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From Nomura to Tōgō
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At 10:30 A.M. on the 17th I with Ambassador Kurusu called on Secretary Hull.

Hull opened the conversation by saying that the present situation had been brought about because there were no far-sighted statesmen after the last war, and that we must even today prepare to save the world from a repetition of such a situation.

Kurusu expressed sympathy with the idea, and said that the United States and Japan, neither of which has yet joined in the European War, have great responsibility in meeting the situation, but that there are more immediate problems which have to be solved between the two countries and about which concrete discussions should at once be started. He continued (after describing how he had come over to the United States at the request of you and the Premier) that the Premier is sincerely desirous of the conclusion of the negotiations, and holds greater hope for their success than one imagines, and that of the three problems at issue between Japan and the United States--non-discriminatory treatment in trade, the Tripartite Pact, and withdrawal of troops--the Premier is very hopeful of settlement respecting the first two, and much concerned about the last point of withdrawal of troops.

As the appointment with the President drew near, Hull suggested that the conversation be resumed in the presence of the President and we all left the room. At 11:00 we were received by the President with Secretary Hull. Kurusu stated that the present Cabinet is, as he had told Secretary Hull, very earnest about the Japanese-American negotiations; that the President as a statesman must have sufficient appreciation of the frame of mind of the Japanese people, who have been in the China Affair for over four years; that even a layman such as himself had observed at Hong Kong, Manila and other islands that the situation was tense militarily and might explode any minute; that such a situation serves no purpose whatsoever for the two countries (the President agreed). Japan, he said, is desirous of the success of the negotiations, but the time-element has to be taken into consideration because the economic and military ability of Japan to defend herself would deteriorate with procrastination; Japan cannot submit to complete surrender without doing anything to avoid it; and therefore, though Japan is earnest about the success of the negotiations, they must at the same time be concluded speedily.

The President reminded us that Secretary of State Bryan once told Baron Ginda that "there is no last word between friends", and said that, whereas many non-aggression pacts in the past have now all become "out of date", he considers that it is possible to save the situation by arriving at some "general understanding" between Japan and the United States.

Kurusu offered his personal opinion in agreement with the President's suggestion. As he looked at it, he said, the real issues in the Japanese-American negotiations are ultimately the question of how Japan should harmonize the Tripartite Pact with the negotiations, and the question how the United States could adjust her various insistences with respect to the solution of the China problem; and the negotiations. As to the Tripartite Pact, he explained, Japan has treaty obligation as well as her honor as a world power, and does not dare commit treaty violations. It is not to be assumed that the United States--who has been a strong advocate of observance of international commitments--would request Japan to

violate one. Inasmuch as the object of the Tripartite Pact lies particularly in preventing extension of war and in maintenance of peace, it should be possible to solve this point somehow. As to the solution of the China problem, Kurusu said, it should be understood that Japan cannot accept proposals which it is not possible to put into practice, however attractive they may sound.

The President said that he has heard of the difficulties in withdrawing troops in relation to the China problem. The United States, he said, has no intention either to "intervene" or to "mediate" the problems between Japan and China, but means only to be an "introducer", though the term may not be one of diplomatic usage.

Kurusu said that, whereas Japan has stated that her action with respect to the obligation to go to war under the Tripartite Pact will be determined entirely independently, it appears that the United States took it to mean that Japan intended to stab the United States in the back when she had become deeply entangled in the European war. He stated that such an interpretation was entirely wrong, and that clarification had been made, to the effect that Japan would act independently, for the purpose of dispelling an apparent misapprehension on the part of the United States that Japan would, under the influence of Germany, move at Germany's demand. If some such broad understanding as was suggested by the President were reached at the present moment between Japan and the United States concerning the pacific problems, Kurusu went on, it would naturally "outshine" the Tripartite Pact, and American apprehension over the problem of application of the Pact would consequently be dissipated.

Secretary Hull then intervened and described in detail the German policy of aggression. He said that if Germany succeeded in the conquest of Britain she would establish various puppet régimes in South America, and launch an attack against the United States with the British fleet; that as it would be too late then for the United States to cope with her, the United States must defend herself now; and that this is the self-defense of the United States and Japan must understand it. He thus described his own theory in detail. The President added that the map showing the Central and South American policy of Germany, to which he referred in his recent speech, is a real thing obtained from German government sources.

Kurusu said that inasmuch as we are discussing peace in the Pacific, and as the President refers to a Japanese-American general understanding, Central and South America will be covered in it because one side of the Western Hemisphere faces the Pacific Ocean; that it is, therefore, impossible that Japan should become a partner of one who would disturb the peace of the Western Hemisphere. Although it is argued that the conclusion of the present negotiations will be criticized as allowing Japan to have a peaceful treaty with the United States on the one hand and to cooperate with Germany on the other, Japan's peaceful policy will be proved to the American people if Japan, in accordance with the commitment made by her, withdraw her troops from French Indo-China upon establishment of the equitable peace in the Pacific; and that at any rate it is urgently necessary to settle the issues now being discussed between Ambassador Nomura and Secretary Hull.

Secretary Hull said that he would like to continue the discussion further, and that he would like to have opinions from new angles offered by Ambassador Kurusu, for he has been talking with Ambassador Nomura repeatedly and going round and round the same point. The President agreed with this, and told me and Kurusu that as he will be in Washington until Saturday (the 22nd) he will be glad to see us at any time that we may desire in accordance with the progress of the talks with Secretary Hull.