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711. 94/1323: Telegram

The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State

Tokyo, October 23, 1939 -- 10 p.m.

(Received October 23 -- 1:17 p.m.)

544. Our 543, October 23, 7:17 p.m. Yakichiro Suma, newly appointed Foreign Office spokesman and formerly Councilor in Washington, gave a long interview to the foreign correspondents today in regard to Japanese-American relations. While these correspondents are understood to have cabled the significant portions thereof to their papers in the United States, in view of Mr. Suma's position, it is believed that the Department may wish to have the contents of his interview as reported here which were substantially as follows:

Question: Are you handling Ambassador Grew's address given at the Imperial Hotel as an official protest or have you received an official protest with similar contents?

Answer: We do not regard it as an official protest nor have we received such an official protest.

Question: What is Japan's view in regard to that speech?

Answer: For a diplomat to report accurately the feeling of his country to the country to which he is accredited

takes an unusual amount of courage and I am deeply impressed with Mr. Grew's action. However, it is difficult to agree with the Ambassador's statement that the American public has a correct grasp of the situation in East Asia. From my own experiences in America there has been deplorable ignorance among the people concerning conditions in the Far East. Recently, I read Hugh Wilson's book entitled "Memoirs of a Diplomat" in which he states that as the American people are geographically too well blessed, public opinion in regard to foreign affairs is one of a serious character and I am in agreement with him. American views with regard to the Far East are completely directed by emotion. The American Government and people should pay full attention to actual facts of the situation in East Asia and their opinion should be more constructive and practical.

Question: As the ^{the} treaty expires next January 18, the view is strong here ^{the} United States will cease buying Japanese silk and Japan will cease buying American cotton. What do you think of that?

Answer: I heard this sort of view quite often while in the United States. I even heard that all trade relations would cease. However, this would amount to aggressive action against Japan and as it would not bring the result desired by the United States the majority of opinion inclined to the view that it could be spoken of lightly.

As Walter Lippmann has said, the responsibility for the adjustment of ^{Japanese} -American relations rests not only with Japan, the United States also must exert every effort to observe the road to adjustment.

Question: What do you think about the rumour that a four-power conference including Japan, England, France and the United States will be held to discuss the question of opening the Yangtze River to navigation.

Answer: That is purely conjecture, France and England would not have to be mentioned. If necessary, discussions could be carried on with the United States. In any case the question of opening the Yangtze to navigation is not to be dismissed lightly.

Copies by air mail to Sharghai and Peiping. Shanghai requested to repeat to Chungking by naval radio.

Grew

17 not printed

18 see pp 189 ff.