

No 2874

Ex 2874

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Informal and Unofficial Oral Statement Handed by the
Secretary of State to the Japanese Ambassador (Nomura)
on May 16, 1941

There has not yet been time to study carefully the proposal which the Ambassador has presented under instructions from his Government. From such examination as it has been possible to make, however, certain preliminary comments suggest themselves.

It is understood that the purpose of the present discussions and of the proposal presented by the Japanese Ambassador is to work out a formula whereunder Japan and the United States may make manifest their common desire and definite purpose to refrain from any aggressive act by force and to pledge themselves in honor and in fact to maintain and preserve peace in the Pacific area.

Keeping in mind this admirable objective, it would seem advisable to dispose of certain fundamental points before attempting to consider the Japanese proposal as a whole.

With reference to the proposed formula in Section II in regard to the relations of Japan and of the United States toward the European war, the United States is, as the Ambassador is aware, engaged in an extensive program of strengthening its national defense, and it regards as an essential part of its program of self-defense aid to Great Britain and to other countries which are resisting the present world-wide movement of conquest and aggression by force. There is annexed a statement which defines clearly the position of the Government of the United States on this subject. The Japanese Government will naturally wish to give careful consideration to the position of the Government of the United States as set forth in the statement.

It is believed that on the basis of the fundamental purpose of pledging themselves in honor and in fact to refrain from any aggressive act by force and to maintain and preserve peace in the Pacific area a mutually satisfactory formula defining the relations of the United States and of Japan toward the European war can be arrived at.

In the light of the foregoing, there are offered for the Ambassador's consideration certain suggestions for possible revision of Section II of the proposal.

With reference to the proposed formula in Section III in regard to the relations of the United States and of Japan toward the China Affair, it is noted that in the "Annex and Explanation" it is stated that in Section III of the proposal there are exemplified principles of neighborly friendship; joint defense against communism; economic cooperation free from economic monopoly or limitation of the interests of other countries; mutual respect of sovereignty and territories; mutual respect for the inherent characteristics of each nation cooperating as good neighbors and forming a Far Eastern nucleus contributing to world peace; withdrawal of Japanese troops from Chinese territory in accordance with an agreement to be concluded between Japan and China; no annexation and no indemnities; and the independence of Manchuria.

While one or two of the points might present difficulties, it is believed that, if China and Japan could come to agreement on the basis of the other points mentioned, the remaining points with some modification need not present insuperable obstacles.

The principles embodied in the Kono Statement, as defined in the "Annex and Explanation" as relating to neighborly friendship, joint defense against communism, and economic cooperation free from economic monopoly or limitation of the interests of other countries, could, with some modification, it is believed, be acceptable.

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[Annex 1]

Extracts From Address by the Secretary of State on
April 24, 1941, Handed to the Japanese Ambassador on
May 16, 1941

". . . Events have shown beyond possible question that the safety of this hemisphere and of this country calls for resistance wherever resistance will be most effective."

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The foregoing statements make it clear that the attitude of the Government of the United States is one of resolve to take measures of self-defense in resistance to a movement, which, as has been made unequivocally clear by the acts and utterances of Hitler, is directed to world conquest by force from which no country and no area are excepted. This attitude is based upon a most fundamental consideration--that of the inalienable right of self-defense.