

Washington Daily

Merry-Go-Round

(Trade Mark Registered)

By DREW PEARSON and ROBERT S. ALLEN

It is now possible to tell the tragic inside story of the diplomatic negotiations which Secretary Hull was conducting while the Japanese were preparing their secret attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States.

The real story goes back to early August when Prince Konoye sent a cable to the President asking that they meet at a conference to discuss Pacific problems. When this was received in the State Department, Maxwell Hamilton, chief of the department's Far Eastern Division, proposed that the United States negotiate.

However, a group of his advisers in the Far Eastern Division, who had been in Japan recently, were convinced that everything Japan was doing pointed to war against the United States. They were convinced that any Japanese diplomatic negotiations were mere bluff for the purpose of consuming time while Japan finished preparations.

This group was not consulted, however, regarding conversations. So finally they drafted a two page memorandum warning that diplomatic negotiations would lead to disaster. Also they wanted to go over Max Hamilton's head to Secretary Hull.

Those who signed this warning were Cabot Coville, Joseph M. Jones, Frank A. Schuler, John R. Davies, Herbert Fales and E. Paul Tenney.

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Immediately they were summoned before Hamilton, the chief of the Far Eastern Division.

Hamilton bawled out his subordinates and told them they had no business interfering. But they insisted that their memorandum be taken direct to Sec-

retary Hull. And Cabot Coville resigned. When his resignation came to the attention of Assistant Secretary Berle, however, Berle refused to accept it, and Coville was transferred to the Phillippines, where he is today. The chief results of his efforts are that today he is being subjected to the bombing attacks which he, himself, warned were coming.

Frank Schuler, another of the rebels, was shortly transferred to a tiny post in the British Virgin Islands.

These men were all hardened experts on the Far East who had lived there and who knew Japan. They were not youngsters. However, their warning memorandum, though it finally reached the hands of Secretary Hull, made no impression. A few weeks later special envoy Kurusu was sent to Washington with a big blare of Tokyo trumpets about peace and the negotiations continued.

Koreans with Hull

About this time Secretary Hull was receiving letters from Koreans in the United States, warning that Japan was preparing to attack the United States. Koreans, being a subject race, hate their Japanese conquerors. Frequently operating as servants, they have maintained an amazing underground intelligence system in Japan.

On October 23, 1941, Kilsoo K. Haan, a Korean who had been a member of the Japanese consular service, wrote Mr. Hull, reporting a meeting of the Black Dragon Society (secret Fascist order of the Japanese military) on August 28, in which Foreign Minister Hirota revealed "a total war preparation to meet the armed forces of the United States."

"He (Hirota) also spoke of Premier Tojo giving orders to complete the mounting of guns and rush supplies to the Marshall and Caroline group by November 1941. Hirota and others in the meeting freely expressed the view that the most suitable time to wage war with America was December 1941 or February 1942."

Mr. Haan was introduced to Secretary Hull by Senator Gillette of Iowa, so his letter did not come from an unknown crackpot. In fact, Gillette thought so highly of the Korean's information that he proposed a Senate investigation of Japanese activities, but was discouraged by the State Department.

Despite this, Secretary Hull's conversations with Envoy Kurusu began shortly thereafter, and continued in very earnest vein. Mr. Hull apparently believed that something could be worked out with the Japanese, and at one point he and his State Department advisers actually thought that an agreement was just around the corner.

Churchill Objects

This was on November 24 and 25. Mr. Kurusu suddenly seemed willing to talk a three month commercial truce, and the State Department worked out an involved formula whereby no more Japanese troops were to enter Indo-China, but were to remain in China, and we were to resume the sale of gasoline, oil, scrap iron and other raw materials for “civilian use.”

At the very time Mr. Hull was discussing this plan with Kurusu, his government in Tokyo is no revealed as even then already launching its plan for attacking Hawaii.

However, Secretary Hull was so anxious to rush this truce to a conclusion that he did not want to give Lord Halifax time to cable the plan to London for Churchill’s approval – even though British and Australians were sitting in on the conversations.

Lord Halifax insisted, however, and when Churchill got a cabled report on the plan he hit the ceiling. He did not think the Japanese would keep faith, and argued that it merely gave the Japanese more time to increase their armament. Simultaneously the plan leaked out to the Chinese, and the Chinese ambassador delivered a personal protest from Gen. Chiang Kaishek to the President.

In view of the Churchill and Chinese objections, Secretary Hull suddenly withdrew his proposal of a three-month truce and fell back on the traditional American policy of the Open Door in China plus withdrawal of all Japanese troops.

If President Roosevelt is right that the Japanese had begun preparing for the Hawaii attack well in advance, there seems no question that none of Mr. Hull’s proposals, whether appeasement or the Open Door policy would have changed the course of the Japanese war lords.

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