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GERMANY AND JAPAN

By HEINRICH STAHLER

On January 1, 1943, the Führer appointed Mr. Heinrich Stahl, formerly Ambassador to China, to the post of Ambassador to Japan. Before leaving for his new post, Ambassador Stahl wrote the following article for "The XXth Century."—K.M.

NOW that Germany and Japan have been loyal comrades-at-arms for more than a year, fighting shoulder to shoulder in the greatest war in history, I should like to say a few words about the men whose farsightedness and energy have brought about this close relationship between the two nations.

On the German side it was the Führer himself who had been convinced for many years of the necessity of close co-operation between Germany, Italy, and Japan. In this line of thought he was, from the very beginning, vigorously supported by Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Reich Foreign Minister. Herr von Ribbentrop devoted himself with profound interest to laying the groundwork for this co-operation. The German Foreign Minister possesses extraordinary political judgment and the rare gift of being able clearly to grasp the often complicated interplay in the relationship of the various nations to each other. It is characteristic of him, after having clarified the political aims, to follow these aims with the greatest possible devotion to duty, so that one can say without exaggeration that his sole interest, day and night, is to serve the State and that he never ceases to be occupied with the numerous difficult problems arising from his activity.

Herr von Ribbentrop has reached his present position through his own merits and through the confidence the Führer

has in him. His work is aided considerably by the knowledge he has gained through numerous travels in foreign countries as well as by the fact that he has met many leading statesmen and businessmen abroad. He began his foreign political career as Reich Commissioner for Disarmament, and one of my most pleasant memories is of the time when we worked together in the few modest rooms of the Reich Commissariat. Even then, Herr von Ribbentrop knew how, through tireless work, to carry out his ideas on foreign policy, ideas which always had the Führer's full approval.

As a result of my own experience, I am in a position to judge with what extraordinary seriousness the Führer clung to the idea of disarmament and of maintaining peace, and what great importance he attached to this question. All humanly possible efforts were made on our part to achieve a sound, harmonious development for Germany with the avoidance of any kind of military conflict.

It was for this purpose that we took up connections with war veterans abroad, activities in which I participated myself. These attempts were very successful, as it turned out that, more than anyone else, soldiers who had fought against each other in the last war came together without friction and in complete harmony. They were all convinced that it must be possible to achieve a true co-operation, beneficial to all sides, without a new

war. Especially gratifying and characteristic of this spirit was the twentieth anniversary of the battle of Verdun, which was commemorated on the spot. Well over 100,000 French and German soldiers, together with Italian and British delegations, assembled without the least incident and in full harmony in memory of their fallen comrades.

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In the work of those years which was aimed at general disarmament and understanding between the nations, Germany, although meeting with a great deal of sympathy on the part of the other nations, was constantly faced by hostility on the part of their leaders. It soon became clear that these latter had no intention of carrying out general disarmament, and that they were observing the reawakening of the German nation with deep hatred.

The leaders of Italy and Japan had at the same time similar experiences. And when Herr von Ribbentrop, after having been Ambassador in London, was made Reich Foreign Minister, negotiations were soon begun which were directed at a closer union between Germany and Japan. In these negotiations Japan was represented by Ambassador Oshima, who knows conditions in Germany as a result of his long sojourn there. From the very beginning, he was convinced of the absolute rightness of close co-operation between Japan and Germany, and he was able, with his exceptional energy and skill, to contribute much towards the later successes. In Japan it was the former Foreign Minister Matsuoka, an experienced diplomat with extensive political knowledge and rare power of comprehension, who, foreseeing the coming historical developments, played a decisive role in the conclusion of the pact. Both Ambassador Oshima and Mr. Matsuoka enjoy the greatest possible popularity among the Germans.

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The Tripartite Pact, signed in September 1940, is the foundation of the policy of the Axis. It grew in Tokyo,

Berlin, and Rome from a clear understanding of the political situation of the world as well as from the conviction that coming developments would follow a direction which was in every respect to the mutual interest of the three participating nations. The constant pressure from the Anglo-Saxon camp against their economic development led inevitably to an alliance of the three countries which, in their endeavor to provide their people with a healthy development without the methods of imperialism, met with resistance everywhere. The political events of the last few years have proved without question that these assumptions were correct.

A comparatively small clique of statesmen in England and France, supported by Roosevelt and his like-minded entourage, has driven the world into the new war. We will wage it until victory brings final clarification and a real, enduring, and just peace. This conformity in the views of the statesmen in Berlin, Tokyo, and Rome made it possible for the Tripartite Pact to be completed within a time which was very short compared with the pact's importance. Our firm conviction of the justice of our aims is our constant stimulus for doing everything to disprove by deeds the calumnies directed by our enemies against this close relationship between Japan, Germany, and Italy, and to keep our eyes on our great common goal.

In my opinion, the idea of the Greater European and Greater East Asiatic spheres which was created by the Axis nations is the best and safest guarantee for a happy development. The clear reciprocal recognition of the two *Grossraums* ensures their firm collaboration and independence in the future.

My one year's stay in China, a country which for decades has had close ties of friendship with Germany, has given me an opportunity to form my own picture of the progress of Sino-Japanese collaboration. Above all, it has convinced me that this collaboration will necessarily increase in the future, since it is essential for the establishment of the Co-Prosperity

Sphere aimed at by both countries. In view of this collaboration, I am very happy that the Chinese Government decided on January 9 to enter the war at the side of Japan and the Axis and has thus become our ally.

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Shortly before the signing of the Tripartite Pact, I was given an opportunity to visit Japan and, together with the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the President of the German Red Cross, to make a journey of several weeks through the United States. I found it very interesting to see with my own eyes the difference in the attitude of the statesmen as well as of the people in the two nations. While in Japan it is above all a burning patriotism and the idea of the Emperor that inspire each individual, there was nothing like that to be found in America, however much one searched. All the conversations I had there revealed to me only the preponderance of personal interest and ambition. At the same time I was struck by the astonishing lack of knowledge—even in the highest places—of actual conditions in Europe, East Asia, and other parts of the world; and my main impression was one of muddling and uncertainty.

Several conversations I had with economic leaders and high officers of the Army and Navy stand out in my memory. The businessmen and bankers feared an economic catastrophe as the result of America's active entry into the war. The military and naval men openly declared that, although they would do all in their power to prevent the active employment of the armed forces, they saw very little chance of success in view of President Roosevelt's manner of making decisions.

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My imminent departure for Japan recalls to my mind the beginning of my work with Japan in 1935, work which

was then limited to the cultural sphere. At that time, the first Japanese-German films were being made through the collaboration of both countries. The reciprocal feelings of friendship between Germany and Japan, which have existed for decades, have been greatly intensified during the last few years. The number of Japanese studying in Germany has constantly increased, as has the number of translations of books and scientific publications in both countries. In 1937 a famous Japanese group of dancers came to Germany and presented some scenes from classical No and Kabuki plays which met with the greatest interest. Both nations are eager to learn as much as possible about the other country and to obtain an idea of its life and its culture. The fact that in these two peoples the desire for knowledge of each other is greater than that for knowledge of other countries seems to me to be founded in a great common feeling that both peoples have, in spite of the differences in their culture, history, and attitude towards life. This common feeling is their love for their country, their unquestioning readiness to sacrifice all for its good, and a truly soldierly feeling in the best sense of the word.

It is not a coincidence that in Japan and Germany the fallen warriors are honored in ways essentially different from those of other countries. I have seen the memorials to the Unknown Soldier in almost all the countries that participated in the Great War, and everywhere there are the remains of unknown soldiers buried under them. Some years ago, numerous proposals for a German war memorial were submitted to me for approval; among them there was not a single one which required the burial of an unknown soldier. Like the Japanese, the German nation honors its great dead in the spirit.

The spiritual unity of the Axis in aims and attitude is the guarantee for its victory in this struggle.