

Not used

REPORTED JAPANESE TROOP MOVEMENTS

Secretary Hull conferred with the Japanese Ambassador and Mr. Kurusu on December 1. The Secretary said that in the current discussions we had to take into account the bellicose utterances emanating from Tokyo. He emphasized that we did not propose to go into partnership with Japan's military leaders; that he had not heard one whisper of peace from them, "only bluster and bloodcurdling threats". The Japanese representatives said that statements of Japanese officials were taken more seriously in the United States than was warranted; that these statements were misquoted in the press.

The Secretary said that this Government had no idea of trying to bluff Japan and that he saw no occasion for Japan's trying to bluff us; he emphasized that "there is a limit beyond which we cannot go".

He made clear that this Government was anxious to help settle the China affair if a settlement could be reached in accordance with the basic principles discussed in the conversations, and that under such circumstances we would be glad to offer our good offices. He said that under existing circumstances, while Japan was bound in the Tripartite Pact, Japan might just as well ask us to cease aiding Britain as to cease aiding China. The United States would give Japan all the materials it wanted, he said, if Japan's military leaders would only show that Japan intended to pursue a peaceful course.

The Secretary observed that Japanese troops in Indochina constituted a menace to the South Seas area; that the stationing of these troops in Indochina was making it necessary for the United States and its friends to keep large numbers of armed forces immobilized in East Asia; that in this way Japan's acts were having the effect of aiding Hitler. He called attention to reports of heavy Japanese troop movements in Indochina, stating that we could not be sure what the Japanese military leaders were likely to do. The Secretary said that we could not "sit still" while these developments were taking place; that we would not allow ourselves to be driven out of the Pacific. He

said that there was no reason for conflict between the United States and Japan; that Japan did not have to use a sword to gain "a seat at the head of the table".

The Ambassador said the Japanese people believed that the United States wanted to keep Japan fighting with China and to keep Japan strangled; that the Japanese people were faced with the alternatives of surrendering to the United States or of fighting. Mr. Kurusu said that the Japanese Government had directed him to inquire what was the ultimate aim of the United States in the conversations and to request that the United States Government make "deep reflection of this matter".

Meanwhile, this Government received reports of continued Japanese troop movements to Indochina. In a communication of December 2, handed to the Japanese Ambassador by Under Secretary Welles, President Roosevelt inquired regarding these reports and asked to be informed of the actual reasons for these steps. The President stated that the stationing of increased Japanese forces in Indochina seemed to imply the intention to utilize these forces for further aggression; that such aggression might be against the Philippine Islands, the Netherlands Indies, Burma, Malaya, or Thailand.

On December 5 the Japanese Ambassador handed to Secretary Hull a reply which stated that as Chinese troops had recently shown frequent signs of movements along the northern frontier of French Indochina bordering on China, Japanese troops, with the object mainly of taking precautionary measures, had been reinforced to a certain extent in the northern part of French Indochina; that as a natural sequence of this step, certain movements had been made among the troops stationed in the southern part of the said territory; and that an exaggerated report had been made of these movements.

In a conversation which followed with the Japanese Ambassador and Mr. Kurusu, the Secretary said that he had been under the impression that Japan had been moving forces into northern Indochina for the purpose of attacking China from there; that he had never heard before that these troop movements were for the purpose of defense against Chinese attack.

Ambassador Nomura said that the Japanese were alarmed over the increasing naval and military preparations of the "ABCD powers"; that the United States blamed Japan for its move into Indochina but that if Indochina were controlled by other powers it would be a menace to Japan. Mr. Kurusu said that if an agreement could be reached on temporary measures, we could proceed with the exploration of fundamental solutions; that what was needed immediately was a temporary expedient.

The Secretary said that we could solve matters without delay if the Japanese Government would renounce its policy of force and aggression. He added that we were not looking for trouble but that at the same time "we were not running away from menaces".

Excerpt from "Peace and War"
Official publication
Department of State, U. S. A.
Pages 138-140