

JAPANESE ULTIMATUM TO GERMANY

(August 15, 1914)

The text of the ultimatum from the Japanese to the German Government under date of August 15, 1914, is given as follows by the London *Times* (weekly edition) of August 21, 1914:

“We consider it highly important and necessary in the present situation to take measures to remove the causes of all disturbance of the peace in the Far East and to safeguard general interests as contemplated in the agreement of alliance between Japan and Great Britain. In order to secure firm and enduring peace in Eastern Asia the establishment of which is the aim of the said agreement, the Imperial Japanese Government sincerely believes it to be its duty to give advice to the Imperial German Government to carry out the following two propositions:—

“(1) To withdraw immediately from Japanese and Chinese waters the German men-of-war and armed vessels of all kinds, and to disarm at once those which cannot be withdrawn.

“(2) To deliver on a date not later than September 15 to the Imperial Japanese authorities, without condition or compensation, the entire leased territory of Kiaochau with a view to the eventual restoration of the same to China.

“The Imperial Japanese Government announces at the same time that, in the event of its not receiving by noon of August 23 an answer from the Imperial German Government signifying unconditional acceptance of the above advice offered by the Imperial Japanese Government, Japan will be compelled to take such action as it may deem necessary to meet the situation.”

To the text of the ultimatum, as there printed, is appended the text of a communication from the press bureau, as follows:

BRITISH OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING JAPANESE PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR

(August 18, 1914)

“The Governments of Great Britain and Japan having been in communication with each other, are of opinion that it is necessary for each to take action to protect the general interest in the Far East contemplated by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, keeping specially in view the independence and integrity of China, and provided for in that Agreement.

“It is understood that the action of Japan will not extend to the Pacific Ocean beyond the China Seas except in so far as it may be necessary to protect Japanese shipping lines in the Pacific, nor beyond Asiatic waters westward of the China Seas, nor to any foreign territory except territory in German occupation on the Continent of Eastern Asia.”

In the course of the conferences among the Allied Powers at Paris, preliminary to the conclusion of peace with Germany, it appeared that during February, 1917, the Japanese Government had approached the Governments of Great Britain, France Russia and Italy with regard to the ultimate disposal of German rights in Shantung. A special cable to the *New York Times*, dated from Paris, April 21, 1919, quoted as follows the documents embodying the results of the negotiations thus initiated:

UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND JAPAN REGARDING ULTIMATE DISPOSAL OF GERMAN RIGHTS

(February, 1917)

The British Ambassador at Tokyo to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs February 16, 1917

British Embassy,
“Tokyo, February 16, 1917.

“My dear Excellency

“With reference to the subject of our conversation of the 27th ultimo, when Your Excellency informed me of the desire of the Imperial Government to receive an assurance that on the occasion of a Peace Conference His Britannic Majesty’s Government will support the claims of Japan in regard to the disposal of Germany’s rights in Shantung and possessions in the islands north of the equator, I have the honour, under instructions received from His Britannic Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to communicate to you the following message from His Britannic Majesty’s Government:

“His Britannic Majesty’s Government accede with pleasure to request of the Japanese Government for an assurance that they will support Japan’s claims in regard to the disposal of Germany’s rights in Shantung and possessions in the islands north of the equator on the occasion of the Peace Conference; it being understood that the Japanese Government will in the eventual peace settlement treat in the same spirit Great Britain’s claims to the German islands south of the equator.

“I avail myself of this opportunity, M. le Ministre, to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

“CONYNGHAM GREENE,
“*His Britannic Majesty’s Ambassador.*

His Excellency VISCOUNT ICHIRO MOTONO,

“His Imperial Japanese Majesty’s Minister for Foreign Affairs.”

The Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs to the British Ambassador, February 21 1917

EXTRACT

“The Japanese Government is deeply appreciative of the friendly spirit in which your Government has given assurance and happy to note it as fresh proof of the close ties that unite the two allied Powers. I take pleasure in stating that the Japanese Government on its part is fully prepared to support in the same spirit the claims which may be put forward at the Peace Conference by His Britannic Majesty’s Government in regard to the German possessions in the islands south of the equator.”

UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FRANCE AND JAPAN REGARDING ULTIMATE
DISPOSAL OF GERMAN RIGHTS

(March, 1917)

Memorandum of the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs to the French Ambassador and (mutatis mutandis) to the Russian Ambassador at Tokyo, February 19, 1917

“The Imperial Japanese Government has not yet formally entered into conversations with the Entente Powers concerning the conditions of peace I propose to present to Germany, because it is guided by the thought that such questions ought to be decided in concert between Japan and the said Powers at the moment when the peace negotiations begin. Nevertheless, in view of recent developments in the general situation, and in view of the particular arrangements concerning peace conditions, such as arrangements relative to the disposition of the Bosphorus, Constantinople, and the Dardanelles, being already under discussion by the Powers interested, the Imperial Japanese Government believes that the moment has come for it also to express its desires relative to certain conditions of peace essential to Japan, and to submit them for the consideration of the Government of the French Republic.

“The French Government is thoroughly informed of all the efforts the Japanese Government has made in a general manner to accomplish its task in the present war, and particularly to guarantee for the future the peace of Oriental Asia and the security of the Japanese Empire, for which it is absolutely necessary to take from Germany its bases of political, military, and economic activity in the Far East.

“Under these conditions the Imperial Japanese Government proposes to demand from Germany at the time of the peace negotiations the surrender of the territorial and special interests Germany possessed before the war in Shantung and the islands situated north of the equator in the Pacific Ocean.

“The Imperial Japanese Government confidently hopes the Government of the French Republic, realizing the legitimacy of these demands, will give assurance that, her

case being proved,* Japan may count upon its full support on this question.

“It goes without saying that reparation for damages caused to the life and property of the Japanese people by the unjustifiable attacks of the enemy, as well as other conditions of peace of a character common to all the Entente Powers, are entirely outside the consideration of the present question.”

*It would appear that the phrase “her case being proved,” is a mistranslation of “*le cas échéant*,” meaning “in a proper case “or “should occasion require”—EDITOR.

Memorandum of the French Ambassador to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, March 1, 1917.

“The Government of the French Republic is disposed to give the Japanese Government its accord in regulating at the time of the peace negotiations questions vital to Japan concerning Shantung and the German islands in the Pacific north of the equator. It also agrees to support the demands of the Imperial Japanese Government for the surrender of the rights Germany possessed before the war in this Chinese province and in these islands.

“M. Briand demands, on the other hand, that Japan give its support to obtain from China the breaking of its diplomatic relations with Germany, and that it give this act desirable significance. The consequences of this in China should be the following:

“First, handing passports to the German diplomatic agents and consuls.

“Second, the obligation of all under German jurisdiction to leave Chinese territory.

“Third, the internment of German ships in Chinese ports and the ultimate requisition of these ships in order to place them at the disposition of the Allies following the example of Italy and Portugal. According to the information of the French Government there are fifteen German ships in Chinese ports, totaling about 40,000 tons.

“Fourth, requisition of German commercial houses established in China; forfeiting the right of Germany in the concessions she possesses in certain parts (ports?) of China.”

In reference to the documents quoted above, the *Times* message continues as follows:

“On receipt of the above, Motono wrote expressing profound thanks for the friendly sentiments inspiring the French Government, and in behalf of Japan promised compliance with Briand’s request to get China to break relations with Germany, adding that it had spared no effort in that direction from the beginning.

“The Russian Ambassador wrote very briefly to Motono February 20 committing his Government also to the support of the Japanese claims at the Peace Conference

“So far as Italy was concerned, this same business was transacted, not at Tokio, but at Rome, where the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs gave the Japanese Ambassador assurance that Italy would offer no objections in the matter.”