

our vital outposts, and have at all times, as I indicated to the Foreign Office when in London, been prepared to join in a guarantee to the Netherlands East Indies.

We have also assumed that in the event of war with Japan naval reinforcements, as discussed in London, with a nucleus of five capital ships, would be sent to the Far East. We now say and emphasize that an early despatch of capital ships east of Suez would itself be the most powerful deterrent and the first step.

We also once more urge that having regard to the grave tension at present existing, air and military reinforcements to Malaya should be vigorously expedited. The position of Thailand now comes up for early decision, for events appear to be moving rapidly.

Two urgent questions emerge:

- (1) Should we, the British countries, be prepared to make it clear to Thailand and to Japan that any attack upon Thailand by Japan will be regarded by us as a *casus belli*?
- (2) Should we announce this to countries concerned independent of United States action, or should we make it conditional upon American concurrence and active participation?

We are of the opinion, as the Government of one of the two British Dominions which are most directly affected, that first question should be answered "yes", and that while every pressure should be maintained upon the United States, it would be an error to condition our action upon American action, though actual objection by the United States of America would of course be fatal.

Thailand's strategic position and resources are such that Japan's occupation of them would gravely imperil the safety of Singapore, [effective control of] the waters around Malaya Peninsula, Philippines and Netherlands East Indies, and maintenance of Chinese supplies along Burma Road.

Having regard to reality in the Far East, we do not believe Japan actuated Thailand merely as an end in itself. Its capture or control would be plainly the first step, and it is the first step that counts. In this connection we have noted with regret that Mr. Sumner Welles' warning to Japan seemed to indicate that objectionable matter would not be occupation of Thailand, but only what might happen subsequently.

Attitude of United States, while constitutionally and politically understandable, is disappointing. We have throughout this period felt that clear and unequivocal warning to Japan by the United States would have stopped aggression. Up to the time of coup in Indo-China it had not been made. Later on Sumner Welles made much more vigorous statement to Japanese representative, though it is subject to criticism mentioned above. But Japanese have still not been given firm warning. Indications of postponed resistance to aggression are merely encouragement.