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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: August 15, 1948

SUBJECT: Pacific Pact

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Frank H. Gerner, First Secretary, New Zealand Embassy.  
Mr. Allison, Deputy Director for Far Eastern Affairs.

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American Embassy, Wellington

Mr. Gerner stated during the course of a general conversation on Far Eastern matters that his government had received a telegram from General Banfill inviting it to take part with other like-minded governments in a conference at some unspecified date in the future concerning possibilities of a regional pact among Pacific powers. According to Mr. Gerner General Banfill's telegram quoted extensively from the letter of President Chiang to General Banfill and also attempted to divorce this approach from the recent Chung-Ching talks and to tie it up with the San Francisco conference of last January. General Banfill's telegram was clear that the pact envisioned by him would be primarily economic and cultural and that it would have no military implications. The New Zealand government, according to Mr. Gerner, has replied to General Banfill stating that it would give the matter serious study but that before reaching a decision as to whether or not it would be willing to participate in a conference of this nature it would like to have General Banfill inform it as to the nature of the pact as the United States and the United Kingdom. The cooperation of which, in the opinion of the New Zealand government, the Pacific Pact would appear to be a continuation of the San Francisco conference. At some length it was stated that the New Zealand government was not taking the possibility of the Pacific Pact as a serious possibility but rather as an opportunity to discuss the possibility that the existence of the Pacific Pact would be a possibility.

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Pact might leave New Zealand neglected by its Western friends and associates and it does not feel that a Pacific Pact made up of only the nations of Southeast Asia and India would be a suitable substitute. Mr. Gerner frankly said that the New Zealand Government feels that if it aligns itself in a pact with only Asiatic nations there would be the danger of certain of these nations' coming to look at the comparative wealth of New Zealand and its comparative under population with covetous eyes. According to Mr. Gerner, the New Zealand Government realizes that it might not be possible for the United States to enter a formal security pact in the Pacific at this time and it does not believe that this is necessary but it does think that a general understanding among New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States regarding security in the Pacific would be a most desirable thing. I informed Mr. Gerner that this Government's attitude toward a Pacific Pact had been made clear in various statements by the Secretary and that our attitude toward the Philippine initiative had been expressed in the last sentence of the joint communique issued upon the departure of President Quirino. Mr. Gerner said that his purpose was merely to keep this Government informed and that there was no intention of asking for any specific action at this time.

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