analysis and chronicle of the events in Japan from 1931 to 1945, as is Japan's New Order in East Asia by F.C. Jones. Quigley's The Far Eastern War is a detailed study of the Japanese war with China and the events to Pearl Harbor. Herbert Feis covers political and diplomatic policies of the Japanese government to the beginning of the war with the United States in his excellent book, The Road to Pearl Harbor. Maxon's Control of Japanese Foreign Policy is a detailed analysis of internal Japanese politics and its influence on foreign diplomacy. Japan's Decision to Surrender by Robert Butow deals with material more pertinent to the period 1944-1945 but is also a reflection on past events.

The two books, one by Masuo Kato, The Lost War, and the other by Toshikazu Kase, Journey to the Missouri, are firsthand accounts by Japanese on the country's reactions to the political and diplomatic policies of the Japanese government. Ike's Japan's Decision for War is a record of the policy conferences of the Japanese government in 1941 and the steps toward Pearl Harbor.

A great deal has been written about the Third Reich since the end of the war but relatively few sources are available on Germany's diplomatic relations with Japan. Two books dealing with German diplomacy are Craig and Gilbert's The Diplomats and Seabury's The Wilhelmstrasse. The Diplomats is an expanded study of German diplomacy after the first World War and the technical aspects of the profession. The Wilhelmstrasse is a more closely concerned study of diplomacy in Nazi Germany and the key figures of the German Foreign Office in the period.

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich by William Shirer is the most comprehensive examination of the Third Reich and has a few comments on Hitler's policy with Japan. F.H. Hinsley's Hitler's Strategy is an excellent summation of Hitler's strategic considerations for his subsequent actions in world diplomacy. The German Strategy of World Conquest by Whittlesey is an exaggerated product of the war and is of little value.