

lett: 204/128<sup>A</sup>/41

H.E.

Possibly for purposes of record  
it might be as well to  
send copies of these two  
minutes to the B.O. I  
could do this in a private  
letter to Mr. Deering if you  
agree

WGH 29/11

WGH 29/11

MINUTE SHEET.

Reference G204/128 /41

November 28th, 1941.

When I saw Mr. Hornbeck this morning he himself raised the question of blame for the breakdown of the modus vivendi proposal. He said that the State Department did not accept that the Chinese were chiefly responsible for the breakdown any more than they accepted that the Dutch, Australians, British or themselves were chiefly responsible. The decision not to present the modus vivendi proposal was a joint responsibility to which all had contributed. He based these remarks on the fact that according to him it was being said that we had been extremely keen on the modus vivendi but that the Chinese had killed it - in fact that we were sheltering behind the Chinese. He made it clear that it was being suggested that we were responsible for these rumours. I said that we were nothing of the sort; that I heard also that we were credited with having hoped for a breakdown of the conversations and it seemed to me that somebody, probably the Japanese, were being pretty busy in spreading rumours and doubts. We agreed that any blame-casting or post mortems, especially in public, were highly undesirable and said that we should certainly have nothing to do with it unless we were ourselves erroneously accused in public. I reminded him that Lord Halifax had been told by Mr. Welles that Mr. Hull felt that it had been useless to go on with the idea of the modus vivendi because of our attitude.

We parted with the reiterated

agreement/



MINUTE SHEET.

Reference \_\_\_\_\_

agreement that attempts to cast blame were to be avoided and with the reiteration on his part of his statement recorded at the beginning of this minute.

The conversation was a long one but I do not think I need record the other remarks on this subject which he made, except that <sup>Welles</sup> record of the conversation between H. E. & Welles <sup>that</sup>

It occurs to me that the rumour we have been saying that we were extremely keen on the modus vivendi may date from a period before the decision not to present it when if we had been asked we should have said that we fully supported the U.S. in the conduct of their conversations, but I have no knowledge that anybody did in fact say anything to this effect to pressmen or private individuals.

Unless we detect any attempts to fix the blame on us in the U.S. press or from anywhere else I think we should "duck" any question as to responsibility for the abandonment of the modus vivendi. If we detect any disposition to blame us then I think we should bring it to the attention of the S.D. before we react. There will no doubt be Japanese and perhaps other Axis attempts to use this matter in order to sow distrust and irritation between us and the United States.

RC 28/11

H.E.  
Mr. Childs

on Nov. 27  
Gave the impression  
that you had  
said that in making  
the point about  
China's misgivings  
you had said  
that we had put  
this forward "on  
the part of the  
Chinese Govt":  
This misapprehension  
seemed to have  
given the impression  
that we were  
trying to hide  
behind China.  
Hornbeck asked  
me not to report  
this as it might  
embroider him with  
Welles. I contended  
that H.E. & Welles  
said anything to  
give this impression  
& I think Hornbeck  
was convinced,  
for he talked of  
the importance  
of accurate  
recording & said  
that historians  
looking the facts  
in future would look  
to these records. I  
propose to have another  
go at Hornbeck discreetly in a way that he can misstate the record, without

having to appear as if he had told me of it.

