
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

August 16, 1941

Subject: United States--Japanese Relations.

Participants: Secretary Hull and the Japanese Ambassador,
Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura.

The Ambassador of Japan called at his request. He proceeded to say that he had again read over the documents that he and I had had under discussion, that he had been in communication with his Government, and that he believed there were grounds for progress in the conversations. He said that his Government was very desirous of working out peaceful relations between our two countries and he elaborated further along this line and against the idea of war. He stated that he would favor concessions in order to avoid war and that from what he heard from his Government, it would make concessions in order to avoid war. He said that in fact it would be glad to have a high Japanese official meet a high American official half way between the two countries in order to take up the matter in its final form.

The Ambassador then pointedly inquired of me whether conversations such as he and I had been conducting could be resumed between our two Governments. I proceeded to reiterate and repeat the conversations and the reasons which I set forth through Mr. Welles for their discontinuance. I did not pass further on the question which he propounded but left it as it was. The Ambassador remarked that the situation was critical and it was very important in his judgment for suitable steps

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to be taken to avoid serious developments but I still revealed no sign whatever of saying anything favorable about his request for a resumption of conversations. I said that as the matter stands Japan with her Army, Navy and air forces was establishing many bases in and about French Indochina under her continued policy of conquest by force, that this would mean about the last step prior to a serious invasion of the South Sea area if it should be decided upon by Japan, that such an invasion would be a serious menace to British success in Europe and hence to the safety of the Western Hemisphere, including the United States, and that, therefore, this Government could not for a moment remain silent in the face of such a threat, especially if it should be carried forward to any further extent. The Ambassador remarked that the people of Japan did not have enough foodstuffs and went to Indochina to secure such needed commodities as rice. To this I promptly replied that if Japan had been willing to go forward with a peaceful settlement of the Pacific area in line with the principles and policies the Ambassador and I had discussed, Japan would have been able peacefully and without the use or threat of force to have equal access with every other nation to world markets for rice and all other foodstuffs.

The Ambassador repeatedly said that his country was very desirous of peaceful relations with this country in the future as well as now and that he believed his Government would make some concessions in order to resume conversations to this end. I expressed interest in this and again referred to Japan's continuing policy of conquest by

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force and of bitter denunciation of this country by the Government controlled press which is loudly supporting such a policy, and again I said that I would not be in a position to say anything relative to his request in addition to what I had said some days ago when he first brought up the matter.

I suggested to the Ambassador that the situation was very serious and that if he desired to talk to any others on this subject or to the President it would be perfectly agreeable with me and I would not consider it as in any way going around me, et cetera. The Ambassador said that he would not be in a position to talk to the President until he first telegraphed his country for instructions as to what concessions it might be willing to make in connection with a resumption of conversations.

C.H.

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