

## The “Second” Textile Disputes between Japan and the United States (1969-1971): The One Thousand Days of Diplomatic Complications and Estrangement

ISHII, Osamu

It all started when Richard M. Nixon, a Republican presidential contender, made a set of secret deals which included a promise to limit foreign textile imports with Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, the kingpin of Southern politics at that time. Nixon, now the presidential candidate of his party, narrowly won the fall 1968 election. Upon his inauguration, President Nixon reiterated his campaign promise of limiting the foreign textile imports—particularly, those from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—the so-called “Asian Four.” Hence, the 1000-day diplomatic turmoil.

Looking back to the pre-WW II years, there were highly charged cotton textile disputes between Japan, on the one hand, and Great Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands and their Commonwealth or territories, on the other, in the 1930s. For this reason, this article is entitled the “Second Disputes”.

Since Nixon defeated the Democratic opponent with a very narrow margin, he was determined to secure a safe victory in his reelection in 1972. Textiles became his obsession.

His counterpart, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato of Japan, did not quite grasp the seriousness of this matter and the political nature of this otherwise economic problem. Grateful to Nixon for his generous gesture concerning the return of Okinawa to Japan, Sato showed his willingness to cooperate with the United States on textiles—with handshakes, twice, during the three-day summit meeting of November 1969, held in Washington, D.C. However, he had no control over the “Notorious MITI,”

let alone the Japanese textile industry. He couldn't deliver what he had promised. This article, relying chiefly on the primary sources of the American side, concludes that the responsibilities for the ensuing acrimonious disputes should fall squarely upon Sato's inaction on this matter. The rest of the entire story has yet to be told in my next article.