Pacific Islands

I submit a draft note to the S.D. in accordance with your instructions on 130. Action was delayed in view of Lord Asthing's absence and of the possibility that he and Mr. T. had been discussing the wider aspects of the matter.

The steps by which the present position has been reached are:

1) On Aug. 15, 1939, the S.D. sent us a list of 16 islands in the Central Pacific Ocean which, in addition to the Phoenix Group, are claimed by the U.S. and to which, it is understood, S. B. also asserts claims.

2) In our reply of June 8, 1940, we said we assumed "that the U. S. G. have now tabled the full list of Pacific Islands the Sovereignty over which..."
"which they consider should be discussed" and we asked for confirmation that this assumption was correct.

3) In their reply of August 10, 1940, the P.O. not only avoided giving this assurance but they conveyed the contrary impression that they had more claims. It is these extra claims which Mr. Butler now asks them to state.

It seems strange that we are being asked to talk about claims which are not in the discussions.

Perhaps it would not be out of order for Mr. Butler to ask the note-taker (or whoever takes the note) to say that if the events since August 1939 have led the U.S. to examine their claims again and they now want to claim more island than they originally did we can understand it; but that it makes things unnecessarily hard for us if they do not tell.
Then if this is what is in the mind, it's clearly useless to listen to ministerial in the minute of the war. And if we are defensive, it's far from his hour as his trade that has been to play off the influence of Germany in the interests of the French-owned islands.

I agree.

6.1.

Tell us what islands they want in the end. He come also suggest that it will really lose time for them to tell us now since otherwise we should only have to refer to London, Wellington, Suez, and elsewhere for details of our title after the discussions have begun.

I cannot help thinking that the U.S.A. are arguing to themselves that they should provide against a British defeat and keep their claim's vague so as to be able to take over, with a show of legality, any Pacific island they want to keep out of German or Japanese hands. It might be useful to know whether they are showing any interest in the French-owned islands.

26xii