

Foreign Relations
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The Far East



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- a. A direct jump to N. E. I., by-passing the British.
- b. An advance against the British, primarily, either wholly water-borne direct against Singapore or step by step,—Indochina, Thailand, Burma and Malaya to Singapore.

The latter course, most probably, has been urged by the Axis Powers and Japan may have promised to take it. Advantages and disadvantages to Japan can be seen in either course and it seems unnecessary to attempt an evaluation herein; either one will eventually take in the N.E.I. It suffices, for the purposes herein sought, to most definitely assume that Japan is committed to their "southern advance".

At present the British are faced with those two grave threats to their Far Eastern possessions:—The one, a direct attack by Japan, leaves her no alternative but to resist, alone, if she must, to the best of her ability; the other, a Japanese attack on the Netherlands East Indies, leaves her with the choice of aiding the Dutch in what would almost assuredly result in a repetition of their failure in Norway, or of standing aside, knowing full well that their already precarious position would then become much more desperate. Their position in regard to opposing a Japanese attempt at occupation of the Netherlands East Indies is made more difficult by the fact that the Dutch themselves might not resist. And British Naval, Land and Air forces in the Orient are woefully weak.

Under anything approaching normal conditions British strategy in the Far East would demand that a Japanese attack on the Netherlands East Indies, or Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies even if unresisted by the Dutch, should become a *casus belli*. Under present conditions, however, there is undoubtedly some indecision in the British Camp on the question of what Britain's action should be, even if the Dutch resisted; but so desperate is Britain's need to prevent the establishment of Japanese bases, etc., in the Netherlands East Indies that any commitment from us probably would be sufficient to embolden her to go to war to prevent such an eventuality.

The Dutch attitude, at least that indicated by their failure to send a representative to the recent conference, is understandable, but in the light of recent history hardly seems reasonable or wise. What they fear, of course, is that any consorting with the British would serve to end a Japanese indecision over the use of force against them and hasten a direct attack upon their islands. The Dutch know that British support would be only very meagre, and they may hope that by "maintaining the *status quo*" and showing no favorites they can escape disaster. Aside from the abundant proof of the weakness of this hypothesis to be found in recent European history, the best conclusion to be drawn from the record of the Japanese in the Far East would seem to be that the only thing that will deter them from an at-

390.1115A/209 : Telegram

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

WASHINGTON, November 14, 1940—5 p. m.

475. Your 1144, November 13, 8 p. m.^o In view of your statements and recommendation contained therein *Washington* will not call at Japanese port and will proceed only to Shanghai and Manila.

The Department understands difficulties mentioned by you in obtaining full bookings for the special ships. With respect to the matter of the reluctance of missionaries to leave, the Department has had interviews with leaders here of several of the large missionary organizations and has now written to representatives of both the Protestant and Catholic church councils expressing the hope that they would speedily consider the granting of necessary authorization and funds to permit the return to the United States of those members of their organizations in the Far East who desire to heed the Department's suggestion for their withdrawal. With respect to the short period of time which the approaching arrival of the special ships has allowed for the making of arrangements by Americans to embark on board, while that is appreciated, it was necessary for the Department to take speedy action to make additional shipping available following its suggestion for withdrawal of citizens and to make use of the only vessels it could obtain at the time.

Sent to Tokyo via Shanghai.

WELLES

390.1115A/232 : Telegram

The Consul General at Shanghai (Lockhart) to the Secretary of State

SHANGHAI, November 20, 1940—4 p. m.

[Received 9:40 p. m.]

1280. 1. With the departure of the *Washington* this afternoon 839 Americans have evacuated Shanghai on the 3 special ships sent here for that purpose. 436 embarked on the *Washington*. An estimated additional 216 have left on the regular President Lines sailings, together with 96 on the Canadian Pacific, making a total of 1151. Also a few, approximately 10, left on Japanese vessels.

2. The Department's withdrawal advice was communicated by the Consulate General on three different occasions in circular instructions

^oNot printed. The Ambassador in Japan reported that the time before the S. S. *Washington* was due was not sufficient for Americans to arrange to leave and also that missionary group was especially unwilling to leave. He recommended that the ship should not call at Japan.