

Far East 946/38/41

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15th May 1941.

Dear Hoyer-Miller,

The attached is the opinion of the Ecuadorian Minister in Vichy on the Russo-Japanese Pact which has been obtained from a most secret source.

It should be noted that the views were expressed in mid-April of this year.

Yours ever,

PASSPORT CONTROL.

*Mr Butler MS
Mr Hoyer-Miller
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125
20/5*

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British Embassy,
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WFB/PWD

EFFECT OF THE RUSSO-JAPAN PACT.

As was very natural, the pact and the accompanying declaration has been the subject of much comment, sometimes contradictory in the countries of this continent. In those of the so-called "AXIS" the press and Government welcome it as a three power pact, the certainty of success of the politics of the "new order" a diplomatic triumph which proves more than ever the British defeat. For the Allies it is merely an instrument of vain diplomatic activity without real force or meaning and of no more object than to stimulate the faith of the nations already worn out by the war and the easy victories. The people are disillusioned by these solemn documents which the Governments disregard or contradict as soon as they become useful.

It is said, however, that the Russian promise leaves greater liberty of action to the Japanese Empire in Asia: it seems that such is the opinion of Washington and London who are more than ever determined to arrest any bellicose undertaking by Japan. It seems to us that the promise of neutrality, in the event of one or other parties being the object of hostile military measures, destroys the pact of the value and scope of the Three Power Pact which obliges Japan, Germany, Italy and adherent countries to intervene immediately. If for its own account or in agreement with other powers Russia intervenes in the conflict against Germany, Japan could not fulfil the pact engagements, the latter signature having already cancelled the previous engagement.

This supposition is not unlikely since Germany has not kept step with Moscow: it has brusquely demanded economic concessions, has exercised pressure in such a way as to disgust the whole world and reveal the rancour of Stalin's Government for a procedure which can be qualified as blackmail. In this way it obtained the last commercial agreement which displeases Russia. The advance in the Balkans, the occupation of Bulgaria, the attack on Yugoslavia, the possible menace to Turkey, the possibility or probability of a British victory modifies the opinion and projects of Moscow in such a way that it would be an error not to consider the change and foresee the consequences.

Germany is concentrating some of its finest divisions on the Eastern frontier and well informed circles repeat the opinion of one of the confidential diplomatists of Moscow who speaks of the probability of a conflict between the two countries. The inquietude of this Bolshevik Russia, which thinks like Peter the Great or Catherine II when it concerns international matters, has already manifested itself: it disapproved the transit of German troops across Bulgaria; it accentuated the reprobation to Hungary when she attacked Yugoslavia and accords to rumours, actively negotiated with Turkey, which is not very tranquilising in view of all that is occurring in the Balkans; who knows whether this may not be the precursor of some demand for free passage for German troops.

Russia, Japan and other interested countries affirm, naturally, that the new pact is for the limitation of the war, a pact of peace which all should celebrate.

It is to be feared that in the conversations between Moscow and Japan, they considered the situation and present conditions of the Dutch East Indies, a constant and tremendous temptation for the Nippon Empire which will find no

consolation if, in the event of a change in European events, Holland returns to her previous status. It would not be surprising if Stalin were to incite immediate occupation, since it finds advantage in all disorder or conflict, and in the event of finding herself involved in the war the Japanese guarantee would be very useful.

It is said that Matsuoka proposed the transformation of the Three Power Pact into a Quadruple Treaty which the Government of Moscow denied, as although it was always ready to offer neutrality and even friendship, it would conserve its liberty of action in China. Actually it would seem that the Soviets think of continuing to aid Marshall Chiang-Kai-Shek in his valorous resistance which is withholding Japan from aggression to Great Britain, U.S.A. and the Dutch East Indies.

Whatever value the new document may have, recognition must be given to the good result obtained by the Japanese Minister, which is much more notable when it is remembered that it is the first time that a Chancellor of the Far East has come to Europe to negotiate, not only as an equal to the Aryans but with a certain pre-eminence.

The three most powerful men of the Continent, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin rendered him homage before an amazed public. One of the most respected, Marshal Petain, invited him to come to France, an invitation which for reasons of time and special circumstances Matsuoka could not accept. These are successes that arouse a certain reflection and consideration regarding the state of Europe.