

Excerpt from the Interrogation of Oshima Hiroshi

Interrogation on 27 February 1946

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Q. Proceed.

A. Following the receipt of this despatch containing the orders from the Japanese Government I conveyed the message to Ribbentrop. . . . Ribbentrop then asked me whether there was going to be a war or not - you may recall that the despatch did not definitely say that there would be war, only that in case there was a war such and such was desired. In reply to his questions I told him that I knew of Hull's severe reply and also of the burning of the code books in the United States, and that relations were evidently extremely strained, but whether war would actually come about or not I could not say. . . . Ribbentrop stated that this was an extremely grave decision that Germany would have to make and that before he could give any reply he would have to communicate with Hitler at Supreme Headquarters. . . . I do not remember whether it was that day or the next, but in any case Ribbentrop sent for me again and when I went he stated that Soviet forces had just launched a severe counter-offensive in the Moscow sector and a portion of the German Armies was surrounded. Therefore, he said, Hitler had gone personally to the area to direct operations and that he had not been able to make contact with him yet. It is a further fact that there was a very bad storm raging around Berlin at the time, and I believe that all communications were badly hampered. In any case he asked me to stand by for while, as he was trying very hard to make contact with the Fuehrer.

Q. Now, General, this all happened on the day you received the despatch from Tokyo containing these instructions to approach the German Government?

A. As I just told you, I am not absolutely certain of whether it was that day or the next.

Ribbentrop then questioned me, asking whether Japan had anything to offer on her part and, too, whether she was prepared to draw up another pact regarding mutual aid. . . . In substance, the Germans at this point were becoming very foxy and wanted payment for goods delivered if they supplied the goods. I told him that this would mean doing away with the Military Commission that existed at the time or at least taking away their prerogatives, so that I was not in a position to make any counter-proposals, and that I would communicate about this matter with the Japanese Government. Ribbentrop then said that he wished me to not send such a communication yet, as this was simply his own idea and he would have to communicate with Hitler before any official negotiations were entered into with the Japanese Government. I then sent a despatch to the Japanese Government - this was around the third or fourth of December 1941 - relating how I had informed Ribbentrop about their wish and how Ribbentrop had not been able to contact Hitler yet. There comes a brief recess in the proceedings at this point.

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A. Following this I received an almost daily request from the German Government for any further news as they, too, were very anxious to find out whether war was actually going to break out or not. On my part I was extremely anxious to contact Hitler, but as it transpired right up to the start of hostilities we were not able to contact him.

We now come to December 7, 1941. Sometime during the afternoon I received a despatch from the Foreign Office in Tokyo to the effect that they wished me to speed up negotiations and come to a decision as quickly as possible. I do not know for certain when this telegram was received, but after being decoded it was handed to me about 5 P.M. Because of this communication I decided under any circumstances to send a telegram to the Japanese Government regarding the progress of my talks with the Germans so far. This meant that I would have to include that which Ribbentrop had requested me not to communicate about, as it was his own idea and not the official views of the German Government. In my telegram I wrote up the full history of these talks and while I did not say that Ribbentrop had requested me not to communicate about it I definitely stated that these views regarding unconditional aid were Ribbentrop's alone because it had been impossible to make contact with Hitler as yet. We of the Embassy Staff had a conference about the communication we should send and based on that this despatch was drafted and completed around 7 P.M., Berlin time. Around 8 P.M., Berlin time, after having given orders to send off this despatch I returned to my official residence. After about ten or twenty minutes I received a phone call from Counsellor KAWAHARA informing me that he had heard from a man named NOHARA, an Embassy employee, that this man had heard on the radio that the Japanese Navy had attacked Pearl Harbor. Immediately following this telephone call I called the Japanese Embassy and ordered that the despatch which had been prepared be canceled - that is to say, not be sent. Following this Ribbentrop telephoned and said that he had heard the news over the air that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, but that was all he knew, and did I have any further information as to whether the report was true or not. I answered that I had only heard about it a few minutes before and knew no more than he had recounted. He then requested me to come right over to his home and while I had not yet even had my dinner I went on over. He once again asked me if I knew anything further and I answered in the negative. Ribbentrop then told me that as a matter of fact he had received a telephone call from Supreme Headquarters in which the said that they had heard this over the radio, but did he, Ribbentrop, know anything more about it. I then asked him whether, having been able to contact Hitler, he had spoken about the matter of Germany's entry into the war, and Ribbentrop answered that Hitler had stated he was in accord with Japan's wishes, but wished to wait until an official confirmation of the start of hostilities was received from Japan. Ribbentrop and I broke off the conversation at this point and I returned home. The next day I received the official report from Japan and communicated this fact to Ribbentrop. We then began drawing up the pact. This pact has been made public, but as I recall the main points they were that no cessation of hostilities or a separate peace would be entered into by any of the signatories without prior discussion.

Q. What date was it signed?

A. December 11, 1941. Now, in so far as this treaty goes, while I may have been off slightly on dates, the actual facts leading up to it are as I have recounted it and I believe that both Ribbentrop and Gaus would know of it also.

Q. The actual drafting of the pact then, according to your statement, started on December 9, and it was signed on December 11. Is that correct?

A. The drafting of the pact began on the 8th and the pact was signed on the 11th.

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A. It was a very simple pact and did not necessitate detailed discussions.

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