

Konoye Memoirs

Prince, in Presuicide Letters, Blamed Matsuoka for Bringing About War With U.S.

By MURLIN SPENCER

Tokyo, Dec. 17 (AP).—Top Japanese officials accepted "in principle" an American compromise plan to solve differences with Japan eight months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, but it was blocked by Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka because he was in "a bad mood." Prince Fumimaro Konoye declared in memoirs completed shortly before his suicide Sunday.

The plan was approved in general by leaders, including the War and Navy Ministers, only to be stalled by the sole opposition of Matsuoka until it was made useless by misunderstandings and deterioration of relations, Konoye wrote in his lengthy political testament detailing Japan's side of the negotiations which preceded the spread of the war to the Pacific theatre in December, 1941.

Temporary Expedient

Subsequently, however, Konoye referred to the military as regarding the deal as a temporary expedient.

The Associated Press obtained the Konoye memoirs in Japanese three days before his suicide. They are being translated, and copies are in the hands of Joseph B. Keenan, United States special prosecutor of top war crimes cases in Japan.

Konoye, the prince who was three times his country's Premier, the last time in the tense summer of 1941, reported:

1. The late President Roosevelt suggested a tentative date—some time in October—and a place, possibly Juneau, Alaska, for a personal meeting with Konoye to discuss peace. (It was in mid-October, however, that Japan, by an Imperial conference decision, began preparing for war, and Gen. Hideki Tojo notified Konoye it was time for his Cabinet to resign. Tojo succeeded him.)

2. Japanese naval leaders were fearful of a Pacific war but unwilling to oppose officially the army's demand for it.

3. The then Foreign Minister, Matsuoka, was blamed by Konoye as suffering from jingoism and pro-Germanism plus "a bad mood" which led to sabotaging acceptance of the compromise plan. (Matsuoka, who also has been listed as a war criminal suspect by Gen. MacArthur, held the view, Konoye said, as far back as May, 1941, that Mr. Roosevelt had already decided on United States entry into the war.)

Prince's Final Word

4. Talks on adjustment of American-Japanese relations had been under way unofficially since December, 1940, with Frank Walker, former United States Postmaster-

General, in one of the key roles. Konoye named the others as Bishop James Edward Walsh, Superior-General of the Roman Catholic Foreign Missionary Society, Maryknoll, N.Y., and Kichisaburo Nomura, Japanese Ambassador to the United States, and others for Japan. He said both President Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, then Secretary of State, were informed of the conversations.

There was no indication of the period during which Konoye wrote his memoirs, which relate in detail the negotiations of the second and third Konoye Cabinets from April, 1941, to a period seven weeks before Japan declared war. They evidently were designed, however, to present his final word.

From these private, unofficial talks, Konoye wrote, came on April 4 a "first trial plan," which the Japanese modified slightly in a "second trial plan." Mr. Hull and Nomura held the first talks April 16.

Konoye's description of this program said it was based upon an American promise to help obtain Chungking's agreement to peace in China.

Plan for China

Settlement of the China hostilities was proposed as being vital for Japan and for American-Japanese rapprochement.

The plan provided for Japan and the United States to guarantee the independence of China. Japan was to withdraw her troops from Chinese territory "based on an agreement to be formed between Japanese and Chinese." There would be no annexation of Chinese territory, no reparations, revival of the open-door policy, union of the Chiang and Wang regimes (Chungking and the Japanese-sponsored puppet Government), self-restriction by Japan of immigration of Japanese into Chinese territory, and United States recognition of Manchoukuo, the State which Japan had established in Manchuria.

The plan further agreed that the United States and Japan "will not distribute naval and air strength in positions which would mutually threaten the other."

Konoye said if an understanding were reached there would be mutual exchange of necessary materials. He said it would provide that the United States should furnish credit and give "support and cooperation in the production and gaining of resources Japan desires in the (Southwest Pacific) area, such as petroleum, rubber, tin, nickel and others."

The two countries would jointly guarantee the independence of the Philippines, wrote Konoye.

149
WAR
PACIFIC
1941
JAPAN
GUILT