

## ADDENDUM<sup>1</sup>

763.72119/6513

### *The Japanese Chargé (Debuchi) to the Secretary of State<sup>2</sup>*

The Honorable the Secretary of State in the course of his conversation with the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires at Washington on July 28 called the attention of the Japanese Government to the information received from the American Minister at Peking to the effect that the Japanese Government have opened negotiations with the Chinese Government for the restitution of Kiao-chou on the basis of the Sino-Japanese agreements of 1915 and 1918. Secretary Lansing understood that it had been agreed at the Paris Conference that the question of Shantung was finally to be adjusted independently of and without reference to the arrangements of 1915 and 1918. He therefore asked for explanations respecting the reported action of the Japanese Government which seemed to him to be inconsistent with the understanding reached at Paris.

The Japanese Government desired to point out in reply that it is not true that negotiations had been opened at Peking for the restitution of Kiao-chou. In their statement issued to the press on August 2 they have made it clear that such negotiations could only be entered into after the treaty of peace with Germany shall have been ratified by Japan.

At the same time, they confirm that, in response to the desire of President Hsu, informally conveyed to the Japanese Minister at Peking toward the latter part of May, Mr. Obata expressed his readiness to address an official communication to the Chinese Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs in the sense that the Japanese Government were prepared to enter into negotiations with the Chinese Government as soon as practicable after the ratification by Japan, China and Germany of the Treaty of Versailles, in pursuance of Japan's engagement to China.

It will be recalled that the legal obligation undertaken by Japan toward China to return Kiao-chou originates from the arrangement of 1915. Japan is firmly determined to abide by her pledged word consecrated in that arrangement and it was this sincere determina-

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<sup>1</sup>To be read in connection with the Department's memorandum of Aug. 27, 1919, printed on p. 720.

<sup>2</sup>Note on margin: "Handed me after reading aloud by Japanese Chargé. Aug. 22/19 R[obert] L[ansing]."

tion that Mr. Obata's proposed communication was intended to reaffirm. Nor was any exception then taken by the Chinese Government to the substance of the communication thus suggested. These informal conversations were, however, eventually abandoned by the Chinese themselves owing apparently to the change of the situation caused by their failure to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

The question now raised by the Secretary of State seems further to rest on the presumption that it was admitted by the Japanese delegation in Paris that the validity of the Sino-Japanese arrangements of 1915 and 1918 was at least questioned. Careful research of the reports so far received in Tokio on the proceedings of the Paris Conference has failed to disclose anything which indicates such an admission on the part of the Japanese delegation. On the contrary, Viscount Chinda at the close of the discussion on the Shantung clauses on the 30th of April defined the position of Japan in the matter "to remove any moral obligation on behalf of Japan not to invoke the agreements in question."

Contentions are often advanced in this connection that China was compelled to accept the arrangement of 1915 under conditions which deprived her of a free choice of any other alternative. It is, however, evident that if such contentions were adopted to challenge the validity of treaty solemnly entered into by a sovereign power, dangerous precedents would be set with grave consequences upon the stability of the existing international relations.

In offering foregoing explanation, the Japanese Government are happy to believe that the spirit of entire frankness and confidence in which it is submitted will not be misunderstood by the American Government.