

BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D.C.,

September 5th, 1939.

No. 1002.

Secret.

My Lord,

1113/5

1113/2

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herein a copy of the State Department's reply to the representations which were made to them in accordance with the instructions contained in your despatch No. 952 (P 8703/3918/10) of August 24th regarding the action to be taken by the British military garrisons at Shanghai and Tientsin in the event of a Japanese threat to the integrity of the International Settlement in Shanghai and the British Concession in Tientsin, and of war between Japan and Great Britain or France.

2. The State Department's aide-mémoire was handed to a member of my staff by Dr. Hornbeck who asked that every care should be taken to ensure that its contents remained secret. Dr. Hornbeck explained that the United States authorities had hitherto always made a point of declining to give any indication of what their attitude would be in the event of either of the contingencies mentioned arising and they were most concerned that no leakage should occur. In particular, they were especially anxious that no indication whatever should be allowed to reach the Japanese Government of the views of the United States Government since they felt that there were/

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The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

were definite advantages in keeping the Japanese in a state of uncertainty as to the American attitude.

3. Dr. Hornbeck went on to call attention to the second sentence of the third paragraph of the State Department's aide-mémoire where it is stated that "they (the American landed armed forces in China) are emphatically not intended to engage in combat operations against authorised armed forces of any nation". He explained that this phrase was meant to cover China as well as Japan though he was at pains to emphasize the use of the expression "authorised armed forces" and to make it clear that although the passage implied that the American forces would not engage in operations against the regular Chinese Army, it did not mean that they would not take hostile action against Chinese irregulars or bandits.

4. Finally, Dr. Hornbeck pointed out that in their reply to His Majesty's Government's enquiry about the attitude of the United States Government in the event of the British garrisons at Shanghai and Tientsin being compelled to lay down their arms, the State Department had gone farther than had been suggested and had indicated that they would be ready to suggest to the Japanese Government not only that the British troops might be interned but that they might be evacuated under American auspices.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
humble servant,

(SGD) LOTHIAN