

'21 Demands' Made by Japan to China

January 18, 1915

Taking advantage of the war and its status as an Allied power, Japan secretly made the following 21 demands to China in January of 1915. An ultimatum was issued in May, and China accepted nearly all of its conditions. The effects were subsequently reversed at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922.

GROUP I

The Japanese Government and the Chinese Government, being desirous to maintain the general peace in the Far East and to strengthen the relations of amity and good neighbourhood existing between the two countries, agree to the following articles:

Article 1

The Chinese Government engage to give full assent to all matters that the Japanese Government may hereafter agree with the German Government respecting the disposition of all the rights, interests and concessions, which, in virtue of treaties or otherwise, Germany possesses vis-à-vis China in relation to the province of Shantung.

Article 2

The Chinese Government engage that, within the province of Shantung or along its coast, no territory or island will be ceded or leased to any other Power, under any pretext whatever.

Article 3

The Chinese Government agree to Japan's building a railway connecting Chefoo or Lungkow with the Kiaochou Tsinanfu Railway.

Article 4

The Chinese Government engage to open of their own accord, as soon as possible, certain important cities and towns in the Province of Shantung for the residence and commerce of foreigners. The places to be so opened shall be decided upon in a separate agreement.

GROUP II

The Japanese Government and the Chinese Government, in view of the fact that the Chinese Government has always recognized the predominant position of Japan in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, agree to the following articles:

Article 1

The two contracting Parties mutually agree that the term of the lease of Port Arthur and Dairen and the term respecting the South Manchuria Railway and the Antung-Mukden Railway shall be extended to a further period of 99 years respectively.

Article 2

The Japanese subjects shall be permitted in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia to lease or own land required either for erecting buildings for various commercial and industrial uses or for farming.

Article 3

The Japanese subjects shall have liberty to enter, reside, and travel in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, and to carry on business of various kinds commercial, industrial, and otherwise.

Article 4

The Chinese Government grant to the Japanese subjects the right of mining in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia. As regards the mines to be worked, they shall be decided upon in a separate agreement.

Article 5

The Chinese Government agree that the consent of the Japanese Government shall be obtained in advance:

(1) whenever it is proposed to grant to other nationals the right of constructing a railway or to obtain from other nationals the supply of funds for constructing a railway in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, and (2) whenever a loan is to be made with any other Power, under security of the taxes of South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia.

Article 6

The Chinese Government engage that whenever the Chinese Government need the service of political, financial, or military advisers or instructors in South Manchuria or in Eastern Inner Mongolia, Japan shall first be consulted.

Article 7

The Chinese Government agree that the control and management of the Kirin-Chungchun Railway shall be handed over to Japan for a term of 99 years dating from the signing of this treaty.

GROUP III

The Japanese Government and the Chinese Government, having regard to the close relations existing between Japanese capitalists and the Han-Yeh-Ping Company and desiring to promote the common interests of the two nations, agree to the following articles:

Article 1

The two Contracting Parties mutually agree that when the opportune moment arrives the Han-Yeh-Ping Company shall be made a joint concern of the two nations, and that, without the consent of the Japanese Government, the Chinese Government shall not dispose or permit the Company to dispose of any right or property of the Company.

Article 2

The Chinese Government engage that, as a necessary measure for protection of the invested interests of Japanese capitalists, no mines in the neighbourhood of those owned by the Han-Yeh-Ping Company shall be permitted, without the consent of the said Company, to be worked by anyone other than the Said Company; and further that whenever it is proposed to take any other measure which may likely affect the interests of the said Company directly or indirectly, the consent of the said Company shall first be obtained.

GROUP IV

The Japanese Government and the Chinese Government, with the object of effectively preserving the territorial integrity of China, agree to the following article: The Chinese Government engage not to cede or lease to any other Power any harbour or bay on or any island along the coast of China.

GROUP V

Article 1

The Chinese Central Government to engage influential Japanese as political, financial, and military advisers;

Article 2

The Chinese Government to grant the Japanese hospitals, temples, and schools in the interior of China the right to own land;

Article 3

In the face of many police disputes which have hitherto arisen between Japan and China, causing no little annoyance the police in localities (in China), where such arrangement: are necessary, to be placed under joint Japanese and Chinese administration, or Japanese to be employed in police office in such localities, so as to help at the same time the improvement of the Chinese Police Service;

Article 4

China to obtain from Japan supply of a certain quantity of arms, or to establish an arsenal in China under joint Japanese and Chinese management and to be supplied with experts and materials from Japan;

Article 5

In order to help the development of the Nanchang-Kiukiang Railway, with which Japanese capitalists are so closely identified, and with due regard to the negotiations which have been pending between Japan and China in relation to the railway question in South China, China to agree to give to Japan the right of constructing a railway to connect Wuchang with the Kiukiang-Nanchang and Hangchou and between Nanchang and Chaochou;

Article 6

In view of the relations between the Province of Fukien and Formosa and of the agreement respecting the non-alienation of that province, Japan to be consulted first whenever foreign capital is needed in connection with the railways, mines, and harbour works (including dockyards) in the Province of Fukien;

Article 7

China to grant to Japanese subjects the right of preaching in China.

Japanese Ultimatum to China, 7 May 1915

The reason why the Imperial Government opened the present negotiations with the Chinese Government is first to endeavour to dispose of the complications arising out of the war between Japan and China, and secondly to attempt to solve those various questions which are detrimental to the intimate relations of China and Japan with a view to solidifying the foundation of cordial friendship subsisting between the two countries to the end that the peace of the Far East may be effectually and permanently preserved.

With this object in view, definite proposals were presented to the Chinese Government in January of this year, and up to today as many as twenty-five conferences have been held with the Chinese Government in perfect sincerity and frankness.

In the course of negotiations the Imperial Government have consistently explained the aims and objects of the proposals in a conciliatory spirit, while on the other hand the proposals of the Chinese Government, whether important or unimportant, have been attended to without any reserve.

It may be stated with confidence that no effort has been spared to arrive at a satisfactory and amicable settlement of those questions.

The discussion of the entire corpus of the proposals was practically at an end at the twenty-fourth conference; that is on the 17th of the last month.

The Imperial Government, taking a broad view of the negotiation and in consideration of the points raised by the Chinese Government, modified the original proposals with considerable concessions

and presented to the Chinese Government on the 26th of the same month the revised proposals for agreement, and at the same time it was offered that, on the acceptance of the revised proposals, the Imperial Government would, at a suitable opportunity, restore, with fair and proper conditions, to the Chinese Government the Kiaochow territory, in the acquisition of which the Imperial Government had made a great sacrifice.

On the first of May, the Chinese Government delivered the reply to the revised proposals of the Japanese Government, which is contrary to the expectations of the Imperial Government. The Chinese Government not only did not give a careful consideration to the revised proposals but even with regard to the offer of the Japanese Government to restore Kiaochow to the Chinese Government the latter did not manifest the least appreciation for Japan's good will and difficulties.

From the commercial and military point of view Kiaochow is an important place, in the acquisition of which the Japanese Empire sacrificed much blood and money, and, after the acquisition the Empire incurs no obligation to restore it to China.

But with the object of increasing the future friendly relations of the two countries, they went to the extent of proposing its restoration, yet to her great regret, the Chinese Government did not take into consideration the good intention of Japan and manifest appreciation of her difficulties.

Furthermore, the Chinese Government not only ignored the friendly feelings of the Imperial Government in offering the restoration of Kiaochow Bay, but also in replying to the revised proposals they even demanded its unconditional restoration; and again China demanded that Japan should bear the responsibility of paying indemnity for all the unavoidable losses and damages resulting from Japan's military operations at Kiaochow; and still further in connection with the territory of Kiaochow China advanced other demands and declared that she has the right of participation at the future peace conference to be held between Japan and Germany.

Although China is fully aware that the unconditional restoration of Kiaochow and Japan's responsibility of indemnification for the unavoidable losses and damages can never be tolerated by Japan, yet she purposely advanced these demands and declared that this reply was final and decisive. Since Japan could not tolerate such demands the settlement of the other questions, however compromising it may be, would not be to her interest. The consequence is that the present reply of the Chinese Government is, on the whole, vague and meaningless.

Furthermore, in the reply of the Chinese Government to the other proposals in the revised list of the Imperial Government, such as South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, where Japan particularly has geographical, commercial, industrial and strategic relations, as recognized by all nations, and made more remarkable in consequence of the two wars in which Japan was engaged, the Chinese Government overlooks these facts and does not respect Japan's position in that place.

The Chinese Government even freely altered those articles which the Imperial Government, in a compromising spirit, have formulated in accordance with the statement of the Chinese Representatives, thereby making the statements of the Representatives an empty talk; and on seeing them conceding with the one hand and withholding with the other it is very difficult to attribute faithfulness and sincerity to the Chinese authorities.

As regards the articles relating to the employment of advisers, the establishment of schools and hospitals, the supply of arms and ammunition and the establishment of arsenals and railway concessions in South China in the revised proposals, they were either proposed with the proviso that the consent of the Power concerned must be obtained, or they are merely to be recorded in the minutes in accordance with the statements of the Chinese delegates, and thus they are not in the least in conflict either with Chinese sovereignty or her treaties with the Foreign Powers, yet the Chinese Government in their reply to the proposals, alleging that these proposals are incompatible with their sovereign rights and treaties with Foreign Powers, defeat the expectations of the Imperial Government.

However, in spite of such attitude of the Chinese Government, the Imperial Government, though regretting to see that there is no room for further negotiations, yet warmly attached to the preservation of the peace of the Far East, is still hoping for a satisfactory settlement in order to avoid the disturbance of the relations.

So in spite of the circumstances which admitted no patience, they have reconsidered the feelings of the Government of their neighbouring country and, with the exception of the article relating to Fukien which is to be the subject of an exchange of notes as has already been agreed upon by the Representatives of both nations, will undertake to detach the Group V from the present negotiations and discuss it separately in the future.

Therefore, the Chinese Government should appreciate the friendly feelings of the Imperial Government by immediately accepting without any alteration all the articles of Groups I, II, III, and IV and the exchange of notes in connection with Fukien province in Group V as contained in the revised proposals presented on the 26th of April.

The Imperial Government hereby again offer their advice and hope that the Chinese Government, upon this advice, will give a satisfactory reply by 6 o'clock P.M. on the 9th day of May. It is hereby declared that if no satisfactory reply is received before or at the specified time, the Imperial Government will take steps they may deem necessary.

Explanatory Note

Accompanying Ultimatum delivered to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Japanese Minister, May 7th, 1915.

1. With the exception of the question of Fukien to be arranged by an exchange of notes, the five articles postponed for later negotiation refer to (a) the employment of advisers, (b) the establishment of schools and hospitals, (c) the railway concessions in South China, (d) the supply of arms and ammunition and the establishment of arsenals and (e) right of missionary propaganda.

2. The acceptance by the Chinese Government of the article relating to Fukien may be either in the form as proposed by the Japanese Minister on the 26th of April or in that contained in the Reply of the Chinese Government of May 1st. Although the Ultimatum calls for the immediate acceptance by China of the modified proposals presented on April 26th, without alteration, but it should be noted that it merely states the principle and does not apply to this article and articles 4 and 5 of this note.

3. If the Chinese Government accept all the articles as demanded in the Ultimatum the offer of the Japanese Government to restore Kiaochow to China, made on the 26th of April, will still hold good.

4. Article 2 of Group II relating to the lease or purchase of land, the terms "lease" and "purchase" may be replaced by the terms "temporary lease" and "perpetual lease" or "lease on consultation," which means a long-term lease with its unconditional renewal.

Article IV of Group II relating to the approval of police laws and ordinances and local taxes by the Japanese Council may form the subject of a secret agreement.

5. The phrase "to consult with the Japanese Government" in connection with questions of pledging the local taxes for raising loans and the loans for the construction of railways, in Eastern Inner Mongolia, which is similar to the agreement in Manchuria relating to the matters of the same kind, may be replaced by the phrase "to consult with the Japanese capitalists."

The article relating to the opening of trade marts in Eastern Inner Mongolia in respect to location and regulations, may, following their precedent set in Shantung, be the subject of an exchange of notes.

6. From the phrase "those interested in the Company" in Group III of the revised list of demands, the words "those interested in" may be deleted.

7. The Japanese version of the Formal Agreement and its annexes shall be the official text or both the Chinese and Japanese shall be the official texts.

Chinese Reply to Japanese Ultimatum, 8 May 1915

On the 7th of this month, at three o'clock P.M., the Chinese Government received an Ultimatum from the Japanese Government together with an Explanatory Note of seven articles.

The Ultimatum concluded with the hope that the Chinese Government by six o'clock P.M. on the 9th of May will give a satisfactory reply, and it is hereby declared that if no satisfactory reply is received before or at the specified time, the Japanese Government will take steps she may deem necessary.

The Chinese Government with a view to preserving the peace of the Far East hereby accepts, with the exception of those five articles of Group V postponed for later negotiations, all the articles of Groups I, II, III, and IV and the exchange of notes in connection with Fukien Province in Group V as contained in the revised proposals presented on the 26th of April, and in accordance with the Explanatory Note of seven articles accompanying the Ultimatum of the Japanese Government with the hope that thereby all the outstanding questions are settled, so that the cordial relationship between the two countries may be further consolidated.

The Japanese Minister is hereby requested to appoint a day to call at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make the literary improvement of the text and sign the Agreement as soon as possible.